

Southern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority

Pia Bateman – Chief Executive Officer



Unit 3 Holes Bay Park
Sterte Avenue West
Poole
Dorset
BH15 2AA

29th November 2023

Dear Member,

MEETING OF THE AUTHORITY

A meeting of the Authority will be held at The RNLI College, West Quay Road, Poole, Dorset, BH15 1HZ on **7th December 2023** at **14:00**, to discuss the business on the under mentioned Agenda.

Car parking at the RNLI college is limited on a pay and display basis. Additional parking is available in local pay and display car parks. Poole bus station and Poole Railway Station are a 5–10-minute walk from the venue

Members of the public can request to attend the meeting through emailing enquiries@southern-ifca.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely,

Maria Chaplin, Office Manager
maria.chaplin@southern-ifca.gov.uk

AGENDA

1. Apologies

To receive apologies for absence.

2. Declaration of Interest

All Members are to declare any interests in line with paragraphs (16) and (17) of the Southern IFCA Code of Conduct for Non-Council Members.

3. Minutes

To confirm the Minutes of the meeting held on 21st September 2023 (Marked A) and the Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting held on the 26th September 2023 (Marked B)

- a. Recommendations 350 & 362:** To receive a verbal update from DCO Birchenough.

4. Chairman's Announcements

To receive any updates from the Chairman.

5. Sub-Committees

To receive the Minutes of the following Sub-Committees and to consider the adoption of the recommendations contained therein:

- a) Executive Committee** held on 19th September 2023 (Marked C).
b) Technical Advisory Committee held on the 24th August 3 (Marked D).

6. Progress Reports

To consider the following:

- a. **Budget Control Statement to September 2023.** To consider a report from the CEO/Accountant (Marked E).
- b. **Chief Executive Officer updates.** To receive a verbal report from the CEO.
- c. **Marine Asset Review.** To consider a verbal update from DCO Dell.

ITEMS FOR DECISION

7. Budget Forecast 2024-2025

To consider a report from the CEO/Accountant (Marked F)

8. Levy Contributions 2024-2025

To consider a report from the CEO (Marked G)

9. Authorisation for Portland Seed Mussel Fishery 2024

To consider report from DCO Birchenough and Senior IFCO Condie (Marked H)

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION ONLY

10. Compliance and Enforcement Report

To receive the report from DCO Dell (Marked I)

11. Research and Policy Team: Behind the Scenes

To receive a report from DCO Birchenough (Marked J)

12. AIFCA Cockle Presentation

To receive a presentation from Tim Smith, AIFCA.

13. Sector Group Meetings

To receive the minutes from recent meetings of The Fisherman's Council (Marked K)

14. Meeting Venues 2024

To receive a paper from the Office Manager (Marked L)

15. Date of Next Meeting

To confirm the date of the next Authority meeting on the 14th March 2024 at Dorchester Cornhill Exchange, High Street East, Dorchester, DT1 1HF

Southern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority

Full Authority Meeting – 21st September 2023

A meeting of the Full Authority was held at 2pm on 21st September 2023 at the Lighthouse, 21 Kingland Road, Poole, Dorset, BH15 1UG.

Marked A

Present

Cllr Mark Roberts	Dorset Council (Chairman)
Cllr Paul Fuller	Isle of Wight Council (Vice Chairman)
Dr Antony Jensen	MMO Appointee
Mr Richard Stride	MMO Appointee
Mr Neil Hornby	MMO Appointee
Cllr Rob Hughes	Dorset County Council
Cllr Matthew Winnington	Portsmouth City Council
Mr Stuart Kingston-Turner	Environment Agency
Dr Richard Morgan	Natural England
Ms Louise MacCallum	MMO Appointee
Mr Gary Wordsworth	MMO Appointee
Mr Colin Francis	MMO Appointee
Ms Rachel Irish	MMO Appointee
Dr Simon Cripps	MMO Appointee
Ms Elisabeth Bussey-Jones	MMO Appointee
Ms Pia Bateman	Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
Mr Sam Dell	Deputy Chief Officer (DCO)
Dr Sarah Birchenough	Deputy Chief Officer (DCO)
Mr Adam Parry	Senior IFCO
Mrs Gemma Roberts	Accountant
Ms Maria Chaplin	Office Manager

The Chairman opened the meeting by welcoming Ms Elisabeth Bussey-Jones to the meeting in her role as an MMO Appointee and Mr Stuart Kingston-Turner from the Environment Agency. The Chairman welcomed the return of Dr Richard Morgan from Natural England.

The Chairman welcomed those attending the meeting from the public gallery, Mr Mike Bennet (NE), Mr Ryan Tyres and Mr Steve Boyd (Warsash fishers) and Mr Charlie Brock (Director of Brighton & Newhaven Fish Sales).

Apologies

331. Apologies for absence were received from Cllr. Crispin Goodall (BCP Council), Cllr. John Savage (Southampton City Council) and Cllr. Pete Miles (BCP Council).

Declarations of Interest

332. The following non-pecuniary interests were declared: Mr R Stride (16).

Minutes

333. Members considered the Minutes of the meet held on the 8th June 2023. DCO Dell provided an update on Recommendation 318 regarding the Kingfisher Project, regarding the projects ability to update Kingfisher charts based on up to date IFCA regulations. DCO Dell confirmed that he was waiting for a response from Kingfisher and will update Members when a response had been received.

DCO Birchenough provided an update on Recommendation 319, in that additional information had been added to the supporting documentation accompanying the BTFG Byelaw 2023 to provide clarity that the original environmental assessments carried out in 2016 by Southern IFCA were reviewed in 2020 as part of the review and concluded that no additional relevant updates were required.

With reference to Recommendation 325, DCO Birchenough confirmed that the December meeting of the Authority and annual Christmas meal will be held at the RNLI College in Poole, with the meal following the meeting.

Resolved

334. Cllr. P Fuller proposed that the minutes be confirmed and signed, seconded by Mr R Stride. All Members were in favour.

Chairman's Announcements

335. The Chairman reported that he had enjoyed a tour of the CEFAS research vessel & facility in Weymouth, which he found fascinating and an extremely good networking opportunity. The Chairman discussed his involvement on interview panels in recent weeks, as well as Member's Appraisals over the summer period.

The Chairman thanked everyone involved in the boat trip that took place earlier in the day, expressing his thanks to DCO Birchenough, DCO Dell and Mr G. Wordsworth for their expert talks.

Sub Committees

336. Members received the minutes of the Executive Sub-Committee held on the 6th June 2023 and the Technical Advisory Sub-Committee held on the 4th May 2023.

Resolved

337. That Members received and agreed the minutes of the Sub-Committees.

PROGRESS REPORTS

Budget Control Statement (April 2023-June 2023)

338. The Accountant provided a summary of the year to date, correct to 30th June 2023, in that there is a decrease in income over expenditure of 118k. The Accountant explained that this deficit relates to the anticipated receipt of DEFRA project grants of 150k, as well as the anticipated sale of FPV Stella Barbara at 50k and three vehicles. The Accountant explained that all of the expenditure under the Major Budget Headers were positive.

Resolved

339. That the report be received.

Statement of Accounts for Year Ended 31st March 2023. Annual Return from PKF Francis

340. The Accountant introduced the item, explaining that Members had previously received these papers in draft form at the June 2023 meeting, where Members approved that they be sent those to PKF Francis for an independent assurance review. As a result of this work, the Accountant explained a change in the treatment of the Defra grants (400k), which have been moved from the balance sheet and put through the revenue account as income. In addition the Accountant explained how improvement had been made to the internal filing systems in recent months.

Cllr. P Fuller proposed the three recommendations, all of which were seconded by Cllr R Hughes. All Members were in favour.

Resolved

341. That Members note the outcomes of the external audit for the financial year ended 31st March 2023.

342. That Members formally accept the Annual Return, and subject to approval of a recommendation by the ESC on the 19th September 2023, the document is signed at the meeting by the Chairman, the CEO and the Accountant on behalf of the Authority.

343. That Members formally accept the final Statement of Accounts, and subject to approval of a recommendation by the ESC on the 19th September 2023, the document is signed at the meeting by the CEO on behalf of the Authority.

Chief Executive Officer Updates

344. The CEO discussed the recent ratification of the Net Fishing Byelaw and provided an overview of the Net Fishing Review process to date as well as the significant impact that its ratification will have on a number of fishers in the District.

The CEO discussed the recent General Member Appraisals, in addition to providing an update of a number of recent recruitment campaigns, which have included the successful recruitment of Maria Chaplin as the Office Manager, Clare Jeans as a part-time Accounts Administrator and Celie Mullen and John Lakin who have recently been successful in securing an IFCO role.

The CEO thanked Members for their attendance a recent Southern IFCA Workshop to discuss FMPs, with outcomes currently being compiled by officers for submission to Defra in due course as part of the consultation on frontrunner FMPs.

Resolved

345. That the report be received.

Marine Asset Procurement

346. DCO Dell reported that the build of FPV Vigilant was progressing well, despite an estimated 8-week delay on the build, due to a drawing review of cabin positioning. The delay was at the request of DCO Dell on advice from the MECAL Surveyor. The DCO reported that the next factory visit was scheduled for the 3rd of October.

Resolved

347. That the report be received.

Net Fishing Byelaw

348. DCO Birchenough reported that officers had been developing communication tools for industry to assist the roll-out of the Net Fishing Byelaw, discussing the content and dissemination of these infographics. DCO Dell explained that he was the designated Fishing Liaison Officer for the byelaw and was focussing on community engagement in areas which will be subject to permits. This included a meeting with the fishing community in Warsash, along with the CEO and Fisherman's Mission. DCO Dell emphasised the focus on continuing to work closely with the fishing community to ensure that net fishing can continue for relevant fishers within the permit areas for those that meet the eligibility criteria.

Resolved

349. That the report be received.

Recommended

350. That the NFB Infographics be circulated to Members

ITEMS FOR DECISION

Bottom Towed Fishing Gear Byelaw 2023

351. DCO Birchenough provided Members with an overview of the BTFG review to date and the development of the BTFG Byelaw 2023, with the Byelaw having been 'made' at the Authority meeting on 8th June 2023 prior to a period of formal consultation which ended on 28th July 2023. DCO Birchenough reported that seven responses had been received, six of which were letters of objection and that in accordance with due process these had been considered by both the TAC in August and subsequently by the ESC, who had approved the draft Southern IFCA responses to the seven responders, in addition to resolving that no amendments were required to be made to the draft byelaw or supporting documentation

and that a recommendation be made to the Authority to submit the BTFG Byelaw 2023 to the MMO for consideration prior to confirmation by the Secretary of State.

Dr A Jensen discussed the two staged approach to the BTFG review. Dr S Cripps discussed his concerns with feature based management and that there was no place for BTFG activity within protected areas. Ms L MacCallum requested that Phase 2 of the BTFG review commence as soon as possible. Dr A Jensen supported this position and reassured Members that as TAC Chair he was already in discussions with officers regarding the second phase. Mr N Hornby asked whether industry were concerned about the proposed 2023 closures, with DCO Birchenough responding that representation had only been received from two industry stakeholders during the period of public consultation and that these objections related specifically to Southbourne Rough MCZ.

Cllr . P Fuller proposed the recommendation which was seconded by Dr A Jensen. All Members were in favour with the exception of Dr S Cripps who abstained.

Resolved

352. That the Authority submits the Bottom Towed Fishing Gear Byelaw 2023 to the Marine Management Organisation for confirmation by the Secretary of State.

Solent Dredge Permit Byelaw: Scallop Fishery

353. DCO Birchenough provided an overview of the Solent scallop fishery, which emerged in 2013. As the fishery expanded, fishers raised concerns regarding the stock sustainability, which culminated in Southern IFCA introducing a Code of Conduct (CoC) in March 2021 which included seasonal closures between April and October (inclusive) and a limit to two dredges per vessel, as well as a commitment by the Authority to undertake scallop surveys pre and post the fishing season. Subsequently, due to non-compliance with the CoC the TAC developed permit conditions under the Solent Dredge Permit Byelaw (SDPB) which were agreed at the TAC meeting in February 2022 and introduced through a variation to the SDPB Category A Permit for 2022-2023. Under these permit conditions a seasonal closure of April to September (inclusive) was introduced along with the above mentioned gear restrictions.

The DCO explained that management is currently in place under the 2022 to 2023 permit period, with the fishery due to open on the 1st October 2023, and that 32 vessels are permitted. The DCO discussed that that a pre-season survey had been undertaken between the 4-6th September and that outcomes of this suggested a decline in CPUE in this fishery. The DCO also referred to a letter received from industry on 11th September 2023 which raised concerns regarding the health of the scallop fishery and requested a reduction in fishing hours and days.

DCO provided Members with a comprehensive overview of the best available evidence for the fishery via PowerPoint, which included an initial analysis of CPUE data from the Autumn 2023 survey compared to previous surveys, catch data submitted by permit holders from both the 2021-22 season and the 2022-23 season, as well as MMO landings data for comparison purposes from between 2015 to 2020.

DCO Birchenough outlined that data from the Southern IFCA Scallop Survey had been analysed for the Solent as a whole (the area covered by the survey) as well as by Bivalve Management Area (as defined under the SDPB) and by individual survey sites. At a Solent level, the data showed that whilst in 2022 there had been a significant increase in total CPUE and CPUE under Minimum Conservation Reference Size (MCRS) during the closed season, this had not been seen in 2023 and that CPUE levels were lower in autumn 2022 than autumn 2023. It was noted that for CPUE over MCRS a significant increase during the closed period was seen for both years. For BMA level comparisons, the survey takes place in BMA 2 (no significant results) and BMA 3 where the pattern of results was the same as that seen at the Solent level. DCO Birchenough explained the results at a site level outlining that in 2022 1 out of 17, 5 out of 17 and 1 out of 17 sites had showed a decline in CPUE during the fishery closed period (spring to autumn) for Total CPUE, CPUE under MCRS and CPUE over MCRS respectively compared to 8 out of 18, 14 out of 18 and 5 out of 18 sites in the 2023 surveys. In addition, 13 out of 19, 15 out of 19 and 9 out of 19 sites showed a decline in CPUE in autumn 2023 compared to autumn 2022 for Total CPUE, CPUE under MCRS and CPUE over MCRS respectively. DCO Birchenough outlined through visual maps where these declines were noted to be statistically significant.

DCO Birchenough also reviewed the catch data from permit holders, providing an overview of weight of scallops caught and the number of boats fishing for scallops for each of the months of the season for

2021-2022 and 2022-2023 (to date) and how this effort was split between BMAs with a clear focus of effort in BMA 3 in both years, and data from the MMO to provide context prior to the introduction of specific scallop fishery management in the Solent, recognising that there were caveats to this data and the two data sources were not directly comparable.

DCO Birchenough concluded by reviewing the current flexible permit conditions for the scallop fishery under a Category A Permit and the options available to the Authority to manage effort in the fishery in accordance with the SDPB. A final slide was provided on points for Members to consider when discussing management options which reflected the duties of Southern IFCA under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009.

In accordance with Standing Orders, the Chairman invited Mr Steve Boyd, a fisherman from Warsash, Hampshire to address the Members. Mr Boyd explained to Members the concerns of the Warsash fishers who see firsthand the depletion of the scallop stocks and asked that the Members consider intervention via a shortening of fishing hours from 0800 to 1400 and removing fishing at weekends.

Mr Charlie Brock was invited to address the Members who described why the proposal to close the fishery for the 2023-2024 season would not be appropriate. Mr Brock agreed a need to consider additional management, suggesting that the fishing week be reduced to five or six days with the weekend off and a reduction in fishing hours 08:00 till 16:00. Mr Brock discussed the consideration of a delayed start to the season to commence 1st November. He also discussed the potential to consider the use of more efficient fishing gear and suggested a mid-season survey so that Southern IFCA could gather more data.

The CEO read a statement on behalf of Mr Daryle Matthews, a Portsmouth fisherman, which in summary asked for Members to consider a reduction in fishing days to 6 and a change in fishing hours from 0800-1600.

The Chairman thanked the public gallery for their representations and opened up discussions to the Membership. Mr G Wordsworth raised possible comparisons of the stock decline with those seen in Poole Harbour for other shellfish species due to a lack of rainfall the previous summer. Dr S Cripps recognised the inability to fully quantify a reduction in effort due to the data sets available. Mr N Hornby asked what management options were available to the IFCA to achieve a reduction in effort. Cllr P Fuller discussed the financial implications of shortening a season and Christmas markets. Ms L MacCallum asked whether a track record was required for this fishery and whether the fishery was within an MPA. In addition Ms L MacCallum recognised that two years' worth of data wasn't robust, but it is considered to be the best available evidence. Mr R Stride was encouraged with the representations from industry and agreed that there was no justification for a full closure due to data uncertainty. Ms E Bussey-Jones discussed the possible future access into the fishery if sustainability improved following management intervention.

The CEO discussed with Members the options available to reduce effort in the fishery, as permitted under flexible permit management and the resource implications of these. In addition she discussed the track record requirements for entry into this fishery in year one and access for new entrants. In addition she discussed the Access Policy, which has the ability to be reviewed in accordance with the provisions of the byelaw, enabling the Authority to consider access requirements and limitations on permit numbers. DCO Birchenough described the legal process surrounding industry consultation and confirmed parts of the fishery were within an MPA, with BTFG closures used as a general management tool in areas where the fishery operates.

The CEO discussed the need for Members to make a decision today on proposed management interventions that could be taken to consultation immediately, with a final decision on any proposed changes to be made by the Authority at an Extraordinary meeting on the evening of Tuesday 26th September 2023.

The following recommendations were considered for the current 2022-2023 permit season:

354. Resolved

(1) That permit condition (3) and (7) from the 2022-2023 Category A Permits (as issued under the SDPB) are revoked and replaced with a provision that ensures that scallops are not fished for or removed from the Solent fishery from 1st October to 31st October 2023 and that subsequently:

a) a period of consultation with 2022-2023 32 permits holders be held between the 22nd September until 26th September in accordance with requirements under the SDPB.

b) That the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Authority and the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Technical Advisory Committee are delegated by proxy to consider the outcomes of the above-mentioned consultation and determine management measures on behalf of the Authority, with subsequent outcomes to be disseminated to fishers by 28th September 2023.

Cllr M Winnington proposed Recommendation (1) and (1a) and Dr S Cripps seconded. All Members were in favour.

As Recommendation (1b) remained under debate, the Chairman introduced the following amendment which was seconded by Dr S Cripps. All Members were in favour.

b) That an Extraordinary meeting of the Authority be held at 1800 on the 26th September 2023 at the Southern IFCA office in order to consider the responses to the consultation and determine management measures, with subsequent outcomes to be disseminated to fishers by 28th September 2023.

The following recommendations were considered for the forthcoming 2023-2024 permit season:

(2) That fishing for scallops is not permitted under the 2023-2024 SDPB Category A Permit, and subsequently:

a) That a period of consultation with 34 applicants who have applied to fish under the 2023-2023 SDPB Category A Permit be held between the 22nd September until 26th September.

b) That the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Authority and the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Technical Advisory Committee are delegated by proxy to consider the outcomes of the above-mentioned consultation and determine management measures on behalf of the Authority, with subsequent outcomes to be disseminated to fishers by 28th September 2023.

The following amendment was made to Recommendation (2), proposed by Cllr M Winnington and seconded by Cllr P Fuller. All Members were in favour with the exception of Ms L MacCallum.

(2) That fishing for scallops is not permitted under the 2023-2024 SDPB Category A Permit for the period 1st April 2024 to 31st October 2024, and that fishing is to be permitted for five days a week, between 0800-1400 daily during the season.

As Recommendation (2b) remained under debate, the Chairman introduced the following amendment which was seconded by Dr S Cripps. All Members were in favour.

b) That an Extraordinary meeting of the Authority be held at 1800 on the 26th September 2023 at the Southern IFCA office in order to consider the responses to the consultation and determine management measures, with subsequent outcomes to be disseminated to fishers by 28th September 2023.

Annual Report 2022-2023

354. The CEO described the requirement for Southern IFCA to submit an Annual Report to Defra in accordance with the provisions under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009. The CEO provided a brief overview of the report and thanked staff, Members and the wider community for their contributions.

Cllr P Fuller proposed the recommendations and Mr R Stride seconded. All Members were in favour.

Resolved

355. That Members consider and provide comment on the draft Annual Report and that Members approve its submission to the Secretary of State.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION ONLY

Joint Working with The Marine Management Organisation

356. Senior IFCO Mr A Parry discussed recent joint work undertaken with the MMO on the offshore patrol vessel Viking Sentinel, which had been arranged through NIMEG in order to bring together expertise in the field of regulation and enforcement, to allow for sharing of best practice which in turn promotes professionalism and consistency with the aim of aligning compliance approached across regulators.

Resolved

357. That Members noted the report.

Compliance and Enforcement Report

357. DCO Dell provided an overview of work undertaken by the Compliance and Enforcement Team for the period April to June 2023.

Resolved

358. That Members noted the report.

Research and Policy Team: Behind the scenes

359. DCO Birchenough provided a quarterly overview from the officers in the Research and Policy Team for the period April to June 2023.

Resolved

360. That Members noted the report.

The Sector Group Meetings

361. DCO Birchenough introduced the minutes from the Recreational Angling Sector Group and the South Coast Fishermen's Council.

Resolved

362. That Members noted the report.

Date of Next Meeting

363. The next Authority Meeting will be held on the 7th December at 2pm at RNLI in Poole, a Christmas meal will follow the meeting.

AOB

364. Dr S Cripps requested a presentation on the new Poole Harbour Aquatic Management Plan at a subsequent meeting.

Recommended

362. That DCO Birchenough explore possible arrangement for a guest speaker on the above named item at a subsequent meeting of the Authority.

The meeting concluded at 17:10.

SOUTHERN INSHORE FISHERIES & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

EXTRAORDINARY MEETING – 26th September 2023

Marked B

Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting held in the meeting room at the Southern IFCA office in Poole at 18:00 on 26th September 2023

Present

Mr Mark Roberts	Dorset Council (Chairman)
Dr Antony Jensen	MMO Appointee
Mr Richard Stride	MMO Appointee
Dr Simon Cripps	MMO Appointee
Mr Gary Wordsworth	MMO Appointee
Mr Rob Hughes	Dorset Council
Mr Stuart Kingston-Turner	Environment Agency
Ms Pia Bateman	Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

Deputy Chief Officers (DCO) Ms Sarah Birchenough was also present.

Ms Elisabeth Bussey-Jones (MMO Appointee), Mr Tedd Legg (MMO Appointee), Mr Neil Hornby (MMO Appointee) and DCO Sam Dell attended the meeting virtually.

Apologies

1. Apologies for absence were received from Cllr. Paul Fuller (Isle of Wight), Ms Rachel Irish (MMO), Ms Louise McCallum (MMO Appointee), Mr Richard Morgan (MMO Appointee) and Cllr Matthew Winnington (Portsmouth City Council)

Declarations of Interest

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

Determination of Effort Controls in the Solent Scallop Fishery

3. DCO Birchenough provided Members with an overview of work that had been undertaken since the 21st September 2023, when Members agreed at The Meeting of the Authority to take forward proposals relating to a public consultation focussed on methods to reduce effort in the Solent scallop fishery in response to the best available evidence, which suggested a decline in stock levels.

DCO Birchenough explained that a consultation had been undertaken between the 22nd September until midday 26th September. During this period 11 responses were received in writing. In addition, a virtual Solent Bivalve Community Forum was held by Southern IFCA on the 26th September at 10:00, however there were no attendees present.

DCO Birchenough referred Members to Section 2 of the agenda paper, where the outcomes of the consultation are captured, and provided an overview of the feedback received.

Prior to discussions opening across the Membership, the CEO invited those present to consider the Authority's legal duties under the Marine & Coastal Access Act, in conjunction with the best available evidence presented, when making decisions. The CEO discussed Section 3 of the agenda paper, where a summary of these considerations were available.

The Chairman invited Members to begin discussions.

SOUTHERN INSHORE FISHERIES & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

EXTRAORDINARY MEETING – 26th September 2023

Dr S Cripps observed that limiting access to a fishery doesn't mean that effort will also be reduced, however a 50% reduction in access would hope to equate to a reduction of effort. Mr R Stride agreed that a reduction in effort may not equate to a reduction in the number of scallops removed, and that a reduction in the season won't have an impact given the inconsistencies in fishing patterns throughout the season, with higher catch rates seen at the beginning of the season. Mr T Legg agreed that despite a change in season length, the majority of the scallops will come off the ground in the first four weeks.

The CEO discussed with Members of the scientific rationale which led to the open season beginning in November and ending in April, which specifically related to known periods of spawning and settlement. These seasonal measures were introduced in a Code of Conduct. Due to non-compliance with this Code of Conduct, statutory measures were later developed by the Authority and following representation from fishers, the Authority determined to lengthen the fishing season via an opening in October.

Dr A Jensen described the larva stages of the spawning of the Solent population, where settling is likely in late September through early October which gives the scallops an opportunity to grow a little bit before they start getting turned over.

Mr N Hornby discussed the risk of fishers fishing harder in the time available, and whether Southern IFCA had provisions to track landings. The CEO discussed that one of the conditions under the permits is for catch data to be submitted which is at a much higher resolution than previous MMO catch data. This data is submitted by the 14th of each month.

Mr R Stride agreed with the scientific reasons for moving the season start to the 1st November, however recognised the impact that a change in season length this year would have a big impact on those fishers who were currently preparing for the season to open on the 1st October.

Mr S Kingston-Turner asked for clarification on the grow rate of scallops. Mr G Wordsworth discussed that at this stage of the season the scallops would likely still be growing given the water temperatures at c.16degrees and further that growth continues until about 10degrees in Poole Harbour, so a closure of the scallop fishery in October may benefit the spawn that has settled.

Ms E Bussey-Jones agreed that a closure in October would be advisable when considering the evidence relating to settlement and growth, coupled with the fact that the fishers had approached the Authority for intervention in this fishery.

Mr G Wordsworth asked whether the evidence alone would invoke a change in management by Southern IFCA, or whether the approach from fishers lead to the consideration of additional effort management. The CEO discussed the Control Mechanisms set out in the Solent Dredge Permit Byelaw Management Intentions Policy, which specify that a declining CPUE would suggest that the target species is unable to support the current level of harvesting. In this scenario the Authority are committed to consider a review of the existing management measures within the fishery in question.

Members discussed the potential for other factors to be impacting on the reduction in CPUE and the role of the precautionary principle when there is a reduction in stock health.

Mr G Wordsworth proposed Recommendation (1) and Dr S Cripps seconded. 6 Members were in favour and 1 against. The motion was carried.

Mr G Wordsworth proposed Recommendation's (2) and (3) and Mr S Kingston-Turner

SOUTHERN INSHORE FISHERIES & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

EXTRAORDINARY MEETING – 26th September 2023

seconded. Five Members were in favour and two abstained.

Mr R Stride asked for Members to consider a week-day fishery, removing Saturday and Sunday. The Chairman invited the proposal from Mr R Stride for consideration by the Membership. The proposal was seconded by Dr S Cripps. As the proposal was carried, Mr R Stride then proposed Recommendation (4) which Dr S Cripps seconded. Five Members were in favour and two abstained.

4. Resolved

- (1) That permit condition (3) and (7) from the current 2022-2023 Category A Permits are revoked and replaced with a provision that ensures that scallops are not fished for or removed from the Solent fishery from 1st October to 31st October 2023.
- (2) That the following effort controls be included under the forthcoming 2023-2024 Category A Permit:
 - a) Within the Solent, between the 1st April and 31st October each year, both days inclusive, a person must not:
 - i) use a dredge by means of a relevant fishing vessel, to fish for or remove from the fishery any scallops; or
 - ii) retain any scallops on board a relevant fishing vessel whilst using a dredge.
 - b) Within the Solent, between the 1st November and 31st March each year, both days inclusive, a person must not fish for or remove from the fishery any scallops:
 - i) between 0600-0800 and 1600-1800 local time.
- (3) That the current gear restriction remain in place during the forthcoming 2023-2024 Category A Permit season:
 - a) Within the Solent a person must not, at any one time, use more than two scallop dredges from a relevant fishing vessel when harvesting scallops.
- (4) That within the Solent, between the 1st November and 31st March each year, both days inclusive, a person must not fish for or remove from the fishery any scallops on a Saturday or Sunday.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 19:00.

Chairman:

Date:

Southern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority

EXECUTIVE SUB-COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Executive Sub-Committee (ESC) was held at **14:00 on 19th September 2023** via video conferencing.

Present

Cllr Mark Roberts	Dorset Council (Chairman)
Cllr Paul Fuller	Isle of Wight Council (Vice Chairman)
Cllr Rob Hughes	Dorset Council
Dr Antony Jensen	MMO Appointee
Miss Pia Bateman	Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

Deputy Chief Officer (DCO) Mr S Dell, DCO Miss S Birchenough, Accountant Mrs G Roberts and Office Manager Ms M Chaplin were also present.

327. Apologies

Apologies were received from Mr Richard Stride (MMO Appointee)

328. Declarations of Interest

There were no pecuniary or non-pecuniary interests declared.

329. Minutes

The minutes from the previous meeting held on the 6th June 2023 were considered by Members.

The CEO provided an update on Recommendation 318, explaining that she has met with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Authority to consider and implement a strategy to engage the five newly Elected Members with the work of the Authority and provide an induction workshop. As no responses had been received (with the exception of Cllr J Savage), the CEO advised that the workshop had been postponed. The Chairman discussed that as a result, the newly elected Members had not been allocated a role on relevant Sub-Committees.

The CEO provided an update on Recommendation 319, in that the update to the Standing Orders would be considered in the meeting today, reflecting changes in dates for meeting AGMs.

Resolved

330. The minutes from the previous meetings were agreed by Members.

Recommendation

331. That the CEO, Chair and Vice- Chair reconvene to discuss a plan moving forward re: elected memberships to Sub-Committees.

332. Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman provided an overview of the CEFAs boat tour and laboratories and the positive networking opportunities that this event had created. He also discussed his involvement in a number of recruitment campaigns in recent weeks.

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Progress Reports

333. Budget Control Statements

The CEO introduced the Budget Control Statement (BCS) for the months April 2023 to June 2023. In her summary she discussed a deficit of income against budget of 118k. The main reason, being a deficit in projected income of 219k relating to outstanding DEFRA grant monies (150k) for the current financial year, as well as anticipated disposal of vehicles and vessel following FPV Vigilant coming into service later in the year. The CEO explained that all of the expenditure under the Major Budget Headers was positive.

334. Statement of Accounts for Financial Year ending 31st March 2023

The Accountant introduced the item, explaining that Members had previously received these papers in draft form at the ESC in June 2023. She explained that the paper captures the outcomes of the PKF Francis Clark independent assurance review carried out over the summer months, and discussed the conclusions of the external audit, which were positive and that the only change to these set of accounts compared to those received at the June ESC relates to the treatment of the DEFRA grants (400k), which have been moved from the balance sheet and put through the revenue account as income.

The first recommendation was taken on general consent. The second and third were proposed by Cllr P Fuller and seconded by Cllr R Hughes.

Resolved

335. That Members note the outcomes of the external audit for the financial year ended 31st March 2023

336. That Members formally accept the Annual Return and make recommendations to the Full Authority on the 21st September 2023 for signing by the Chairman, CEO and Accountant on behalf of The Authority.

337. That Members formally accept the final Statement of Accounts and make recommendations to the Full Authority on the 21st September 2023 for signing by the CEO on behalf of The Authority.

338. Reserves Update

The CEO provided a background to the paper, explaining the intention being that the forecasting will feed into the three yearly update of the Reserves Policy, in addition to aiding budgetary discussions in December with the full Authority membership.

The Accountant explained to Members that the Southern IFCA reserves as of 31st March 2023 were c.2m, an increase of c.500k on the previous year, and that this was a reflection of the DEFRA funding received, coupled with salary surpluses due to in year staff changes. The Accountant continued with a description of the information captured in Section 4 of the Cover Sheet, where each reserve pot is clarified, to include purpose, in addition to provision of a forecast for the next 10 years. The Accountant explained that the reserves are not a spare resource, rather are being utilised in the coming years.

The Chairman welcomed the summary paper and discussed future plans for the Accountant to explore interest rates via an Investment Policy.

All three recommendations were considered as a collective, proposed by Cllr M Roberts and seconded by Cllr R Hughes. All were approved by mutual consent.

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Resolved

339. That a presentation is made to the ESC following the approval of the annual accounts by the Authority's external auditors, to justify the existing reserves and their adequacy or otherwise for the following 10 years.

340. That Members to approves the creation of two new reserve pots to sit under the General Reserves (a) DEFRA Revenue Grant, (b) DEFRA Capital Reserve.

341. For Members to approved the updates for inclusion in the existing Southern IFCA Reserve Policy to be received by the ESC in March 2024.

Recommendation

342. That the Accountant prepare an Investment Plan/Policy for consideration by the ESC in March 2024.

343 Chief Executive Officer Updates

The CEO provided an update on staffing, in that four recruitment campaigns had been undertaken since June, resulting in the appointment of Office Manager Maria Chaplin, Accounts Administrator Clare Jeans and IFCO John Lakin, who joined the Compliance and Enforcement Team in August. More recently, the CEO discussed that interviews had been held for an internal promotion opportunity for a Senior Policy Specialist in the Research and Policy Team, with outcomes soon to be announced. The CEO thanked both Dr A Jenson and Cllr M Roberts for their involvement in these interviews.

The CEO provided an overview of the work associated with the recent ratification of the Net Fishing Byelaw and the main items for decision at the forthcoming Authority meeting, namely the BTFG Byelaw, as well as a decision on the management of the Solent scallop fishery.

Resolved

344. That the update be noted.

345 Marine Asset Review Update: FPV Vigilant

DCO Dell provided an update on the RIBCRAFT Terms & Conditions, specifically those relating to a change which removes survey fees to enable Southern IFCA to independently enlist these services directly (using the existing surveyor). This had had an impact on the % stage payments, which had been verified by both parties. The DCO confirmed that in addition to the deposit, Stage 1 and 2 payments had now been made, with Stage 3 payments imminent.

The DCO confirmed an anticipated 8 week delay on the build. The DCO, Senior Marine Operations IFCO A. Parry and the Chairman were due to visit the RIBCRAFT factory on the 3rd October 2023 to maintain progress and ask questions around anticipated delivery dates.

Resolved

346. That the update be noted.

347. BTFG Byelaw – Outcomes of Public Consultation

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DCO Birchenough provided an overview of Phase 1 of the BTFG Byelaw Review, reminding Members that the Authority had approved the 'making' of the Byelaw on the 8th June 2023. Subsequently a period of formal consultation was held, ending the 28th July 2023.

DCO Birchenough highlighted that the majority of responses were received from the conservation sector (1: letter of support & 6 objections). In addition, two industry responses were received outside of the formal consultation window, DCO Birchenough informed Members that these would be considered under Phase 2. In summary, the objections received considered whole site management versus feature-based management, the extent of the site-specific boundaries, and the evidence based that had been used to develop the draft byelaw.

Dr A Jensen provided an overview of MPA management in the context of the responses received and the IFCA's legal duties to manage the areas in accordance with the feature based designations. He further explained the Phase 2, where wider spatial management can be considered beyond feature based designations and hoped that some of the objections would be factored into this stage of management development.

Cllr Paul Fuller proposed the recommendations and Dr A Jensen seconded. All members voted in favour.

Resolved

348. That the Members of the Executive Committee:

(a) consider the objections received through the Formal Consultation along with the summary of the discussions held at the August meeting of the TAC, and, on this basis, make recommendations to the Authority regarding the submission of the BTFG Byelaw 2023 for confirmation by the Secretary of State, and

(b) consider the draft responses to the consultation respondents, and, if appropriate approve the dissemination of the responses.

349. Updates to Southern IFCA Constitution

The CEO explained that inconsequential updates had been made to the Standing Orders (SOs) and Financial Regulations, specifically that changes in job title had been made (Business Services Manager to Office Manager and/or Accounts Administrator, with these updates included at the front of the document for full transparency and a record of review.

A change in AGM meeting dates had also been made to the SOs in response to an ESC recommendation in June, which took into account the timing of local elections and subsequent changes in the elected memberships.

Cllr P Fuller proposed the two recommendations and Cllr R Hughes seconded. All Members were in favour.

Resolved

346. That, in line with paragraph (3) and (29) of the Standing Orders 2022, that Members of the ESC consider the change to the date of the AGM for both the Authority (September) and TAC (November) meetings and make Recommendations for their consent.

347. That Members of the ESC approve the updates Financial Regulations 2022 recognising, where requires the replacement of the Business Services Manager with Office Manager

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and/or Accounts Administrator, and that these inconsequential changes are replicated in the Standing Orders.

348. Accident, Incident and Near Miss Report

DCO Dell first advised members that the reporting period had been readjusted to the period between Executive Committee meetings opposed to quarterly. DCO Dell informed the Members that there had been no accidents during the previous reporting period.

Resolved

349. That Member's noted the update.

350. Date of Next Meeting

Members considered the date of the next Executive Sub-Committee, timetabled for the 5th December 2023.

Resolved

351. The date of the next virtual meeting of the Executive Sub-Committee is confirmed

The meeting closed at 15:34

SOUTHERN INSHORE FISHERIES & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE – 24th August 2023

MARKED D

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) held in the meeting room at the Southern IFCA office in Poole at **14:00 on 24th August 2023**

Present

Dr Antony Jensen	Chairman, MMO Appointee
Mr Richard Stride	Vice Chairman, MMO Appointee
Dr Simon Cripps	MMO Appointee
Mr Colin Francis	MMO Appointee
Ms Louise MacCallum	MMO Appointee
Mr Gary Wordsworth	MMO Appointee
Mr Stuart Kingston-Turner	Environment Agency
Ms Pia Bateman	Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

Deputy Chief Officers (DCOs) Ms Sarah Birchenough and Mr Sam Dell, Office Manager Ms Maria Chaplin, Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officers (IFCOs) Ms Emily Condie, Mr Dominic Parry, Ms Celie Mullen and Project Officer (PO) Ms Chelsea Perrins were also present.

Ms Elisabeth Bussey-Jones (MMO Appointee), Mr Tedd Legg (MMO Appointee), Jess Taylor (Natural England) attended the meeting virtually.

Mr Tim Smith (Association of IFCAs) and Mr Mike Bennet attended the virtual public gallery.

Chairman's Welcome

Dr A Jensen opened the meeting, reminding Members that the meeting would be recorded for the purposes of minute taking. Dr A Jensen welcomed new Members Ms Elisabeth Bussey-Jones (MMO Appointee) and Mr Stuart Kingston-Turner (Environment Agency), as well as Maria Chaplin at her inaugural meeting as Southern IFCA's new Office Manager.

Election of Chairman for 2023-2024

1. That Dr A Jensen be elected as Chairman for the year 2023-2024. This motion was proposed by Mr R Stride and seconded by Mr G Wordsworth. All Members were in favour.

Election of Vice Chairman for 2023-2024

2. That Mr R Stride be elected as Vice-Chairman for the year 2023-2024. This motion was proposed by Dr A Jensen and seconded by Ms L MacCallum. All Members were in favour.

Apologies

3. Apologies for absence were received from Mr N Hornby (MMO Appointee) and Ms R Rachel Irish (MMO Appointee).

Declarations of interest

4. The following pecuniary interests were declared: Mr G Wordsworth (Agenda Item 4&12: relevant item as captured in these Minutes:6&18), Mr R Stride (Agenda Item 7, relevant item as captured in these Minutes 10), Mr T Legg (Agenda Item 6&8: relevant item as captured in these Minutes 8&12). The following non-pecuniary interests were declared: Mr R Stride (Agenda Item 10 relevant item as captured in these Minutes 16).

Minutes

5. Members considered the Minutes of the meeting held on the 4th May 2023. DCO Birchenough provided an update on Recommendation 189, confirming that officers had discussed options regarding areas which were proposed to be reopened under the BTFG Byelaw 2023 in accordance with Phase 1 Principles at a recent meeting of a Working Group. These discussions concluded that the areas are to remain closed, for subsequent review during Phase 2 of the BTFG Review, in order to consider socio-economic and environmental impacts that a change in management may have in these areas.

The CEO provided an update on Recommendation 192, that in accordance with Standing Orders and the Local Government Act 1972, where a Member is unable to vote on an item due to a pecuniary interest, the Member remains present in the meeting, and therefore where relevant, maintains quorum.

The minutes were confirmed and signed.

Guest Speaker: Cockle Fisheries Management Plan (FMP)

6. Members received a virtual presentation from Mr Tim Smith of the Association of IFCA's, on the development of the Cockle FMP to date. Mr T Smith provided a background to the FMP, which is inclusive of four key cockle fisheries (Southern, Northwestern, Kent & Essex, Eastern), with the aim to provide a blueprint FMP which builds on the existing and successful management models being employed by the four IFCAs. Mr T Smith discussed timelines which culminate in submission to Defra in February 2024. Mr T Smith encouraged any Members with an interest to contact him direct.

Mr G Wordsworth asked how the differing nature of the cockle fisheries, which includes the Poole Harbour MSC certified fishery, would be considered under the FMP, raising concerns of a 'one model fits all approach'. Mr T Smith recognised the success and variation of existing management regimes, and discussed how the FMP intends to build a blueprint for emerging cockle fisheries to use.

The CEO asked how open Defra are to seeing the outcomes of an FMP which recognises existing management that is working well. Dr A Jensen asked whether the FMP will consider the impact of warming weather on species movements around the coast, in order to future proof the plan. Mr T Smith intends to include this consideration into the development of best practice.

Dr A Jensen thanked Tim Smith and looks forward to how this develops.

PROGRESS REPORTS

7. Chief Executive Officer Updates

The CEO began with an update of the Net Fishing Byelaw (NFB), confirming that the Secretary of State had now signed this Byelaw. The CEO provided Members with a background to this area of work, which had been submitted to the MMO in March 2022. On the 3rd April 2023, the NFB was passed to Defra for consideration and subsequently the Authority has now received confirmation of its ratification.

The CEO thanked Members for their hard work since 2017, with a particular focus on work that Members and Officers had more recently undertaken since 2021, in response to the TAC membership rejecting a recommendation in February 2021 to 'make' the proposed draft byelaw, instead recommending that the Net Fishing Review undergo an internal evaluation to

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ensure its robustness in accordance with the IFCA duties. This review led to innovative solutions where, as an Authority, Southern are able to demonstrate how we are seeking to balance the needs of the fishing community with those of conservation, in accordance with our legal duties. The risk based models that were developed to facilitate co-use of space in functionally linked areas, draw together risk components which were identified for functionally linked areas utilised by salmonids and Essential Fish Habitats (EFH) in order to inform, in combination, the site specific management outcomes, as well as capturing the legislative drivers underpinning the management intentions as well as those areas already subject to existing governance.

The CEO recognised that following the ratification of the NFB, that not all stakeholders will be supportive of its introduction and that as an Authority Southern are acutely aware of the impact that its introduction may have on fishers' livelihoods. The CEO discussed that in delivery of the IFCA duties as an Authority, Southern will never be able to satisfy all parties however, the CEO reminded Members of the unique legislative remit of the IFCA, with the NFB encapsulating a balance across social, economic and conservation in accordance with these duties. The CEO discussed the next stages, where the IFCOs will focus on communication, which will include reference to the mutual benefits of the NFB across all sectors that Southern IFCA represent.

Ms L MacCallum asked whether the uniqueness of the NFB was the cause of the delay in the MMO Quality Assurance (QA) process and eventual ratification. The CEO could not expand on the reasons for the delay, however, was aware that there had been significant interest from stakeholders throughout, with direct communications between industry and Defra ongoing during the QA process. The CEO was also aware of previous resource challenges in the MMO legal team. In addition, due to the complexity of the byelaw through its development stages (covering a period of five years), coupled with the district-wide evidence packages which underpin the byelaw, it would be right to assume that thorough scrutiny by the MMO and subsequent Defra will have taken place over a prolonged period of time.

Mr R Stride asked if the ratification could be challenged by industry now that the Byelaw has been signed by the Secretary of State. The CEO responded, that to the best of her knowledge and in accordance with Defra Guidance, the window for public enquiry closes once the Byelaw has been ratified. The CEO reminded Members that stakeholders have a defined period of time to respond to the formal public consultation, where they are able to object to the byelaw. These objections are then considered by the MMO and Defra as part of the wider QA process.

Dr S Cripps reflected on the impact on livelihoods that the Byelaw may bring, discussing the fact that if the NFB hadn't been made, livelihoods would still be impacted via a degradation of the marine environment. Further, Dr S Cripps asked that when officers begin to communicate the news of the byelaw, that, we remind all stakeholders that the point of the byelaw is not to restrict, rather it is part of a wider approach which will enhance industry at the same time as protecting the environment upon which the fisheries depend.

Dr A Jensen discussed the differing approaches to net fishing regulations by other IFCAs, recognising that it may have taken six years at Southern to get to a point of byelaw ratification, but this time was essential in developing solutions which could support and facilitate net fisheries in the district's harbours and estuaries, whilst achieving conservation objectives.

The CEO provided Members with an overview of the current Defra consultations, which form part of the UK Government's proposals for fisheries reform policy, released on the 17th July 2023. The CEO explained the importance of these consultations and provided a user friendly paper to help Members and the wider stakeholder community navigate and be informed so that they can feed into the consultations. The CEO discussed Defra's virtual attendance

following the meeting of the TAC, where more in-depth information on the consultations would be provided.

ITEMS FOR DECISION

8. Bottom Towed Fishing Gear Byelaw 2023

DCO Birchenough provided an overview of Phase 1 of the BTFG Byelaw Review, reminding Members that the Authority had approved the 'making' of the Byelaw on the 8th June 2023. Subsequently a period of formal consultation was held, ending the 28th July 2023.

DCO Birchenough highlighted that the majority of responses were received from the conservation sector (1: letter of support & 6 objections). In addition, two industry responses were received outside of the formal consultation window, DCO Birchenough informed Members that these would be considered under Phase 2. In summary, the objections received considered whole site management versus feature-based management, the extent of the site-specific boundaries, and the evidence based that had been used to develop the draft byelaw.

In consideration of the objections received, DCO Birchenough invited Members to consider whether there was a need to make any subsequent changes to the draft byelaw, prior to consideration by the Executive Sub-Committee, who will be reviewing the letters of objections and draft responses provided by Southern IFCA, prior to consideration by the Authority to submit the Byelaw to the Secretary of State.

Dr A Jensen acknowledged the objections received regarding whole-site management, recognising the widely accepted frustrations associated with feature-based management, and suggested that these objections were taken forward into Phase 2 of the BTFG review, where the Authority will be considering management beyond a feature-based resolution, where socio-economic and environmental matters can be considered in combination.

Dr S Cripps asked for clarification of feature-based management vs. whole site management. In response, Dr A Jensen discussed the rationale underpinning the phased approach, which will allow Southern to achieve the Government deadline of 2024 for management within MPAs (National Site Network Sites), with Phase 2 allowing for a wider review of sensitive habitat management, both within and outside of MPAs, considering what management may be required beyond designated feature-based management, incorporating extensive consultation to incorporate socio-economic as well as conservation evidence.

Ms J Taylor asked whether there would be an opportunity to discuss the area in Studland to Portland where management is not suggested based on the low confidence in the evidence. DCO Birchenough confirmed that she had had in depth discussions with NE in January 2023, where it was agreed that the evidence was not robust enough to support a closure.

Dr S Cripps asked why some protected area boundaries were larger than the location of the designated features. Mr R Stride had asked this question during the MCZ development process and had been informed that the boundaries were drawn to ensure the smallest number of lines. Ms J Taylor defined these areas in question as 'site fabric', namely those areas of the site which don't include the designated feature.

Dr A Jensen proposed the first recommendation which was seconded by Mr R Stride. All Members were in favour, with the exception of Dr S Cripps and Mr S Kingston-Turner who abstained.

Dr A Jensen proposed the second recommendation which was seconded by Mr R Stride. The Members unanimously supported the proposal.

9. Resolved

a) On reviewing the feedback from the formal consultation, it is recommended that no amendments are made to the Byelaw or supporting documentation.

b) That a summary of the TAC discussion is provided to the Executive Sub-Committee in order to inform their subsequent decision to make recommendations to the Authority regarding the submission of the byelaw to the MMO for confirmation by the Secretary of State

10. Black Seabream Management Development

DCO Birchenough provided an overview of the Black Bream Review to date, explaining that this MPA work falls in line with 2024 government deadline for MPA management. This overview included the designation of Black Bream in the following MCZs 1) Purbeck Coast, 2) Poole Rocks 3) Southbourne Rough, as part of the 2019 Tranche 3 MCZ process.

DCO Birchenough guided Members through the summary conclusions from Part A MCZ Assessments, as well as a site-specific evidence package which in combination provided information on the locations of black bream nests and fishing activity locations.

DCO Birchenough discussed the recommendations, namely that the officers draft management principles relevant to the three MCZ's, for consideration and approval by Members at a subsequent working group, with the intention that these outcomes are formally considered alongside the development of draft measures at the November TAC.

Mr R Stride raised his concerns regarding the use of sightings data as robust evidence. Members discussed the abundance of black seabream across the District, and asked why the Conservation Objective was set to recover, questioning its accuracy and asking for clarification of what we are required to protect and to what degree.

Ms J Taylor discussed 'recover targets' as a general management approach, which would have been based on exposure to certain activities and their impacts. She discussed that NE have now provided updated and focussed advice which is supplementary to the Conservation Objectives.

Mr R Stride questioned that if the Conservation Objective of recovery is set because the species is subject to a pressure which might be producing an impact, then by definition we are locked into removing that pressure. If it is not in need of recovery it's already doing ok, it should be maintained, highlighting that we are never going to succeed because we can't recover it if it's already recovered.

Members were in agreement that as part of this review we must fully understand the 'Recover' Conservation Objective, given the importance of this fishery, in particular for sea anglers.

Ms L MacCallum discussed the Fisheries Industry Science Partnership Project (FISP) for tagging Bream and asked whether this data could be introduced into the review.

The recommendations were taken on mutual consent, with all in favour.

11. Resolved

a) That in accordance with the best available evidence, officers develop a set of draft Management Principles relevant to the three Dorset MCZs, for consideration at a subsequent TAC Working Group.

- b) That the outcomes of this Working Group will inform the development of draft management measures prior to consideration at the November TAC.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

12. Fisheries Management Plans

DCO Birchenough provided an update on the FMPs and reminded Members that a Workshop was being held on the 7th September which would facilitate Members input into the consultation response to Defra.

13. Resolved

That Members note the update

14. Southern IFCA Survey Reports

IFCO Mr D. Parry began by providing an overview of the Southern IFCA Whelk Survey 2023.

Members discussed the challenges of annual data comparisons and the methodologies regarding pot design. IFCO Parry described how the survey was designed to be undertaken at the same time each year, and that it had been considered that there would be differences in pot design, however each set of pots has been adapted to fish in certain conditions and areas of the District and are therefore optimised for capture. Mr R Stride suggested a need to undertake the survey more frequently to achieve a more accurate picture, however acknowledged resource challenges with this approach.

DCO Birchenough recognised the caveats of all survey work, explaining why it was important to try and maintain survey variables where possible, such as timing etc. Whilst recognising this isn't a perfect science, in following a set methodology, repeated each year, mitigation against possible bias could be demonstrated. Additionally, consideration of variables is taken into account when undertaking comparisons in data.

IFCO Ms E. Condie provided an overview of the Southern IFCA Juvenile Fish Surveys 2017 to 2023.

Members asked about data comparisons with previous years across sites and changing methodologies and welcomed the approach to citizen science, where other partners are taking an active role in this survey. In addition, Members asked for the data analysis to be clearer visually for ease of understanding, with a summary considered for all future survey reports where Members and the wider community alike can assess the information in a more user friendly format.

Members thanked both IFCOs for their reports

15. Resolved

That Members note the update

16. Marine Licensing Update

IFCO Ms E. Condie provided a quarterly update on Southern IFCA's input into the marine licensing process since May 2023.

17. Resolved

That Members note the update

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MARKED D

18. Poole Harbour Several Order – Requests to Amend Business Plans

In accordance with Schedule 12A of The Local Government Act 1972, members of the public were excluded during the consideration of this item.

IFCO Ms I Griffiths provided an overview of the matters under consideration. Following discussion amongst the Membership, the recommendations were taken on mutual consent, with all in favour. Mr G Wordsworth was unable to vote due to a pecuniary interest in the matter.

19. Resolved

a) That Members approve the proposed changes to Business Plan 2020-2025 for Lease Bed 3.

b) That Members approve the proposed changes to Business Plan 2020-2025 for Lease Bed 4.

20. Date of Next Meeting

That the next meeting of the TAC will be on the 2nd November 2023 at Southern IFCA, Unit 3 Holes Bay Park, Sterte Avenue West, Poole Dorset BH15 2AA.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 16:37.

Chairman:

Date:

Budget Control Statement

Report by The CEO and Chartered Accountant

A. Purpose

To provide Members with a summary of the Authority's accounts for the financial year 1st April to 30th September 2023.

B. Recommendation

1. That the report be received.

C. Annexes

Annex 1: Summary Budget Control Statement
Annex 2: Detailed Budget Control Statement

1.0 Budget Control Statement

1.1 The Summary Budget Control Statement to 30th September 2023 is shown at Annex 1, showing a **130k deficit of income against budget**.

1.2 The notes accompanying the Summary (Annex 1) and Detailed Budget Control Statement (Annex 2) provide an overview of all positive and negative variance equal to or greater than 1k.

2.0 Summary of Major Budget Headers

2.1 The positive variance captured under the Compliance & Enforcement Header (c.57k) is due in part (c.33k) to a new approach to accounting (in accordance with best recognised practice), where monies to replenish the Patrol Vessel Reserve fund are to be transferred at the end of the financial year, rather than in year. Marine Insurance was c.7k lower than anticipated (relating to FPV Vigilant and the point in which she will enter service) and costs associated with prosecutions (c.11k) remain lower than budget. Berthing fees for FPV Vigilant entering service were budgeted from June 2023.

2.2 The positive variance captured under the Research and Policy Header (c.9k) reflects the monies ringfenced for byelaw adverts (relating to the formal advertisement of byelaws) and that ringfenced for legal scrutiny of byelaws which have not been utilised to date.

2.3 The positive variance captured under the Business Service Header (c.22k) is due to a reduction in staff salary and pension contributions as a result of in year staff movements, specifically carrying vacancies for Office Manager, Finance Administration and Senior IFCO Research & Policy (c.26k).

2.4 The positive variance under the Capital Equipment Header (c.33k) is due to budgeting for FPV Vigilant to enter service earlier than anticipated.

3.0 Total Income

A deficit in projected income of c.252k reflects outstanding receipt of DEFRA grant for project work 2023-2024 (150k). The additional outstanding monies relate to the anticipated disposal of FPV Stella Barbara following FPV Vigilant coming into service, and the disposal of 3 x Authority vehicles (2/3 completed in October).

4.0 Payment of Amounts Exceeding £5,000

4.1 Paragraph (11) of Southern IFCA’s Financial Regulations 2022 require that all ex. VAT payments over £5,000 (with the exception of salaries, PAYE, pension contributions and regular payments outside of the Financial Manager’s control) are to be reported to the Authority via a BCS.

4.2 Between the 30th June 2023 and the 30th September 2023, the following payments equal to or greater than the above-mentioned figure are as follows:

Amount	Date	What	Who
£13,041	05/07/2023	Membership subscription 23/24.	AIFCA
£5,248	18/8/2023	Upfront payment for IFCO training, of which 75% will be reclaimed under the Fisheries & Seafood Scheme (FASS) following completion of training for eight IFCO’s in recognised Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping (STCW)	Fire Aid Academy
£66,850	25/08/2023	Staged Payment (2) Cabin RHIB	Ribcraft Ltd
£7,500	25/08/2023	Placement fee (Recruitment Agency)	Office Angels
£66,850	29/9/2023	Staged Payment (3) Cabin RHIB	Ribcraft Ltd

SUMMARY RESULTS Major Budget Headers		YTD			YTD Notes for positive & negative variance ≥£1k
		1 Apr 23 - 30 Sept 23 (6 mths)			
Apr23-Mar24 12 mths Budget		Actual	Budget	Variances	
EXPENDITURE SUMMARY					
Compliance and Enforcement	169,529	35,128	92,496	↑ (57,368)	£33.3K pending transfer to the Marine Renewal Reserve which despite being budgeted for in-year cannot be transferred until EOY. Insurance £6.7K lower than budgeted. £2K lower of FPV Fuel and £4K lower on FPV Maintenance. Prosecution costs £11K lower than budgeted.
Research and Policy	33,631	6,208	15,296	↑ (9,088)	£3.7K for byelaws adverts pending, Legal scrutiny £3.2K not utilised to date & surveys pending
Business Services	895,839	445,143	467,318	↑ (22,175)	Majority related to salary & pension savings (£26K). £4.3K overspend on Office Expenditure is covered by the ringfenced reserve for office improvements. £10K overspend on Office Angels placement fee. These are offset by a £6K underspend on training (mostly National training) than budgeted.
Capital Equipment	126,055	21,501	54,904	↑ (33,403)	£30K relates to depreciation on Stella Barbara replacement budgeted to be on service in June 2023.
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	1,225,054	507,980	630,014	↑ (122,034)	
TOTAL INCOME	1,175,441	897,670	1,149,827	↓ (252,157)	DEFRA grant (£165K) 2023/24 pending. Pending sale of FPV Stella Barbara (£55K) & 3x vehicles (c.25K). Offset by £28K relating to Poole Dredge permits not budgeted for until next month.
INCOME OVER EXPENDITURE	(49,613)	389,690	519,813	↓ (130,123)	YTD there is a deficit in income of £130k against budget.

DETAILED RESULTS		Apr23-Mar24	YTD			YTD Notes for positive & negative variance ≥£1k
Minor Budget Headers		12 mths	1 Apr 23 - 30 Sept 23 (6 mths)			
		Budget	Actual	Budget	Variances	
Compliance & Enforcement	Total Vehicle Fuel	4,835	2,493	2,417	↓ 76	
	7150-100 Vehicle roadside assistance	210	0	105	↑ (105)	
	7160-100 Vehicle maintenance	3,222	2,598	1,611	↓ 987	
	7170-100 Vehicle road tax	1,396	1,096	698	↓ 398	
	7180-100 Vehicle Insurance	3,805	4,222	3,805	↓ 417	
	6068-100 Drone insurance	2,400	0	2,400	↑ (2,400)	This cost has been captured under 6070 Marine Insurance.
	6066-100 Drone running costs	644	327	322	↓ 5	
	6000-100 3x FPV Fuel	12,709	3,890	6,354	↑ (2,464)	Underspend in part reflects periods when FPV Stella Barabara & FPV Protector were land based for maintenance purposes. Cost of fuel has reduced since budget setting.
	6005-100 FPV Berthing	10,352	5,178	5,176	↓ 2	
	6006-100 FPV Maintenance	19,173	5,255	9,587	↑ (4,332)	Underspend reflects incorrect coding in addition to reduction in fuel costs since budget setting.
	6015-100 PV Endeavour Maintenance	0	598	0	↓ 598	
	6045-100 PV Stella Barbara Maintenance	0	1,627	0	↓ 1,627	Need to journal these to 6006 (FPV Maintenance)
	6055-100 PV Protector Maintenance	0	201	0	↓ 201	
	NEW vessel maintenance	0	0	0	→ 0	
	6070-100 Marine Insurance	9,260	5,138	9,260	↑ (4,122)	Premium lower than expected based on previous years.
	4910-100 Patrol Vessel Reserve Fund	66,667	0	33,333	↑ (33,333)	Recognised accounting treatment requires the £66,667 to be transferred out of General Reserves and into the Marine Vessel Renewal Reserve at year end.
	5040-100 Protective clothing (PPE)	6,306	2,213	3,153	↑ (940)	
5233-100 Enforcement Equipment	3,222	617	1,611	↑ (994)		
5234-100 Industry compliance aids	3,847	(136)	1,924	↑ (2,060)	Increase in requests for RSA MCRS stickers & increase in shellfish gauge distribution due to handgathering	
5090-100 Prosecution costs	21,480	(190)	10,740	↑ (10,930)	Budget is evenly phased by month. We are not accruing each month but will account for these costs as they hit.	
TOTAL	169,529	35,128	92,496	↑ (57,368)		
Research & Policy	5140-100 Adverts - Byelaws	10,842	1,653	5,421	↑ (3,768)	Budgeted for 3 MPA byelaws - anticipated BTFG Autumn 2023, SG & BB 2024.
	5096-100 Legal scrutiny (including byelaws)	6,444	0	3,222	↑ (3,222)	Budget is evenly phased by month. We are not accruing each month but will account for these costs as they hit.
	5099-100 Consultation costs	1,074	0	537	↑ (537)	
	5201-100 Poole Bivalve Survey	1,100	168	1,100	↑ (932)	
	5202-100 Solent Scallop Stock Survey	3,029	2,360	3,029	↑ (669)	
	5206-100 Solent Bivalve Stock Assessment	3,029	1,890	0	↓ 1,890	Survey costs pending processing October
	5207-100 Whelk Survey	1,718	136	1,718	↑ (1,582)	Costs less than anticipated at this point in year - further spends pending
	5217-100 Survey Equipment & Maintenance	537	0	269	↑ (269)	
	5231-100 Poole Harbour MSC Re-certification	1,025	0	0	→ 0	
	5230-100 Poole Harbour MSC Annual Audit	4,833	0	0	→ 0	
TOTAL	33,631	6,208	15,296	↑ (9,088)		

Business Services						
Office expenditure	32,089	21,453	16,044	↓	5,409	Ringfenced reserve is being used to fund additional purchases outside of budget for infrastructure improvements for EOY reserve transfer.
5060-100 Communications	8,055	4,563	4,028	↓	535	
5070-100 General insurance	20,479	21,221	20,479	↓	742	
5075-100 Rates	21,086	10,956	10,543	↓	413	
5110-100 Misc	4,296	1,064	2,148	↑	(1,084)	Legacy account to capture amounts prior to correct allocations - moving away from using code.
5130-100 Financial Audit costs	3,866	3,300	3,866	↑	(566)	Accrued £3600 for PK Francis costs related to 2022-24 in order to match Budget.
5065-100 New accounting software - Xero	541	0	0	→	0	
5680-100 Bank charges	930	383	465	↑	(82)	
5160-100 AIFCA	15,000	13,585	15,000	↑	(1,415)	Less than budgeted
5080-100 General Subscriptions	4,854	1,920	2,427	↑	(507)	
5056-100 Permit Database	1,257	0	628	↑	(628)	
5105-100 Authority meetings	2,685	392	1,343	↑	(951)	
4862-100 Meetings - NIMEG	0	419	0	↓	419	
5150-100 Adverts - Recruitment	2,148	11,994	1,074	↓	10,920	£10K Office Angels placement fees in April.
5097-100 Legal support (HR)	1,611	0	806	↑	(806)	
5010-100 Salaries and other labour costs	658,369	304,649	329,184	↑	(24,535)	Vacancies (SNR IFCO, Office Manager & Finance Admin positions. All roles now filled)
5020-100 LGA Pension Scheme	87,892	42,032	43,946	↑	(1,914)	
Training	22,307	4,959	11,154	↑	(6,195)	National Training costs (Competent Officer Course) anticipated Feb 2024
Staff Expenses	4,400	2,362	2,196	↓	166	
7130-100 Chairman's fund	1,074	62	537	↑	(475)	
7145-100 Members networking	752	0	376	↑	(376)	
7140-100/7144-100 MMO appointee expenses	2,148	(171)	1,074	↑	(1,245)	This is the release of 2022/23 accrual. No new accruals made.
TOTAL	895,839	445,143	467,318	↑	(22,175)	

Capital Equipment						
9120-100 Premises	4,988	2,494	2,494	↑	(0)	
9140-100 Equipment	4,039	2,284	2,019	↓	265	Awaiting FPV Vigilant arrival prior to disposal/purchase of vehicles (this was budgeted for in April).
9180-100 Vehicles	12,376	3,498	6,188	↑	(2,690)	Budget estimated Stella Barbara replacement (i.e. Vigilant) to be in use from Jun 2023.
9160-100 FPV's	99,282	11,873	41,518	↑	(29,645)	Phased evenly by month for the Budget. This is an estimate.
8010-100 Small items of equip (<£500)	5,370	1,353	2,685	↑	(1,332)	
TOTAL	126,055	21,501	54,904	↑	(33,403)	

Income						
4210-100 Levy - Hants	328,489	328,489	328,489	→	0	
4220-100 Levy - IOW	116,678	116,678	116,678	→	0	
4230-100 Levy - Dorset	201,537	201,537	201,537	→	0	
4250-100 Levy - BCP	90,607	90,607	90,607	→	0	
4260-100 Levy - Southampton	34,963	34,963	34,963	→	0	
4270-100 Levy - Portsmouth	40,817	40,817	40,817	→	0	
4845-100 Poole Harbour Dredge Permits	27,000	29,800	27,000	↑	2,800	Additional amount due to MSC Certification uplift on permits
4846-100 Solent Dredge Permits Category A	7,740	2,415	7,740	↓	(5,325)	Payments due October for 1st Nov season start
4850-100 Poole Order Aquaculture Leases	31,530	14,729	31,530	↓	(16,801)	Income to be realised in January 2024
4847-100 Net fishing permits	2,890	0	1,445	↓	(1,445)	Income to be realised in December 2023
4851-100 Pot Fishing Permit - commercial	3,600	0	1,800	↓	(1,800)	PFB not ratified by SoS - currently with DEFRA QA
4852-100 Pot Fishing Permit - recreational	1,050	0	525	↓	(525)	
4895-100 Poole Council Shellfish Sample	2,835	-	1,418	↓	(1,418)	Payment pending from BCP
4190-100 Bank interest receivable	1,000	12,934	500	↑	12,434	Budget set before interest rate increases.
4890-100 Misc income (including DEFRA refunds)	2,500	1,051	1,250	↓	(199)	
4200-100 DEFRA Fisheries Act Fund (SR21)	165,000	0	165,000	↓	(165,000)	No update on DEFRA funding for 2023-24 - anticipate will receive this during the financial year. Expected to be £150K.
4897-100 Poole Harbour Fishery Reserve tfr	33,930	0	16,965	↓	(16,965)	Recognised accounting treatment requires transfer from the Poole Order Reserve to the General Reserve at year end to cover costs.
5170-100 (Surplus)/deficit on equip sale	79,851	0	79,851	↓	(79,851)	Relates to sale of Stella Barbara (£55K) & 3 x vehicles (£25K) awaiting disposal following FPV Vigilant coming into service.
4600-100 Court costs recovered	3,424	1,681	1,712	↓	(31)	
TOTAL	1,175,441	897,670.09	1,149,827.00	↓	(252,157)	

Budget Forecast 2024-2025

Report by The CEO and the Accountant

A. Purpose

To provide Members with a budget forecast for the financial year 1st Apr 2024 to 31st March 2025.

The report is accompanied by a contextual narrative (Annex 1) which provides an overview of the 'Budget Setting Components' (key areas of work which Southern IFCA are required to deliver in the next financial year in accordance with statutory duties as well as additional functions placed upon the IFCA by DEFRA, for delivery). Additionally, the paper describes a number of 'Unknown Variables' which have been considered when presenting this budget forecast, as well as detail on the health of the Authority Reserves.

B. Recommendations

1. That Members of the Authority approve the principles informing the Budget Forecast for the Financial Year 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025.

C. Supporting Documentation for Further Information

Annex 1: Background to Budget Forecasting
Annex 2: Budget Forecast 2024-2025

1.0 Introduction

To provide Members with a budget forecast for the financial year 1st Apr 2024 to 31st March 2025. This timeframe, rather than longer projections mirrors the timelines of the Government's Spending Review 2021 (SR21) which set departmental budgets up to 2024-25.

Where possible the budget forecast is objective with estimations of income and expenditure mapped based on past and current data information as well as projected economic conditions. Due to the nature of the work that Southern IFCA deliver, aspects of the budget must remain conservative due to a need to build in contingency for expenditures, for example when considering cost associated with 'Prosecution Costs' or 'FPV Maintenance Costs'.

The budget forecast is designed to enable the delivery of the Authority's priorities in accordance with the IFCA's (1) **statutory functions**, and (2), the **additional functions** placed upon the 10 IFCAs, which will support Defra in its delivery of objectives under the Fisheries Act 2020.

2.0 Summary of Key Points

- Prior to inflationary projections and assuming a standstill (0%) in levy contributions, the budget forecast for the financial year 1st April 2024 to 31 March 2025 anticipates a **loss of c.161k**.
- The projected loss is a direct result of the following necessary changes which have been made to the Southern IFCA business model to enable maintained delivery of **statutory functions**:

Operational costs associated with supporting & maintaining FPV Vigilant 's operational function

- 1 x Senior Marine Operations IFCO role created in 2023, with direct consideration of new operational ways of working (to include salary & other labour costs & LGA Pension scheme contributions).
- Berthing, plus roaming berthing costs in Solent
- Additional fuel costs based on 1 patrol/wk.

c.80k

Cost associated with necessary improvements to business function:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> external payroll and pension delivery creation of 1 x additional part-time financial administrator post (to include salary & other labour costs & LGA Pension scheme contributions). fulfilment of legal requirements under Fire Safety Legislation fulfilment of legal requirements under Drone Legislation offsite parking solutions introduction of CLUE Intelligence system 	c.50k
Rises in Cost of Living:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NJC pay awards (c.5% provision) Increases in business rates 	c.30k

New Programmes of Work	Transfer from Ringfenced Reserves	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Solent Scallop Survey – introduction of mid-season survey Drift Net Project – In conjunction with Net Fishing Byelaw Solent Oyster Survey – every two years 	c.5k	Research Reserve
Tranche 3 Lease Bed Allocation Programme 2025-2030 – 1 x Aquaculture Project Officer (fixed term to include salary & other labour costs & LGA Pension scheme contributions)	c.75k*	Poole Order Reserve (*over 2 years)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remote Electronic Monitoring and Artificial Intelligence: Spatial Management & Salmonid Interactions Remote Electronic Monitoring and Artificial Intelligence: Pot Restrictions Whelk CPUE Pilot Solent Scallop Research 	c.17k	Fisheries Act Reserve

- At the end of the current financial year (2023-24) Southern IFCA are anticipating a **surplus of income over expenditure of c.75k** (Budget Forecast 2023-24: deficit of c.49k). The majority of which relates to:
 - An underspend of c.62k in Capital Equipment due to lower than budgeted depreciation in relations to FPV Vigilant (budgeted to be operational from June 2023, this is now anticipated at January 2024)
 - Savings associated with in-year staff changes (c.26k)
- In addition, a **number of cost efficiencies** have been achieved during the current 2023-24 financial year, which include the chartering of FPVs to other Government organisations a reduction in vehicle fleet from 6 to 4 vehicles. Further, **unforeseen income** has been received during this financial year for works associated with the Poole Harbour Oil Spill (c.23k) and from FASS to support Compliance & Enforcement Training (c.10k).

3.0 Conclusions

The unforeseen savings and income during the current financial year will allow Southern IFCA to achieve a balanced budget for the forthcoming financial year, drawing from the General and Ringfenced Reserves to match the anticipated deficit.

4.0 Next Steps

Subject to approval of the Recommendation, the principles informing the budget forecast will be embellished to form the basis for the Southern IFCA Annual Strategy 2024-225, for presentation to The Authority in March 2024.

Background to Budget Forecasting

Part One: Budget Setting Components

1.1 Statutory Functions

Marine and Coastal Access Act, Section 153(2)

- a. Seek to ensure that the exploitation of sea fisheries resources is carried out in a sustainable way.
- b. Seek to balance the social and economic benefits of exploiting the sea fisheries resources of the District with the need to protect the marine environment from, or promote its recovery from, the effects of such exploitation.
- c. Take any other steps which in the authority's opinion are necessary or expedient for the purpose of making a contribution to the achievement of sustainable development.
- d. Seek to balance the different needs of persons engaged in the exploitation of sea fisheries resources in the District.

Marine and Coastal Access Act, Section 154

Seek to ensure that the conservation objectives of any Marine Conservation Zones in the District are furthered.

The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019, Regulation 63

Duties require Southern IFCA, as a defined competent authority, to make appropriate assessments of a plan or project which is likely to have a significant effect on a European Marine Site (EMS) (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects).

The Conservation Regs. 2019 transpose the land and marine aspects of the Habitats Directive⁶ (Council Directive 92/43/EEC) and the Wild Birds Directive⁷ (Directive 2009/147/EC) (known collectively as the Nature Directives) into UK statute. Under these Directives IFCAs must ensure that fishing activity does not damage, disturb or have an adverse effect on the wildlife or habitats for which a European Marine Site (EMS) is legally protected.

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 Sections 28g and 28i

Southern IFCA must consider any Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) with marine components, which are providing protection to species and/or habitat of national importance.

The Poole Harbour Fishery Order 2015

Southern IFCA manage aquaculture activity within a defined area of Poole Harbour (837.8 hectares) under the above named Order. In accordance with Section (1) of the Sea Fisheries (Shellfish) Act 1967, the Order confers on Southern IFCA the right of several fishery for the cultivation of shellfish of any kind for a period of twenty years from the 1st July 2015.

Under the terms of the Lease of Right of Several Fishery of Shellfish Laying in Poole Harbour, a third tranche of leases are required to be issued for the period 1st July 2025 to 30th June 2030.

1.1.1 Primary Elements

The following outlines the primary elements that have informed the budget forecast for the forthcoming financial year, to ensure that Southern IFCA remain able to continue in the delivery of all statutory functions as specified under the Marine and Coastal Access Act (2009), The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019⁵ and The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981⁸ and The Poole Harbour Fishery Order 2015¹.

- To **collect data, undertake surveys** and carry out **stock assessments** in order to ensure that the best available evidence is used to inform both the development of; and existing fisheries management interventions (see Monitoring Programme – Annex 2).

¹ [The Poole Harbour Fishery Order 2015 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://legislation.gov.uk)

- ***NEW***:
 - **Solent SCE Survey**: an additional 3 day survey mid-season
 - **Drift Net Project**: In conjunction with the ongoing management of net fishing within Net Permit Areas, Southern IFCA are committed to undertake a Research Project in order to improve understandings of potential interactions between the use of drift nets and salmonids as a designated feature in a non-targeted fishery. The outcomes of this Research Project will be used to jointly inform MPA management discussions as well as inform the annual review of the Southern IFCA Permit Conditions under the Net Fishing Byelaw.
 - **Solent Oyster Survey**: undertaken every 2 years (last conducted 2022)
- To continue with the delivery of **MPA management** in accordance with the Government's 2023 Environmental Improvement Programme (EIP); a revision of the 25 Year Environment Plan - specifically Phase II of the Bottom Towed Fishing Gear (BTFG), the Shore Gathering Review and Black Bream management.
- To continue with the delivery of the **MCRS Review**, ensuring the sustainability of stocks.
- To undertake annual **reviews of existing permit byelaws**, in line with specified statutory timelines, to include the Poole Harbour Dredge, the Solent Dredge Permit Byelaw and the Net Fishing Byelaw.
- To maintain a **permit byelaw administration function**, adjusting to an anticipated increase in this area of work, pending ratification of the Pot Fishing by the Secretary of State (additional administration of c.230 permits-currently c.100 permits are issued annually under the SDPB, the PHDP and the NFB collectively, in addition to c.369 permits to fish on a two year rolling cycle).
- To deliver ongoing **compliance and enforcement functions** across all IFCA byelaws.
 - Additional duties following introduction of the NFB (ratified in 2023)
 - Additional pending duties following anticipated ratification of the PFB to include gear hauling capability.
- To deliver a **compliance and enforcement function** of all other relevant legislation to ensure the protection and enhancement of the fisheries and marine environment, supporting regulatory delivery partners where applicable.
- ***NEW*** To work with partner Government Organisations to introduce **CLUE** – a new intelligence database.
- ***NEW*** To deliver the **2025-2030 Tranche 3 Lease Bed Allocation Programme**
- To provide **pay increases to all employees** in accordance with the National Joint Council (NJC) Pay Award, as set out in employee contracts.
- To **maintain core staffing levels** in accordance with existing levels (16 full time, 3 part time, 1 temporary contract²)

1.2 Additional Functions

As part of the Government Spending Review 2021, DEFRA committed to a provision of funding (£150k per IFCA) for three financial years (2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25). The funding provision is to enable IFCA's to support DEFRA in their delivery of the Fisheries Act 2020 objectives, specifically MPA, FMP and Marine Consents work (see below relevant to expectation of delivery 2022-2023, at the time of writing no further guidance has been received from DEFRA for subsequent years).

Fisheries Management Plans

Relevant to the **Crab and Lobster, Whelk, Bass, Scallop** and **Non Quota Species** Front Runner FMPs, Southern IFCA are required to:

- (1) Support planning/preparation phase (ongoing)

² 2023-2024 14 FT, 2 PT -the increase due to split of Business Service manager role to 1X FT Office Manager and 1Xpt Accounts Administrator plus addition of Senior Marine Operations IFCO to support operational need following procurement of new FPV Vigilant.

- (2) Support publication phase – review and evaluate (to begin c. March 2023)
- (3) Log requests and feedback concerns (ongoing)

MPA Programme

To conclude the implementation of all appropriate management measures for all MPAs by 2024, identifying strategic blocks to delivery and establishing a narrative around the delivery of these plans.

Marine Consents

- (1) To engage with the **Marine Spatial Prioritisation Programme** via scenario testing, stakeholder engagement and data and evidence (impacts of co-location work relating to fishing, aquaculture, marine licenses and MPAs).
- (2) To contribute to the development of 2nd generation **Marine Plans**, via data and evidence, stakeholder engagement and policy development. NB 2nd South Report due July 2024.
- (3) Contribution of delivery of **Aquaculture and Mariculture Strategy**.
- (4) Contribution of delivery of **Angling Strategy**.

1.1.2 Primary Elements

- To maintain **DEFRA Funded Project Officer roles** (1xMPA, 1xFMP) in accordance with fixed term contracts.
- To undertake the following research:
 - ***NEW* Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM) & Artificial Intelligence (AI):** Building on the work undertaken by Devon & Severn IFCA, for Southern to pilot a small scale REM and AI solution which will focus on high resolution spatial management and the provisions to quantify salmonid interactions in MPA's. This project will be piloted in the net fisheries of Southampton Water and Christchurch Harbour. The outcomes will jointly inform national discussions on MPA spatial management solutions in the inshore <6m fleet as well the annual reviews of the Southern IFCA Permit Conditions under the Net Fishing Byelaw.
 - ***NEW* REM & AI:** Working with Devon & Severn to pilot a project which explores the capability of REM and AI solutions in managing pot restrictions. The outcomes of which will inform national discussions on the implementation plans for FMP's, specifically seeking novel and cost effective solutions to managing pot limitations in crab, whelk and lobster fisheries.
 - ***NEW* CPUE Pilot Study:** A pilot project looking at CPUE data in accordance with the outcomes of the Whelk FMP. Outcomes will inform Southern IFCA's understanding of the whelk fishery and management following the anticipated introduction of the Southern IFCA Pot Fishing Byelaw.
 - ***NEW* Solent SCE Research:** To undertake a feasibility study using drop down cameras, supported by Cornwall IFCA, as well as an extension of days on Southern IFCA's Solent scallop surveys to deploy cameras. Outcomes will help to inform evidence base requirements as set under the scallop FMP, as well as the annual management of the Solent scallop fishery under the Solent Dredge Permit Byelaw.

Part Two: Unknown Variables

2.1 Rate of Inflation

The Autumn Statement 2023 released on the 22nd November 2023 predicts the UK's inflation rate to be an average of 3.6% in 2024. This is the rate of inflation that has been applied to the 2024-25 Budget Forecast.

2.2 National Joint Council Staff Pay Awards

A 5% provision has been set in the budget forecast to cover the anticipated cost of nationally agreed annual pay awards. This figure is consistent with National Joint Council (NJC) pay agreements received over the last few years, specifically 1.75% in 2021-2022, and a fixed rate of £1,925 per employee (pro rata) in years 2022-23 and 2023-24. These pay awards equate to a salary increase of between c.3% and c.10%.

In monetary terms, over the last three years the nationally agreed NJC annual pay increases have totalled c.£90k and have been met from Southern IFCA's General Reserve. It is anticipated that a 2024 pay award will follow a similar average 5% rise as seen in previous years.

2.3 Levy Contributions

- The Southern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation (Amendment) Order 2019³ states that the expenses incurred by the Authority must be defrayed by the relevant councils.
- Dorset Council, Hampshire County Council, Isle of Wight Council and BCP Council receive a grant from central government (via the New Burdens Doctrine⁴) of £329,425.
- The constituent Local Authorities (LAs) are levied in accordance with a prescribed formula (Table 1). Table 2 maps the levy contributions received from the LAs since 2010.

Table 1: Levy formulas

Constituent Council	Formula (%)
Hampshire County Council	40.40
Dorset Council	24.79
Isle of Wight Council	14.35
BCP Council	11.14
Portsmouth City Council	5.02
Southampton City Council	4.30

Table 2: Levy contributions received since 2010

Budget Year	Levy	% change	Budget Year	Levy	% change
2010 - 11	£729,292	0%	2017 - 18	£743,878	2%
2011 - 12	£729,292	0%	2018 - 19	£758,755	2%
2012 - 13	£729,292	0%	2019 - 20	£773,931	2%
2013 - 14	£729,292	0%	2020 - 21	£789,409	2%
2014 - 15	£729,292	0%	2021 - 22	£789,409	0%
2015 - 16	£729,292	0%	2022 - 23	£813,091	3%
2016 - 17	£729,292	0%	2023 - 24	£813,091	0%

2.4 DEFRA Fisheries Act Funding

- As part of the Government Spending Review 2021, DEFRA committed to a provision of funding (150k per IFCA) for three financial years (2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25). The

³ [The Southern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation \(Amendment\) Order 2019 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk)

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/new-burdens-doctrine-guidance-for-government-departments>

funding provision is to enable IFCA's to support DEFRA in their delivery of the Fisheries Act 2020 objectives, specifically MPA, FMP and Marine Consents work.

- 50k payment for the financial year April 2022-March 2023 was received from DEFRA in October 2022. The remaining 100k was received in April 2023.
- In order to deliver the required functions, Southern IFCA employed an FMP Project Officer (in post January 2023) and a MPA Project Officer (in post May 2023) on a fixed term basis. The marine consents delivery requirements have been incorporated into BAU within the existing staff body.
- At the time of writing, payment for the current financial year (April 2023-March 2024) has yet to be received.
- There remains a level of uncertainty regarding payments for the 2024-2025 financial year due to unknown political climates. Further duties may be placed on the IFCA by DEFRA in the 2024-2025 financial year to meet HPMA objectives.

2.5 Anticipated Surplus of Income on 2023-2024 Budget Forecast

- Southern IFCA are anticipating a surplus of income over expenditure of c.75k at year end March 2024 (Budget 2023 – 24: Deficit of c.49k). The majority of which relates to:
 - An underspend of c.62k in Capital Equipment due to lower than budgeted depreciation in relation to Vigilant and associated vehicles. Vigilant was budgeted to be operational from June 2023, however the forecast date in January 2024.
 - An underspend of c.26k on salaries due to in-year staff changes.
- During the current financial year, there has been unforeseen income relating to the work that Southern IFCA carried out in response to the Poole Harbour Oil Spill (c.23k), in addition to c.9k, following a successful bid to the Fisheries & Seafood Scheme (FASS) to train 8 IFCOs in recognised Standards of Training, Certification & Watchkeeping and 5 IFCOs in Radar and Electronics.

2.6 Proposed Income Initiatives 2024-2025

To date Southern IFCA's bank has provided a savings return of 1.45% under the Business Reserve, which allows for instant access to funds. In 2022-2023 c.6k of bank interest was received. The interest rates offered under a 35 day notice period Business Reserve (3.20%) or a 95 day notice period Business Reserve (4.17%) could generate between c.£13,000 to £17,000 in interest annually.

Southern IFCA are drafting an Investment Policy for consideration by the Executive Sub-Committee in March 2024, with the aim to achieve higher rates of return on reserves.

Part Three: The Budget Forecast 2024-2025

Prior to inflationary projections, the budget forecast anticipates a loss of c.161k for the financial year 1st April 2024 to 31 March 2025.

Post anticipated inflationary rises at 3.6%, the budget forecast anticipates a loss of c.173k for the financial year 1st April 2024 to 31 March 2025⁵.

Expenditure Summary	Budget Forecast 2023-24 comparison ⁶	Budget Forecast 2024-25
Business Services	892,405	991,906
Compliance & Enforcement	95,940	129,122
Research & Policy	30,384	39,093
Capital Equipment	120,685	101,804
Total	1,139,414	1,261,202
Total Income	1,141,511	1,099,670
Income over Expenditure	2,097	-161,532

3.1 Key Differences between 2023-24 & 2024-25 Budget Forecast

- The projected pre-inflation loss of c.161k is a direct result of the following necessary changes which have been made to the Southern IFCA business model to enable maintained delivery of **statutory functions**:

Operational costs associated with supporting & maintaining FPV Vigilant 's operational function

- | | |
|---|--------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 x Senior Marine Operations IFCO role created in 2023, with direct consideration of new operational ways of working (to include salary & other labour costs & LGA Pension scheme contributions). Berthing, plus roaming berthing costs in Solent Additional fuel costs based on 1 patrol/wk. | c.80k |
|---|--------------|

Cost associated with necessary improvements to business function:

- | | |
|--|--------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> external payroll and pension delivery creation of 1 x additional part-time financial administrator post (to include salary & other labour costs & LGA Pension scheme contributions). fulfilment of legal requirements under Fire Safety Legislation fulfilment of legal requirements under Drone Legislation offsite parking solutions introduction of CLUE Intelligence system | c.50k |
|--|--------------|

Rises in Cost of Living:

- | | |
|--|--------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NJC pay awards (c.5% provision) Increases in business rates | c.30k |
|--|--------------|

⁵ Inflation rate modelling only applies to budget headers which relate to services and provisions.

⁶ During 2022-23 the financial reporting systems have been revamped in order to align the budgets more accurately with operational delivery, as such direct comparisons across Main Headers should be treated with caution. These changes to the Financial Constitution were approved by the Committee in March 2022 for implementation during the current financial year (2023-24) and have been mirrored in the Budget Control Statements presented to the Authority since April 2023.

Part Four: Health of Reserves

The following captures the health and function of Southern IFCA's Reserves, **correct as at 31st March 2023.**

General Reserve		491k
<p>Purpose: Accumulated excesses of income over expenditure. The only reserve not earmarked for a specific purpose. It represents resources that could be used at short notice in the event of unexpected events to provide an adequate balance of working capital to help cushion the impact of uneven cash flows and build up funds to meet known or predicted requirements. The reserve has been used to fund budget deficits in the past. The reserve allowed Southern IFCA to freeze the LA levy contributions in 2023-24 at 2022-23 rates.</p>		
Capital Finance Reserve		769k
<p>Purpose: Equates to the net book value of the Authority's fixed assets register to provide a fund for the ongoing replacement of all of the Authority's capital assets (buildings, marine assets, vehicles and equipment).</p>		
Marine Asset Renewal Reserve		275k
<p>Purpose: To provide a fund for the replacement of marine assets (principally patrol vessels) where costs are anticipated to be in excess of net book value in addition to a holding pot for unscheduled significant maintenance works (c.100k).</p>		
<p>Projection of forecast spends 2023-24 FPV Vigilant replacement (c.40k in addition to 250K Defra Capital Grant below)</p>		
<p>Projection of spends 2024-25 FPV Protector replacement (c.120k)</p>		
DEFRA Capital Grant		250k
<p>Purpose: Grant from DEFRA received in April 2023 to support IFCA's purchase of new FPV Vigilant.</p>		
<p>Projection of spends 2023-24 (transfer of 250k) FPV Vigilant replacement</p>		
Research Reserve		16k
<p>Purpose: Created on 1 April 2020 to replace the Marine Act Reserve to fund ongoing work required by the MaCAA.</p>		
<p>Projection of spends 2024-25 (transfer of c.6k)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solent Scallop Survey – introduction of mid-season survey • Drift Net Project – In conjunction with Net Fishing Byelaw • Solent Oyster Survey – every two years 		
Poole Order Reserve		118k
<p>Purpose: The Authority manage aquaculture activity within a defined area of Poole Harbour under The Poole Harbour Fishery Order 2015 (1346/2015). Accordingly, the Authority is required to account for the relevant income and expenditure associated with its duties under this Order to</p>		

RINGFENCED FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES

include annual Management Reviews & biosecurity work, as well as work associated with the Tranche Reallocation Programmes (every five years c.105k).

Projection of spends 2024-25 (transfer of c.38k)

Tranche 3 Lease Bed Allocation Programme 2025-2030 – 1 x Aquaculture Project Officer (2 yr. fixed term to include salary & other labour costs & LGA Pension scheme contributions)

Fisheries Act Reserve

146k

Purpose: As part of the Government Spending Review 2021, DEFRA committed to a provision of funding (£150k per IFCA) for three financial years (2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25). The pot represents the amount received in April 2023 for the financial year 2022-2023 year (150k) minus costs incurred for c.1month 2023.

Projection of spends 2024-25 (transfer of c.117k).

- 1 x FMP Project Officer & 1x MPA Project Officer (fixed term to include salary & other labour costs & LGA Pension scheme contributions), 1x part funded IFCO delivering Marine Consents work
- Remote Electronic Monitoring and Artificial Intelligence: Spatial Management & Salmonid Interactions Research & Pot Restrictions Research, Whelk CPUE Pilot Project & Solent Scallop Research.

Category		Nominal ledger	Apr23-Mar24 12 mths Budget	Apr24-Mar25 12 mths Budget	Notes
Levy	Levy - Hants		328,489	328,489	
	Levy - IOW		116,678	116,678	
	Levy - Dorset		201,537	201,537	
	Levy - BCP		90,607	90,607	
	Levy - Southampton		34,963	34,963	
	Levy - Portsmouth		40,817	40,817	Assuming standstill levy contributions at 2022-2023 rate.
			613,991		
Permits & Leases	Poole Harbour Dredge Permits		27,000	27,000	45 permits at £600.00.
	Solent Dredge Permits Category A		7,740	7,740	c.36 permits at £215.
	Poole Order Aquaculture Leases		31,530	32,160	2% pa rise in line with Lease Contracts (2020-2025).
	Net Fishing Permit		2,890	2,890	c.17 permits at £170.
	Pot Fishing Permit: Commercial		3,600	3,600	c.240 permits at £15.
	Pot Fishing Permit: Recreational		1,050	1,050	c.70 permits at £15.
Other	BCP Council Shellfish Sampling		2,835	2,939	Facilitate monthly testing with EHOs - directly linked to wild & aquaculture fisheries in Poole Harbour - CPI indexed on 5 year agreement.
	Bank interest receivable		1,000	1,000	Based on 2022-2023 actuals.
	Unforeseen income (including chartering)		2,500	2,500	Chartering arrangements with MMO - unforeseen. Based on 5 year average.
	"DEFRA Fisheries Act Funding"		165,000	150,000	Ring fenced by DEFRA for FMP, MPA and Marine Consents work.
	AIFCA Cockle FMP		-	2,700	DCO time allocated to AIFCA Project (1 day pcm).
	Equipment Sale (profit/loss)		79,851	50,000	Anticipated sale of FPV Protector.
Court Costs Recovered		3,424	3,000	Based on 2 year average.	
Income			1,141,511	1,099,670	
Compliance & Enforcement	Vehicles	Vehicle Fuel (combined)	4,502	4,911	Based on 6mo. Actual 2023-2024 with fleet reduction 6-4
		Roadside Assistance	196	105	Based on 6mo. Actual 2023-2024 with fleet reduction 6-4
		Maintenance	3,000	2,800	Based on 6mo. Actual 2023-2024 with fleet reduction 6-4
	Drone	Road Tax	1,300	850	Based on 6mo. Actual 2023-2024 with fleet reduction 6-4
		Secure off site Parking	-	2,160	Secure off-site parking in Poole for 4 vehicles
		Insurance	3,543	2,000	Based on actuals 2022-23 with reduction due to fleet from 6-4
	Fisheries Protection Vessels	Insurance	2,400	2,073	Based on actual 2023-2024
		Maintenance	600	3,600	Based on actual 2022-23 (£633) & upgrade of components to maintain legal standards (£2,967)
		Fuel (combined)	11,833	20,786	Based on 6 mo. actual 2023-24 for Endeavour & Protector (£5,186), plus increased estimate for FPV Vigilant (based on £300 per patrol*52 [1 patrol per wk.]; £15,600)
	GENERAL	FPV Maintenance (combined 3 FPVs)	17,852	15,000	Reduction on actual 2023-24 due to SB sale, however FPV Protector costs expected to increase due to end of life.
		FPV Berthing (combined 3 FPVs)	9,639	17,838	Based on actuals 2023-24: Endeavour £3455, Protector £1183, FPV Vigilant c.£10,000* +roaming berths (c.£400pw*8 weeks=£3,200) NB previous years no cost for Stella Barbara.
		Marine Insurance	8,622	7,620	Based on actuals 2023-24 plus anticipated uplift for FPV Vigilant
		REM AI NFB Project (with D&S IFCA) Phase 1	-	5,000	Costing based on D&S IFCA actuals - to explore technology to monitor spatial management & salmonid interactions in MPAs
		REM AI PFB Project (with D&S IFCA) Phase 2	-	5,000	Costing based on D&S IFCA actuals - to explore technology for pot limitations
		Personal Protective Clothing	5,871	5,365	Provision for wear and tear at 25% of operational team (£4,120) & x 1 provision new starter (£1,648).
	Enforcement Equipment	3,000	2,227	Based on 6mo. Actual 2023-2024	
	Industry Compliance Aids	3,582	1,787	Based on 6mo Actual 2023-2024 (Fish stickers & SF gauges, byelaw book updates)	
	CLUE Intelligence System	-	10,000	Transition to Intelligence System for IFCA's, MMO - cost includes set up fee (c.1,200k) and licence fees (3 full [2,700], 4 light [2,400])	
Legal Services - Prosecutions		20,000	20,000	Consistent with previous budgeting averages	
Expenditure			95,940	129,122	

Category		Nominal ledger	Apr23-Mar24 12 mths Budget	Apr24-Mar25 12 mths Budget	Notes
Research & Policy	Developing Management	Byelaws - Adverts	10,095	7,847	3xByelaws to be advertised for 2 consecutive weeks across District
		Legal Services - Byelaws	6,000	4,500	3xByelaws
	Monitoring Programme	Poole Bivalve Survey	1,024	960	2 days/Apr/E480 per day
		Solent Scallop Survey	2,820	4,320	3 days/3pa, (Apr/Sept/Jan)/E480 per day
		Solent Bivalve Stock Assessment	2,820	2,880	3 days/2pa, (Mar/Sept)/E480 per day
		Whelk Sampling	1,600	600	Purchase WHKs at £150 per vessel (4 sampling)
		Whelk Monitoring Programme Pilot CPUE	-	5,148	CPUE data in line with WHK FMP outputs & PFB introduction. Fisher dependant(c.1k)&independent observer data collection&analysis 2 days pcm (c.3.5k) & relevant analysis training (c0.5k)
		Oyster Survey (every 2 years)	-	1,950	3 days/1pa/E650 per day
	Other	NFB Drift Net Project	-	1,200	1 trip pcm STON water, 1 trip pcm CC HBR with observer - costs for fishers time (£50per trip)
		Survey Equipment and Maintenance	500	1,000	Sml fish survey net, lost string WHK pots, maintenance of bivalve dredge and misc for sml equipment
Poole Harbour MSC - Re-Certification 2022		1,025	1,025	Payment of £1,025 over 5 years (£5,125) to Reserves to replenish MSC re-certification fees.	
Poole Harbour MSC - Annual Audit		4,500	5,440	Actuals 2022-2023	
Solent SCE research		1,500	Feasibility study (camera work) with TAG/Corwall IFCA supporting & additional day on pre-existing SCE survey using cameras		
Expenditure			30,384	38,370	
Business Services	Estate	Office - General	8,000	11,161	Based on 6 mo actuals 2023-2024
		Office - Energy	10,663	7,152	Based on 6 mo actuals 2023-2024
		Office - IT	11,950	13,425	Based on 6 mo actuals 2023-2024 & finance laptop (£687) & wear & tear at 50% of team (laptops [£6183], monitors [1,305]).
		Communications	7,500	7,239	Based on actuals 2022-2023 (Mobiles, landline, webpage)
		General Insurance	19,068	17,381	Based on actuals 2023-2024. Legal protections, professional indemnity, estate insurances etc.
		Office - Rates	19,633	21,516	Based on actuals 2022-2023
	Finance	Equipment (<£500)	5,000	2,000	Based on actuals 2022-2023
		Miscellaneous	4,000	3,000	Based on actuals 2022-2023
		Financial Audit costs	3,600	3,600	Annual Statement of Accounts based on actuals 2022-2023
		Zero Software	504	660	Accountancy software annual cost
	Subscriptions	Paycircle	-	1,164	Pension (£359) Payroll (£714)
		Bank charges	866	1,000	Based on 2022-2023 actual
		AIFCA	15,000	14,088	3% uplift on previous based on NJC national pay awards
	Meetings	General	4,520	4,520	FMC(£300), Solent Forum (E816), Science Direct (E1740), Fishing News(E144), MCSS(E590), GIS(E405), SF As. (E25), SAGB (E500)
		Permit Database	1,170	1,170	Support (£900pa), hosting (£260pa)
	HR	Authority Meetings	2,500	2,500	Based on 2022-2023 actual
		Recruitment	2,000	4,000	Based on 2023-2024 actuals c. 1k per campaign
	Staff Costs	Legal Services	1,500	4,000	Based on actual 2022-23 and 23-24
		Salaries and Other Labour Costs	658,369	744,298	(Of which c.100k for DEFRA funded posts)
		LGA Pension Scheme	87,892	101,622	
	Training	Mandatory Training	2,890	3,130	3x STCW's (£1590), 6 x ENG's (£690), Conflict resolution (£850)
		National Training Model	14,080	10,180	Trainer salary contribution £4980 & course payments pp £1,300 (Competent Officer x 2, Advanced x 2)
		Boarding and Pacing	1,000	1,750	1 per year with new vessel
	Staff Expenses	Professional Development	2,800	2,250	Average £250 per IFCA employee (Defra funded staff under separate budget)
		CEO	1,500	1,000	Meetings/Conference expenses
		DCO	750	800	Meetings/Conference expenses
DCO		750	800	Meetings/Conference expenses	
Members Expenses	Officer Expenses (combined)	1,200	2,000	Based on actuals 2022-2023	
	Chairman's Fund	1,000	1,000	Based on actuals 2023-2024	
	Member Networking	700	1,000	Based on actuals 2023-2024	
MMO appointee expenses		2,000	2,500	Based on actuals 2022-2023	
Expenditure			892,405	991,906	

Category		Nominal ledger	Apr23-Mar24 12 mths Budget	Apr24-Mar25 12 mths Budget	Notes
Capital Equipment	Premises Depreciation		4,988	4,988	Based on Fixed Asset Register forecast
	Equipment Depreciation		4,039	3,864	Based on Fixed Asset Register forecast
	Vehicles Depreciation		12,376	10,668	Based on Fixed Asset Register forecast - this has decreased as vehicle fleet reduced from 6-4
	FPV's Depreciation		99,282	82,284	Based on Fixed Asset Register forecast - this covers a full year of depreciation for Vigilant.
	Expenditure			120,685	101,804

Expenditure Summary		
Business Services	892,405	991,906
Compliance & Enforcement	95,940	129,122
Research & Policy	30,384	38,370
Capital Equipment	120,685	101,804
Total	1,139,414	1,261,202
Total Income	1,141,511	1,099,670
Income over Expenditure	2,097	-161,532

Levy Contributions 2024-2025

Report by The CEO and Accountant

A. Purpose

To seek levy contributions from the six constituent Local Authorities in accordance with The Southern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation (Amendment) Order 2019¹ which states that the expenses incurred by the Authority must be defrayed by the relevant councils.

B. Recommendation

1. That Elected Members² of the Authority approve that Southern IFCA's six constituent Local Authorities are levied at a rate of 4% for the financial year 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025, which equates to an increase of £32k.

1.0 Introduction

- Paragraph (16) of The Southern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation (Amendment) Order 2019 states that the expenses incurred by Southern IFCA must be defrayed by the relevant councils.
- Dorset Council, Hampshire County Council, Isle of Wight Council and BCP Council receive a grant from central government (via the New Burdens Doctrine³) which totals £329,425.
- The constituent Local Authorities (LAs) are levied on an annual basis in accordance with a prescribed formula (Column B, Table 1).
- The total LA levy contributions in 2023-2024 were £813,091. This was a standstill (0%) on the previous year.

Constituent Council	Formula (%)	Levy 2023-2024 (£)
Hampshire County Council	40.40	328,489
Dorset Council	24.79	201,537
Isle of Wight Council	14.35	116,678
BCP Council	11.14	90,607
Portsmouth City Council	5.02	40,817
Southampton City Council	4.30	34,963
		813,091

- The following provides a breakdown of contributions since 2010.

Budget Year	Levy	% change	Budget Year	Levy	% change
2010 - 11	£729,292	0%	2017 -18	£743,878	2%
2011 - 12	£729,292	0%	2018 - 19	£758,755	2%
2012 - 13	£729,292	0%	2019 - 20	£773,931	2%
2013 - 14	£729,292	0%	2020 - 21	£789,409	2%
2014 - 15	£729,292	0%	2021 - 22	£789,409	0%
2015 - 16	£729,292	0%	2022 - 23	£813,091	3%
2016 - 17	£729,292	0%	2023 - 24	£813,091	0%

2.0 Summary of Key Points

- Prior to inflationary projections, the budget forecast for the financial year 1st April 2024 to 31 March 2025 anticipates a loss of **c.161k**.

¹ [The Southern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Order 2010 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2019/01/01/5150131000000001/eng/full/text.html), [The Southern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation \(Amendment\) Order 2019 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2019/01/01/5150131000000001/eng/full/text.html)

² In accordance with Standing Order (77), the vote on the budgetary motion is to be undertaken by Elected Members only.

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/new-burdens-doctrine-guidance-for-government-departments>

- Whilst Southern IFCA are able to achieve a balanced budget due to unforeseen savings and income during the current financial year drawing from the Reserves to match the anticipated deficit, **c.33k** (5% provision) of the deficit relates to anticipated nationally agreed Pay Awards across the core staff body.
- Over the last three years (since 2021) the nationally agreed National Joint Council (NJC) Pay Awards have equated to c.£90k, a cost which has been met by the Southern IFCA Reserves.
- It is not a sustainable finance model to continue drawing from General Reserves (£491k correct as of 31st March 2023).
- Whilst Southern IFCA recognise the extreme financial pressures that our constituent LA's are under, competent management of Southern IFCA's finances over a number of years shouldn't negate consideration of an increase in LA levy contributions, in order to recognise, as a minimum, the cost of nationally agreed Pay Awards.
- The proposal to increase the Levy contributions by 4% is an increase less than the rate of inflation (4.7% October 2023).
- Seeking an increase in levy contributions is an approach consistent with 8 of the 9 other IFCAs in addition to the AIFCA, who are seeking a minimum baseline increase in levy contributions directly related to the impact of the nationally agreed Pay Awards.
- The following table identifies the impact a 4% increase in contributions will have for each LA totaling **c.32.5k**.

Constituent Council	Levy Contribution		
	Standstill (£)	4% Increase (£)	Total (£)
Hampshire County Council	328,489	13,139.56	341,628.56
Dorset Council	201,537	8,061.48	209,598.48
Isle of Wight Council	116,678	4,667.12	121,345.12
BCP Council	90,607	3,624.28	94,231.28
Portsmouth City Council	40,817	1,632.68	42,449.68
Southampton City Council	34,963	1,398.52	36,361.52
	813,091	32,523	845,614

3.0 Conclusions

Prior to inflationary projections, with a 4% increase in levy contributions equating to **c.32.5k**, the budget forecast for the financial year 1st April 2024 to 31 March 2025 anticipates a loss of **c.128k**.

A 4% increase in levy contributions recognises the extreme financial pressures that Southern IFCA's Constituent Local Authorities are under, with Southern IFCA able to achieve a balanced budget for the forthcoming financial year, drawing from the reserves to match the anticipated deficit of 128k.

4.0 Next Steps

Subject to approval of the Recommendation, Southern IFCA's six constituent LAs will be levied at a rate of 4% and no later than the 14th February 2024, in accordance with appropriate legislations.

Portland Seed Mussel Fishery Authorisation 2024

Report by DCO Birchenough and Senior IFCO Condie

This paper has been updated following consideration and discussion by Members at the virtual TAC on the 2nd November 2023.

A. Purpose

For Members to (1) consider authorising the removal of mussels under the Minimum Conservation Reference Size (MCRS) in 2024 for the purposes of aquaculture in accordance with the provisions of the Mussels Byelaw, and (2), to consider the removal of the existing spatial restrictions present under the current 2023 Authorisation.

A. Recommendation(s)

1. That Authorisation shall be provided for the fishing vessel Nicola L (WY37) to continue to remove mussel seed for the purposes of aquaculture during 2024, provided that this activity is in line with the provisions outlined in the 2024 Authorisation, to include (*where different from current 2023 Authorisation*):
 - a) The removal of spatial restrictions outside of the BTFG Byelaw 2023 prohibited areas.
 - b) The addition of a requirement to submit a catch return.
2. That Officers are delegated to make inconsequential changes to the Habitats Regulation Assessment following receipt of any Formal Advice from Natural England.
3. That the Authority consider the benefits of a long term management plan for the mussel seed fishery under Phase 2 of the BTFG Review.

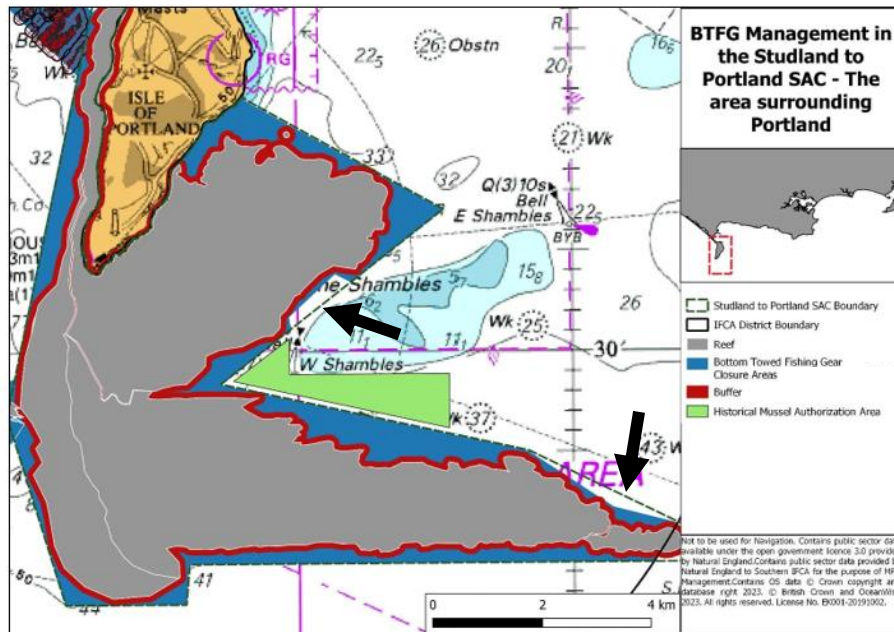
B. Supporting Documentation for Further Information

- Annex 1: Extract from draft minutes of the TAC Meeting, 2nd Nov 2023
- Annex 2: Test of Likely Significant Effect
- Annex 3: Appropriate Assessment
- Annex 4: Authorisation

1.0 Introduction

- The area of seabed to the east and southeast of Portland Bill is a known settlement site for mussels (*Mytilus edulis*) with dense communities forming over areas of rocky and coarse sediment seabed, mostly between 30-50m depth in areas associated with strong currents.
- Fishing for mussel seed has been occurring in this area since 1991, with authorisation granted under the Mussels Byelaw for the purposes of mussel cultivation, where their removal does not have a detrimental effect upon the mussel fishery.
- Studland to Portland was submitted as a candidate SAC in 2012, becoming a Site of Community Importance (SCI) in 2013, prior to receiving full SAC status in 2017. Southern IFCA developed management measures via the BTFG 2013 Byelaw to protect the reef habitats following designation as a cSAC/SCI.
- Following a significant storm in 2014 and resulting low levels of mussels found in 2015, between 2016 and 2018 no authorisations to fish were sought.
- From 2015, Southern IFCA introduced **spatial restrictions** under the Authorisation which evolved into the current spatial area (Map: Green area) from 2021 onwards, in addition to **effort restrictions** on the amount of mussel seed removed (2t [2015], 500kg [2019-21] to the current cap of 1t since 2022).
- In recent weeks, the Authority have **received a request for continued harvesting during 2024, with the applicant seeking removal of the spatially defined area defined in the 2023 Authorisation, as consistent with other BTFG operators in the District**. This request includes areas (Map: black arrows) within the Studland to Portland SAC, which remain outside

of the area prohibited to BTFG activity.



2.0 Summary of Key Points

- Under the Conservation Regulations¹ Southern IFCA are required to undertake an HRA for activities which have the potential to damage, disturb or have an adverse effect on features within or adjacent to an SAC. With consideration of advice provided by Natural England at the November TAC (Annex 1), a full HRA (TLSE and Appropriate Assessment) has now been completed to consider the proposed spatial extensions (Map: black arrows). This required a revision to the draft TLSE presented to the Nov TAC meeting (Annex 2).
- With consideration of the designated features of the Studland to Portland SAC, existing management for BTFG, wider scientific literature and specific studies on the Portland mussel beds and associated mussel dredging activity, **the HRA concluded that mussel dredging under an Authorisation will not have an adverse effect on the integrity of the Studland to Portland SAC and will not hinder the site from achieving its Conservation Objectives either alone or in-combination with other plans/projects.**
- Following consideration of Members advice received at the November TAC, a draft 2024 Authorisation (Annex 4) has been prepared which includes an additional requirement to report coordinates at the start and end of all tows each day.
- Additionally, and in accordance with Member direction (November TAC), it is proposed that consideration be given to the potential benefits of a long-term Management Plan for the mussel seed fishery under Phase II of the BTFG Review, which would aid the Authority in future decision making regarding the operation of this fishery and ensure that the activity remains compatible with any outcomes of Phase II of the review.

3.0 Key Considerations

On the basis of the conclusion of the HRA and when considering Members direction provided at the November TAC, it is recommended that the Authorisation for 2024 be granted in accordance with the Conditions listed in Annex 4.

4.0 Next Steps

- The HRA has been submitted to Natural England for Formal Advice (24th November).
- Following receipt of this advice, subject to there being no substantial changes required, it is proposed that the authorisation for 2024 be issued ahead of the 1st January 2024.

¹ Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 (referred to jointly as the 'Conservation Regulations')

SOUTHERN INSHORE FISHERIES & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE – 2nd November 2023

Marked H_Annex 1

Minutes of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) held virtually via Microsoft Teams at **14:00 on 2nd November 2023 – specific to Decision Agenda Item 6: Authorisation for Mussel Fishing 2024**

Present (Virtual)

Dr Antony Jensen	Chairman, MMO Appointee
Mr Richard Stride	Vice Chairman, MMO Appointee
Mr Colin Francis	MMO Appointee
Ms Louise MacCallum	MMO Appointee
Mr Gary Wordsworth	MMO Appointee
Ms Elisabeth Bussey-Jones	MMO Appointee
Mr Tedd Legg	MMO Appointee
Mr Neil Hornby	MMO Appointee
Ms Rachel Irish	MMO Appointee
Dr Richard Morgan	Natural England
Ms Pia Bateman	Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

Deputy Chief Officer (DCO) Dr Sarah Birchenough, Office Manager Ms Maria Chaplin, Senior Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officer (Snr IFCO) Ms Emily Condie and IFCOs Mr Dominic Parry, Ms Celie Mullen, Ms Hester Churchouse and Project Officer (PO) Ms Chelsea Perrins were also present.

ITEMS FOR DECISION

26. Authorisation for Mussel Fishing 2024

DCO Birchenough provided Members with a background to the authorisation request, in that the relevant Skipper had approached Southern IFCA to ask if he could apply for an authorisation for 2024, having held an authorisation in previous years, and whether the spatial extent of that authorisation could be increased.

DCO Birchenough explained that under the current 2023 Authorisation, a quota is set, as well as requirements for prior reporting, in addition to defining a specific spatial area for mussel seed operations. Following consideration of relevant BTFG Byelaw prohibitions and the mitigation these provide against an adverse effect to designated features, DCO Birchenough explained that it is proposed that a spatial restriction on activity under the authorisation is not required under the 2024 Authorisation, subject to Members consideration. This would enable the vessel to access two small areas of the Studland to Portland SAC which have been identified as having no designated features or buffer zones present and therefore are not subject to wider BTFG prohibitions. DCO Birchenough also outlined that it is proposed to include stricter reporting requirements under the authorisation requiring the skipper to provide days fished, hours fished, coordinates of the start and end of the first and last tow of the day, time spent towing and quantity of mussels landed per tow.

Dr R Morgan discussed concerns held by Natural England of the activity occurring within an SAC, despite falling outside of the feature based BTFG boundary recognising that this position conflicts with previous NE BTFG advice under the BTFG review. Dr R Morgan spoke about a more holistic approach to site management being a preference for NE but recognised that the IFCA has statutory duties for a feature-based approach. Dr R Morgan suggested that an Appropriate Assessment be carried out for the activity occurring within the SAC to ensure that

SOUTHERN INSHORE FISHERIES & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE – 2nd November 2023

the specific activity is assessed separately to general BTFG.

Mr R Stride commented that his understanding is that spatial restrictions would not be required under the authorisation as they are provided by the prohibitions in place under the BTFG Byelaw which provides the feature-based protections. Mr T Legg asked whether there is a reason that the operator would like to fish in other areas, and whether this was an indication that the stocks were reducing in areas currently fished. Ms L McCallum and Ms E Bussey-Jones discussed the fact that the operator was seeking permissions to harvest undersize mussels and as such this activity was not directly comparable with activity of the wider BTFG fleet. Dr A Jensen queried whether the reporting requirement under the authorisation could be amended to require the skipper to record the start and end coordinates of each tow rather than just the first and last tow of the day to ensure the maximum amount of data in relation to fishing activity could be collected, particularly in relation to any potential fishing activity within the SAC. Members discussed whether it would be appropriate to consider management of areas of the SAC where designated features were not present but wider sensitivities may exist under the second phase of the BTFG review.

Mr G Wordsworth explained to Members that the operator was seeking additional grounds due to spatial squeeze concerns as well as recognition of the often transient nature of the mussel seed in response to weather conditions. He discussed the fishing operations being around 20-25minutes a day.

The Chairman summarised discussions, reminding Members that due to the meeting being held virtually, consideration of the Recommendations would be postponed until the December Authority Meeting.

27.Recommendations

That the following recommendations be considered at the forthcoming meeting of The Authority on the 7th December 2023.

- a) That, subject to Formal Advice from Natural England, written consent shall be provided for the fishing vessel WY37 Nicola L to remove mussel under 50mm between 1st January and 31st December 2024, provided that this activity is in line with the provisions outlined in the authorisation.
- b) That Officers are delegated to make any inconsequential changes to the Test of Likely Significant Effect (Annex I) following receipt of any Formal Advice from Natural England.

1. Is the activity/activities directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site for nature conservation? No – fishing activity is not necessary to the management of the site for nature conservation

2. What potential pressures exerted by the gear type(s) are likely to affect the feature(s)/sub-feature(s)?	Advice on Operations - Dredging (Studland to Portland)			Further assessment?	Reefs (Circalittoral Rock, Infralittoral Rock, Subtidal biogenic reefs: mussel beds, Subtidal stony reef, intertidal rock)	Relevant Attributes
	Infralittoral Rock	Subtidal Stony Reef	Circalittoral Rock			
Abrasion/disturbance of the substrate on the surface of the seabed	S	S	S	Y	This gear type is known to cause abrasion and disturbance to the seabed surface. Further investigation is needed on the magnitude of the pressure including spatial scale/intensity of the activity and location of the activity in relation to the feature.	Distribution: presence and spatial distribution of biological communities, Structure and function: presence and abundance of key structural and influential species, Structure: species composition of component communities, Structure: physical structure of rocky substrate, Extent of subtidal biogenic reef, Structure: population density
Changes in suspended solids (water clarity)	S	S	S	Y	This pressure is associated with sediment mobilisation. Whilst sediment mobilisation would not occur due to mussel dredging activity over rocky substrate within the SAC due to the BTFG Byelaw 2016, mussel dredging activity near to rock substrate over sediment habitats could lead to increases in suspended solids. Therefore further assessment is required.	Supporting processes water quality - turbidity
Penetration and/or disturbance of the substratum below the surface of the seabed, including abrasion	S	S	S	Y	Penetration cannot occur in rock habitats. However this gear type are known to cause penetration to biogenic reefs, therefore further assessment is required.	Distribution: presence and spatial distribution of biological communities, Structure and function: presence and abundance of key structural and influential species, Structure: species composition of component communities, Structure: physical structure of rocky substrate, Extent of subtidal biogenic reef, Structure: population density
Removal of non-target species	S	S	S	Y	Impacts on the feature and associated community may occur through the removal of the feature itself, larger epifaunal and potentially infaunal species, whilst smaller organisms are likely to pass through the gear. Abrasion, resulting from contact with the gear, however is likely to disturb smaller species. Further investigation is needed as to the magnitude of disturbance to associated communities/species and location of the activity in relation to the feature.	Distribution: presence and spatial distribution of biological communities, Structure and function: presence and abundance of key structural and influential species, Structure: species composition of component communities,
Removal of target species	S		S	Y	Mussels are a key species to biogenic reefs Further investigation is needed as to the magnitude of the effect of removal of mussels to the feature.	Structure and function: presence and abundance of key structural and influential species, Structure: species composition of component communities, Extent of subtidal biogenic reef, Structure: population density
Smothering and siltation rate changes (Light)	S	S	S	Y	This pressure is associated with sediment mobilisation. Whilst sediment mobilisation would not occur due to mussel dredging over rocky substrate, mussel dredging near to rock substrate over sediment habitats could lead to increases in suspended solids and therefore siltation and smothering. Therefore further assessment is required.	Supporting Process sedimentation rate
Deoxygenation	S	S	S	N	This pressure is associated with sediment mobilisation which can not occur over rocky substrate. Low risk profile - see key.	N/A
Hydrocarbon & PAH contamination	NA	NA	NA	N	The sensitivity of the feature to the pressure is not assessed. Low risk profile - see key.	N/A
Introduction of light	S	S	IE	N	Mussel dredging does not introduce light to the benthos. Low – Risk profile – see key.	N/A
Introduction of Microbial Pathogens	S	S	S	N	There is only one vessel engaged in mussel dredging activity and the vessel only operates locally. Low risk profile – see key.	N/A
Introduction or spread of invasive non-indigenous species	S	S	S	N	There is only one vessel engaged in mussel dredging activity and the vessel only operates locally. Low risk profile – see key.	N/A
Litter	NA	NA	NA	N	The features sensitivity to the pressure is not assessed. These activities do not lead to marine litter. Low-risk profile - see key.	N/A
Nutrient enrichment	S	S	NS	N	This pressure is associated with sediment mobilisation which can not occur over rocky substrate. Low risk profile - see key.	N/A
Organic enrichment	S	S	S	N	This pressure is associated with sediment mobilisation which can not occur over rocky substrate. Low risk profile - see key.	N/A
Physical change (to another seabed type)	S	S	S	N	Any physical change to this habitat is a result of other pressures and as such will be assessed as part of other pressures (i.e. abrasion/penetration and/or disturbance of the substrate below the surface of the seabed). Low-risk profile - see key.	N/A
Physical change (to another sediment type)				N	The features is NOT SENSITIVE to the pressure.	N/A
Synthetic compound contamination (incl. pesticides,	NA	NA	NA	N	The features sensitivity to the pressure is not assessed. Low-risk profile - see key.	N/A
Transition elements & organo-metal (e.g. TBT) contamination	NA	NA	NA	N	The features sensitivity to the pressure is not assessed. Low-risk profile - see key.	N/A
Underwater noise changes		NS	NS	N	The features is NOT SENSITIVE to the pressure.	N/A
Visual disturbance	NS	NS	NS	N	The features is NOT SENSITIVE to the pressure.	N/A

Title	HRA – Authorisation for Mussel Dredging under the Southern IFCA Mussels Byelaw – Studland to Portland SAC
SIFCA Reference	SIFCA_Mussel Authorisation_AA_2024
Author	E Condie
Approver	S Birchenough
Owner	Southern IFCA
Template Used	HRA Template Plan/Project v1.0

Revision History

Date	Author	Version	Status	Reason	Approver(s)
06/11/2023	Emily Condie	1.0	Draft	Requested by Natural England on review of initial TLSE document, TLSE document also updated reflecting comments received.	S Birchenough

This document has been distributed for information and comment to:

Title	Name	Date sent	Comments received
Senior Advisor	Dr Richard Morgan	24.11.23	

Southern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (IFCA)

Habitat Regulations Assessment for Plans/Projects

European Marine Site: Studland to Portland SAC

Feature (Sub feature): Reefs (Infralittoral Rock, Subtidal Stony Reef, Subtidal biogenic, Circalittoral Rock, Intertidal Rock)

Gear type(s) Assessed: Mussel Dredging (under authorisation under Southern IFCA 'Mussels' byelaw)

Technical Summary

Duties under Regulation 9 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 require Southern IFCA, as a competent authority, to make an appropriate assessment of a plan or project likely to have a significant effect on a site that is part of the National Site Network (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects). As such, Southern IFCA are required to undertake an appropriate assessment for the authorisation of mussel dredging under the Southern IFCA 'Mussels' byelaw where that activity may occur within two areas of the Studland to Portland SAC.

In 2023 Southern IFCA received a request from a vessel currently authorised to fish for mussels under the 'Mussels' byelaw for an authorisation for the activity for 2024 and to increase the spatial footprint available for mussel fishing, to include two small areas within the Studland to Portland SAC. The areas within the SAC have previously been inaccessible for mussel fishing under the authorisation due to the vessel being spatially constrained to an area outside of the SAC in the authorisation conditions. The request for the 2024 authorisation therefore requires a Habitats Regulations Assessment to determine whether in the view of Southern IFCA, the issuing of the authorisation with the proposed conditions will hinder the achievement of the conservation objectives for the Studland to Portland SAC and lead to an adverse effect on site integrity.

A review of limited available research into mussel dredging and further information on general bottom towed fishing gear (BTFG) identified that mussel dredging has the potential to cause abrasion, penetration or disturbance of the seabed, removal of non-target and target species and changes in suspended solids and smothering and siltation rates. Scientific literature shows that reef habitats can be significantly damaged by BTFG, physically through the dragging of boulders and destruction of biogenic reefs as well as biological through the damage, removal and mortality of reef associated species.

These potential impacts and risks to the integrity of the reefs within the Studland to Portland SAC are mitigated by the BTFG byelaw 2016 and a proposed updated BTFG Byelaw 2023 which (as of November 2023) sits with the MMO in the QA process. There is no change from the 2016 to the 2023 byelaw with regard to the protections provided for the Studland to Portland SAC with all reef features and associated buffer zones (average 106m) protected by BTFG closed areas. The management ensures that none of the aforementioned pressures will be exerted on the features and therefore no impact will be caused by mussel dredging activity.

Based on these mitigation measures, in the form BTFG management which contains a network of BTFG prohibited areas, it was concluded that mussel dredging activity will not hinder the features from achieving their conservation objectives and as such will not have an adverse effect on the integrity of the Studland to Portland SAC either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Need for an HRA Assessment

The National Site Network¹ is a network of protected sites which are designated for rare and threatened species and rare natural habitat types. This Network includes Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) designated under the EC Habitats Directive 1992. The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017², as amended by The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019³, transposes the land and marine aspects of the Habitats Directive into domestic law, and outlines how the National Site Network will be managed and reflect any changes required by EU Exit.

Southern IFCA has duties under Regulation 9(3) of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 as a competent authority, with functions relevant to marine conservation to exercise those functions so as to secure compliance with the Habitats Directive. Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive requires any plan or project likely to have a significant effect on a National Site Network Site, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, to undergo an Appropriate Assessment to determine its implications for the site. The implications of any plan or project must be assessed in the view of the site's Conservation Objectives.

Southern IFCA has authorized mussel dredging activity, under the 'Mussels' byelaw in an area adjacent to the Studland to Portland SAC since 2011 following the designation of the candidate SAC and subsequently the full SAC designation. Fishing activity for mussels in the area to the east of Portland Bill has been taking place since 1991. In 2023, Southern IFCA received a request from the vessel currently authorised under the authorisation issued for 2023 to be authorised for 2024 and, under the 2024 authorisation, to extend the area available for mussel dredging to include areas within the Studland to Portland SAC surrounding Portland Bill. Therefore, this change in the spatial area available under the authorisation, to include areas within the SAC requires a Habitats Regulations Assessment to determine whether the issuing of the authorisation with the proposed conditions for 2024 will hinder the achievement of the conservation objectives for the Studland to Portland SAC and lead to an adverse effect on site integrity.

The purpose of this document is to assess whether or not in the view of Southern IFCA, mussel dredging activity alone will have a likely significant effect on the features and sub-features of the Studland to Portland SAC, and in-combination with other plans or projects. The assessment ensures Southern IFCA meets its responsibilities as a competent authority by ensuring the Conservation Objectives of the SAC will be met and the integrity of the site is not adversely affected.

Southern IFCA have completed a Test of Likely Significant Effect (TLSE) for the mussel dredging in the Studland to Portland SAC. Advice on Operations for dredging indicated potential pressures that may be exerted by the activity on the features of the site and therefore an Appropriate Assessment (AA) is also required. This document contains the AA for mussel dredging within the Studland to Portland SAC.

2 Documents reviewed to inform this assessment

- Reference List (Section 14)
- Natural England's Conservation Advice⁴
- Site maps – feature location and extent (Section 4.2.2)
- Fishing Activity Maps (Section 4.2.2)
- Fisheries Impact Evidence Database (FIED)

¹ The National Site Network is the network of sites in the United Kingdom's territory consisting of such sites as immediately before EU Exit day formed part of the Natura 2000 site network.

² [The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk)

³ [The Conservation of Habitats and Species \(Amendment\) \(EU Exit\) Regulations 2019 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk)

⁴ [Natural England Conservation Advice for Studland to Portland SAC](#)

3 Information about the SAC

- Studland to Portland SAC (Site Code: UK0030382)

3.1 Overview and relevant features/supporting habitats

The Studland to Portland SAC is made up of two areas found off the coast of Dorset around Weymouth. The two sections are the Studland Bay to Ringstead Bay reefs and the Portland reefs. The site supports a variety of geological and reef features including soft chalk bedrock, limestone ledges, shale reefs and seabed caves. These features support important species such as seagrass beds, maerl beds, *Ampelisca* mats and *Sabellaria* reefs. At the Portland reef, extensive mussel beds can be found as well as flat bedrock, limestone ledges, large boulders and cobbles.

Relevant features of the SAC:

- Reefs
 - Circalittoral rock
 - Infralittoral rock
 - Subtidal stony reef

3.2 Conservation Objectives

For Special Areas of Conservation

The Conservation Objectives apply to the site and individual species and/or assemblage of species for which the site has been classified (the “Qualifying features” listed above).

The objectives are to ensure that, subject to natural change, the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its qualifying features, by maintaining or restoring:

- The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats and habitats of the qualifying species
- The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats
- The structure and function of the habitats of the qualifying species
- The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats and the habitats of qualifying species rely
- The populations of each of the qualifying species
- The distribution of qualifying species within the site

4 Information about the fishing activities within the sites

4.1 Fishing activities under consideration

This HRA is being conducted to assess the impact of mussel dredging upon the features ‘reefs’ in the Studland to Portland SAC. There is currently one fishing vessel authorized by the Southern IFCA to remove seed mussel for the purpose of relaying in Poole Harbour (current authorisation valid until 31st December 2023). Under the conditions applied to the 2023 authorisation, the vessel is currently constrained to an area outside of the Studland to Portland SAC, this area is displayed in Section 4.2.2.

4.2 Technical gear specifications

4.2.1 Mussel Dredge Specifications

The vessel in question uses two steel framed mussel dredges, each are 5t by 5ft. The dredge is constructed with a steel bag with 4-10 mm mesh on the bottom and net on top⁵ (Figure 1).

⁵ Per Comm., Master of authorised vessel under 2023 authorisation



Figure 1 Images of the mussel dredge used in harvesting operations

4.2.2 Location, Scale and Effort of fishing Activities

The area of seabed to the east and southeast of Portland Bill, within 6 nautical miles, is a known settlement site for mussels (*Mytilus edulis*). In this location mussels form dense communities over areas of rocky and coarse sediment seabed, mostly between 30-50m water depth, in areas associated with strong currents.

Fishing activity for mussels in the area to the east of Portland Bill has been taking place since 1991 and the area was subject to regular activity until 2014. Over the winter of 2014-2015 the mussel bed almost completely disappeared, the most likely cause being the impact of severe storms. Between 2015 and 2019 the mussel bed showed signs of recovery and in 2019, the Authority resumed the issuing of an authorisation for this activity in this area.

Fishing for mussels under the MCRS of 50mm can only be undertaken in accordance with an authorisation issued by Southern IFCA under the Southern IFCA 'Mussels' byelaw and can only be removed for the purpose of mussel cultivation by being placed without delay on a mussel cultivation bed or laying situated within the Southern IFCA District where there is a Several, Charter or other private right of fishery for mussels.

In 2011, due to the proposal for Studland to Portland SAC, the fishery became subject to an annual HRA and the adoption of a series of restrictive measures as conditions to the authorisation which, over time, have included spatial restrictions, an allowed catch level (TAC) and reporting requirements. From 2019 onwards, the authorisation defined a spatial area outside of the boundary of the SAC within which the activity could take place, the extent of this area has varied between authorisations issued from 2019 to 2023, the current extent is shown in Figure 2 and has been in place since 2021. Since 2022, the Authority has authorised the removal of no more than 1,000 tonnes of mussel from the defined area.

98.5% of the area of the Studland to Portland SAC that surrounds Portland Bill and is within the Southern IFCA District is closed to all types of BTFG under the BTFG Byelaw 2016. The prohibited areas cover all of the designated reef features (as mapped in the best available evidence – data layer provided to Southern IFCA by Natural England). The reef feature has a 106m buffer applied as per the JNCC/Natural England Buffer Guidance, prohibited areas are then defined to include the extent of the feature and this buffer zone. There are two areas of the SAC which are not closed under the BTFG Byelaw 2016 as evidence demonstrates that no designated feature or buffer zone is present in these areas. In these areas, other forms of BTFG activity are permitted to occur. The areas within the SAC open to BTFG equal approximately 0.8km².

For the mussel dredging activity, each tow lasts between 2 and 3 minutes typically covering 100m of seabed (Collins, 2011) in distance at a speed of 2 to 2.5 knots. Each tow removes approximately 1 tonne of mussel from the fishery with no by catch due to the slow speed of tow. The dredge is estimated to be 50% efficient (Collins, 2011). The dredge contents are emptied directly onto the sorting table, and straight into bags; no sorting occurs due to the absence of bycatch. The vessel undertakes up to 8 tows per day, with an approximate total fishing time of up to 40 minutes (daily variations dependent on requirements of mussel aquaculture operations in Poole Harbour). The tonnage of mussel landed per day is limited by the transport available, the normal transport lorry can only transport up to 8 tonnes⁶.

Historically, the fishery was noted to remove 19,426.8 tonnes of mussel from the Portland mussel beds between 2001 and 2010. Between 2011 and 2014, the average annual catch was 830 tonnes with activity predominantly taking place between March and July each year (Southern IFCA, 2015). For 2022, 432 tonnes of mussels were removed between January and July and in 2023, with data available up to September 772.5 tonne of mussel had been removed (Southern IFCA data). The TAC on mussels stipulated in the authorisation conditions has varied over time, in 2022 it was agreed by the Authority that it would be increased from 500 tonne to 1000 tonne.

The mussels harvested must be used for the purpose of relaying, in this case onto lease beds under The Poole Harbour Fishery Order 2015. The aquaculture industry in Poole Harbour is of significant economic importance, mussel production for the financial year 2014/2015 was 262.5 tonne and it was estimated that

⁶ Per Comm., Master of authorised vessel under 2023 authorisation

the Total Economic Activity from aquaculture in Poole Harbour (across all species, predominantly Pacific oyster and mussel) was £2,615,250 (Williams and Davies, 2018). Recent data for mussel harvesting from aquaculture (noting that the species is not harvested from lease beds every year) shows quantities from 30 to 173.5 tonnes (Southern IFCA data).

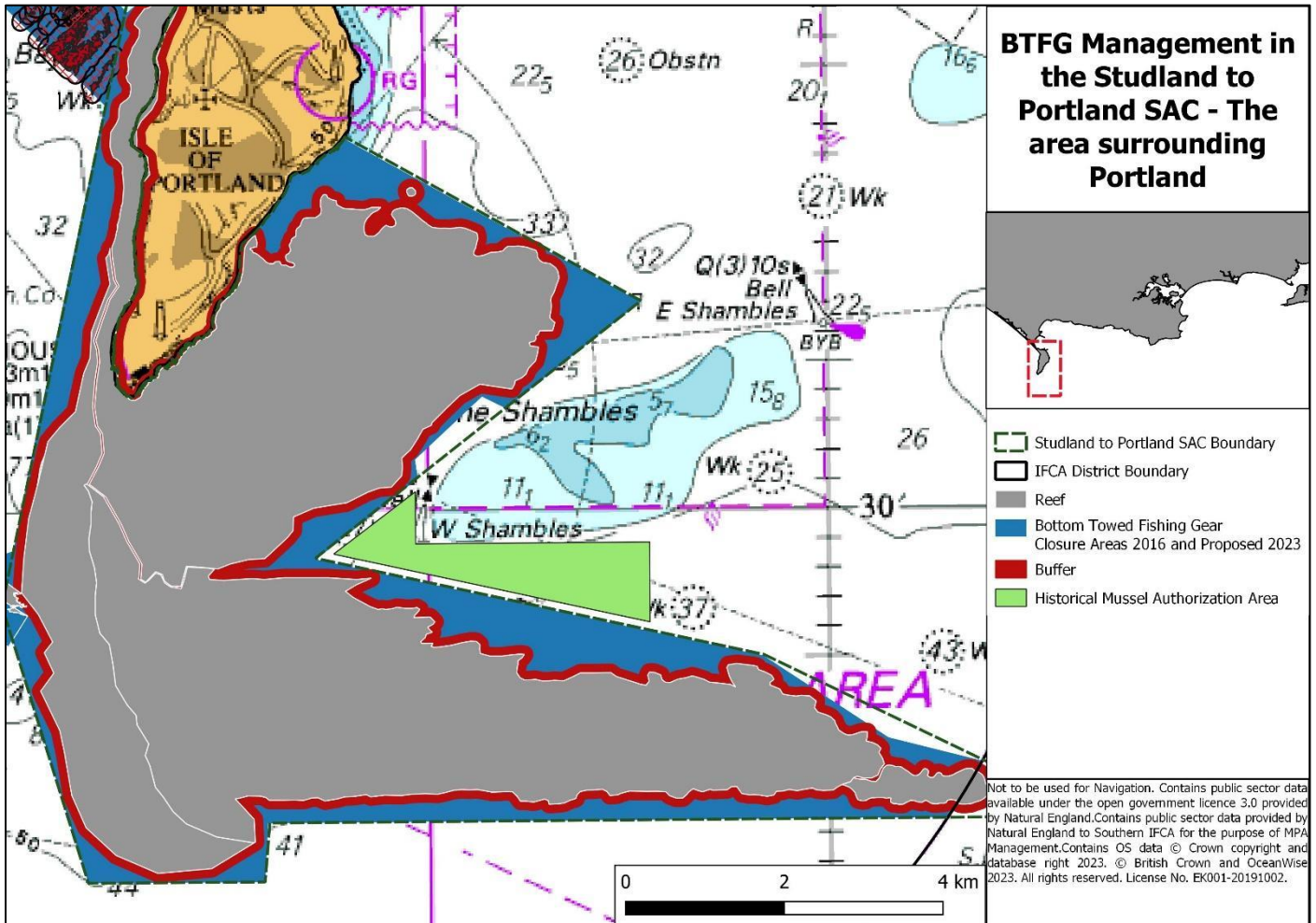


Figure 2 The area of the Studland to Portland SAC that surrounds Portland with the current prohibited area under the BTFG Byelaw 2016 and proposed prohibited area under the BTFG Byelaw 2023 (no change) and the historically authorised mussel dredging area (authorised under 2023 authorisation).

Outside of the prohibited area BTFG activities can take place. Sightings data collected by IFCOs whilst out on boat patrol gives an indication as to the location of these activities after the introduction of the BTFG byelaw 2016. These activities are noted to occur just outside of the prohibited areas. Sightings data (Figure 3) collected by IFCOs between 2017 and 2023⁷ shows where BTFG activity has been seen to occur in the area surrounding the SAC during patrols.

⁷ Data from 2020 is very limited. Southern IFCA patrols are intelligence led with duration and location of patrol dependent on risk. Sightings data provides an overview of a fishery but should be viewed with caution.

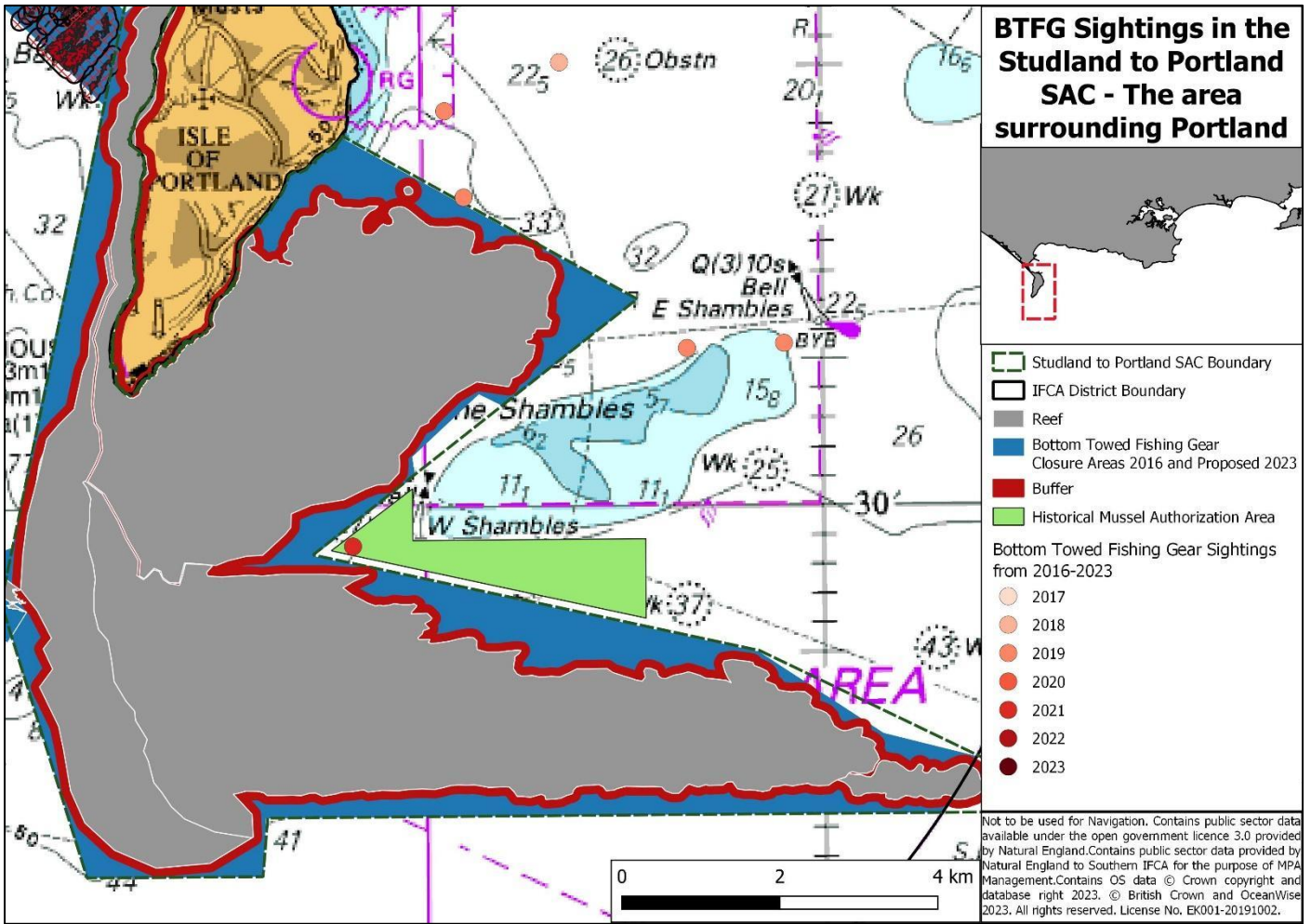


Figure 3 A map of bottom towed fishing activity in the area surrounding Portland Bill from 2016 to 2023.

5 Test of Likely Significant Effect (TSLE)

The Habitats Regulations assessment (HRA) is a stepwise process and is first subject to a coarse test of whether a plan or project will cause a likely significant effect on an National Site Network Site⁸. Each feature/sub-feature was subject to a TLSE⁹. The pressures included in the appropriate assessment are as follows:

- Abrasion/disturbance of the substrate on the surface of the seabed
- Changes in suspended solids (water clarity)
- Penetration and/or disturbance of the substratum below the surface of the seabed, including abrasion
- Removal of non-target species
- Removal of target species
- Smothering and siltation rate changes (Light)

6 Appropriate Assessment

6.1 Co-location of fishing activity and site features/sub-features

In general, BTFG are not currently used within or in close proximity to reefs, partly due to the unsuitability of the substrate for most fishing gears but also due to the fact that in recent years great awareness of the sensitivity of these habitats to BTFG has occurred within the fishing communities. All reef features in the Studland to Portland SAC are protected by prohibited areas under the BTFG Byelaw 2016 which include features being enclosed by a buffer of 106m, with the proposed BTFG Byelaw 2023 maintaining this closure. Therefore, there is no potential for overlap between the activity and the designated features of the site. Consideration has been given to each of the potential pressures identified in the TLSE in section 6.2 below, however this should be viewed in the knowledge of the lack of overlap between activity and the designated features referenced above.

There is little to no literature on the specific effects of mussel dredges on reef features. Therefore, the discussion below provides an overview of a range of bottom towed fishing gears and dredges and their effects. Specific information from studies carried out by the University of Southampton and Southern IFCA on the mussel beds at Portland and the associated historic mussel fishing activity in 2011, 2013, 2014 and 2018 is included as a separate section, 6.3, with section 6.2 below referencing wider scientific literature.

6.2 Potential impacts

6.2.1 Abrasion/disturbance of the substrate on the surface of the seabed / Penetration and/or disturbance of the substrate below the surface of the seabed, including abrasion/ Removal of non-target and target species

The environmental impacts of bottom towed fishing gear are complex (Boulcott *et al.*, 2014). The extent of disturbance depends on several factors including substrate type (Kaiser *et al.*, 2002), design and weight of the gear (Boulcott & Howell, 2011) performance of the gear over a particular substrate (Caddy, 1973; Currie and Parry, 1999) and the sensitivity of the benthic community (Currie and Parry, 1996; Bergman *et al.*, 1998; Collie *et al.*, 2000a; Boulcott *et al.*, 2014).

In a meta-analysis of 41 bottom towed impact control studies, only 3 were found to look at reef features, and these focused on biogenic reefs (Hiddink *et al.*, 2020). The meta-analysis revealed that effects of bottom towed gears were strongest on coarse sediments and biogenic structures. Additionally, those effects were worse for impacts caused by dredges rather than trawls (Hiddink *et al.*, 2020). Whole community biomass and numbers were found to be strongly negatively affected by bottom towed gear in benthic habitats and

⁸ Managing Natura 2000 sites: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/management/guidance_en.htm

⁹ TSLE - Mussel Dredging - Studland to Portland SAC - 2023

were determined to be the best indicators (Hinddick *et al.*, 2020). However, biomass of individual taxa was not found to be significantly affected (Hiddink *et al.*, 2020).

Dredges

Very few studies have been carried out of the impacts of bottom towed fishing gear over rocky reef habitat. A meta-analysis of 39 fishing impact studies revealed dredging had a more negative impact than trawling (Collie *et al.*, 2000b). Potential effects include reductions in habitat structural complexity and subsequent habitat homogenisation, reduction in biodiversity, removal of erect epifaunal species and large sessile species some of which are likely to be large, fragile and long-lived and physical damage to fragile structures (Sewell and Hiscock, 2005). Such impacts are caused through direct contact with the seabed.

Cranfield *et al.*, (2003) studied the effect of oyster dredges in the Foveaux Strait, New Zealand, on bryozoan biogenic reefs. Side scan surveys revealed that dredging over the reefs completely removed the biogenic structure and, on the fringes, had damaged the framework structure (Cranfield *et al.*, 2003). The removal of the biogenic structures had exposed associated sediments which were then transported down current, however this sediment supply stopped when dredging ceased due to a lack of oyster stock (Cranfield *et al.*, 2003).

In Lyme Bay, within the southern IFCA district king scallops are typically harvested using mechanical dredges in the past over rocky, boulder and cobble reef habitats (Munro & Baldock, 2012). The introduction of a statutory closed area provided the opportunity to measure the effects of scallop dredging over rocky habitats. Three types of area were studied – areas which had been voluntarily closed to fishing before the statutory closure, areas newly closed as a part of the statutory closure, and areas which were open to fishing. In open areas there were significantly fewer taxa when compared to both closed and newly closed areas. In particular the number of branching sponges and cover of sponge crusts were significantly lower in areas open to scallop dredging (Munro & Baldock, 2012). The assemblage composition was also significantly different between open and closed areas (Munro & Baldock, 2012). Open sites were characterised by hydroids, polychaetes and barnacles, whilst the closed sites contained sponges as an important component (Munro & Baldock, 2012).

Information relating specifically to Mussel dredging activity is particularly limited. However, in an artisanal Patagonian Mussel Fishery, mussels were found to account for 70% of the total species caught in a mussel dredge of approximately 5ft by 5 ft with 80mm mesh; this accounted for 56.8% of the total catch by weight (Navarte *et al.*, 2011). A study in a similar location, found that only 4% of mussels were damaged during the dredging process which was similar to that cause by diving. Whilst the damage to the target species was low, approximately 75% of the bycatch of Sea Urchins and Ophiroids were damaged (the majority lightly damaged) (Navarte *et al.*, 2012).

The removal of mussels may have an impact on the other species associated with reef habitats. Studies focused on the illegal removal of mussels on the Southeastern coast of Italy, found that fish communities significantly differed between sites exposed to mussel fishing and control sites (Guidetti *et al.*, 2004). There has also been an increase in the abundance of Ophiroids in areas impacted by the illegal mussel removal (Guidetti *et al.*, 2003), and an impact to the recovery of the effected reefs, delayed by the increased grazing of Ophiroids the affected areas (Fanelli *et al.*, 1994)

6.2.2 Changes in suspended solids/ Smothering and siltation rate changes

The resuspension of fine sediments takes place as fishing gear is towed along the seafloor (Johnson *et al.*, 2002). Larger sand particles are redeposited near the dredge whilst measurable amounts of fine silt and clay particles remain in suspension and are potentially transported away by currents (Godcharles, 1971; Tuck *et al.*, 2000). The effects of sediment resuspension include increased turbidity and thus a reduction in light, burial of benthic biota, smothering of adjacent areas including potential spawning areas, and negative effects on the feeding and metabolic rates of organisms (Johnson *et al.*, 2002). These effects are site-specific and

depend on grain size, sediment type, water depth, hydrological conditions, sensitivity of fauna, currents, tides and water mass properties (Coen, 1995).

Where gear is towed over rocky habitat the impact of this will be significantly reduced due to the low or non-existence level of sediment present within the sea habitats. However, if gear is towed between reef areas in coarse and mixed sediment the suspension of sediment is likely.

Information relating to sediment plumes as a result of mussel dredging is limited however one model suggests sediment plumes could reach between 260 and 540m from the dredging site and take up to one hour for the lightest particles to re-settle. It should be noted, this model was developed using 4 light Dutch dredges towed behind a fishing vessel in Norway with some of the survey occurring within an Eelgrass protection area (Saurel et al, 2021).

Dale *et al.*, (2011) used a particle tracking model to determine the effect of a vessel towing eight dredges on either side in a water current of 0.1m per second. The model suggested that the majority of sediment size classes suspended settle within 100 meters of the dredge (Dale *et al.*, 2011). Of the suspended sand and larger particles, only 10m from the dredge all but 3.6% of these particles will have settled (Dale *et al.*, 2011). However, of the fraction of silt that makes up the sediment, 92.5% persists in the water column 100m away from the dredge site (Dale *et al.*, 2011). The total sediment accumulation immediately outside the dredge is just 1.6mm, and, after 1 hour, just 8.2% of the suspended silt remains in suspension at 315m away from the dredge which is comparable to low natural suspended sediment levels (Dale *et al.*, 2011).

For a 48-minute dredge tow, in combination with tidal period, in the far field (where the sediment has been carried by the current away from the dredge site) the maximum suspended concentration is 0.24g per m cubed, with a maximum settled thickness of 0.0012mm (Dale *et al.*, 2011). If sediment hotspots from multiple vessels coincided it would take more than 15 tows for silt concentrations to match low natural levels, and more than 200 tows for the levels to equal that seen during stormy conditions (Dale *et al.*, 2011). The model therefore suggests that reefs in the area are only at risk if they are within 10m of the dredge site, and that those which lay further afield will not be significantly affected by changes in turbidity, siltation or smothering rates beyond natural levels (Dale *et al.*, 2011).

The resuspension of sediment can impact upon benthic communities through smothering, burial and increased turbidity. These effects may extend to organisms living a distance away from the fished area (Kyte & Chew, 1975). If high levels of sediment are resuspended and exposure to such events is regular, impacts may be severe (Mercaldo-Allen & Goldberg, 2011). Increased turbidity can inhibit respiratory and feeding functions of benthic organisms, in addition to causing hypoxia or anoxia (Morgan & Chuenpagdee, 2003). Sediment resuspension can jeopardise the survival of bivalves and fish as a result of clogged gills and inhibition of burrowing activity (Dorsey & Pederson, 1998). Small organisms and immobile species are particularly vulnerable to smothering (Manning, 1957). A redistribution of finer sediment can also hinder the settlement of organisms if hard surfaces are smothered (Tarnowski, 2006). The severity of such impacts is largely determined by sediment type, the level of sediment burden and the tolerance of organisms which is largely related to their biology (i.e. size, relationship to substrate, life history, mobility) (Coen, 1995).

6.2.3 Sensitivity analyses

A number of recent studies have endeavoured to map the sensitivity of habitats to different pressures (Tillin *et al.*, 2010) and fishing activities (Hall *et al.*, 2008).

Tillin *et al.* (2010) developed a pressure-feature sensitivity matrix, which in effect is a risk assessment of the compatibility of specific pressure levels and different features of marine protected areas. The approach used considered the resistance (tolerance) and resilience (recovery) of a feature in order to assess its sensitivity to relevant pressures (Tillin *et al.*, 2010). Where features have been identified as moderately or highly sensitive to benchmark pressure levels, management measures may be needed to support achievement of conservation objectives in situations where activities are likely to exert comparable levels of pressure (Tillin *et al.*, 2010). In the context of this assessment, the relevant pressures likely to be exerted are surface

abrasion, shallow abrasion/penetration and penetration and/or disturbance of the substrate below the surface of the seabed (Table 1).

Hall *et al.* 2008 aimed to assess the sensitivity of benthic habitats to fishing activities. A matrix approach was used, composed of fishing activities and marine habitat types and for each fishing activity sensitivity was scored for four levels of activity (Hall *et al.*, 2008). The matrix was completed using a mixture of scientific literature and expert judgement (Hall *et al.*, 2008). The type of fishing activity chosen was 'beam trawls and scallop dredges' and 'light demersal trawls and seines' as they best encompassed the fishing activities under consideration. The majority towed bottom gears were considered unlikely to be deployed in these habitat types and as such were not assessed for heavy to light gear intensities. Rock with erect and branching species appears to be slightly less sensitive to a single pass of the heavier gear types than very slow growing erect and branching species (Table 2). On the other hand, the assessment for the lighter gear type revealed a high sensitivity for both habitat types to a single pass, which may be inaccurate when considering against the sensitivity assigned for heavier gear types.

Table 1 Sensitivity of features to pressures identified by Tillin *et al.* (2010). Confidence of sensitivity assessment is included in brackets.

Feature	Pressure			
	Surface abrasion: damage to seabed surface features	Shallow abrasion/penetration: damage to seabed surface and penetration	Penetration and/or disturbance of the substrate below the surface of the seabed	Siltation rate changes (low)
High energy infralittoral rock	Medium (Low)	Medium (Low)	Medium (Low)	Not sensitive (low)
Moderate energy infralittoral rock	Medium (Low)	Medium (Low)	Medium (Low)	Not sensitive (low)
Low energy infralittoral rock	Low (low)	Medium (Low)	Medium (low)	Low (Low)
High energy circalittoral rock	Medium to High (Low)	Medium to High (Low)	Medium to High (Low)	Medium to High (Low)
Moderate energy circalittoral rock	Low to high (Low)	Medium to High (Low)	Medium to High (Low)	Not sensitive to high (low)
Low energy circalittoral rock	Medium (low)	Medium (low)	Medium (low)	Not sensitive to medium (low)
Fragile sponge and anthozoan communities on subtidal rocky habitats	High (high)	High (low)	High (low)	Medium (low)
Subtidal Biogenic Reefs	Low- medium (low)	Medium to High (Low)	Medium to High (Low)	Not sensitive to medium (low)
High energy intertidal Rock	Medium (low)	Medium to High (Low)	Medium to High (Low)	Not Sensitive - low (Low)
Moderate energy intertidal Rock	Medium (low)	Medium to High (Low)	Medium to High (Low)	Not Sensitive - low (low)
Low energy intertidal Rock	Medium – high (low)	Medium to High (Low)	Medium to High (Low)	Not Sensitive - high (low)

Table 2 Sensitivity of relevant features to different intensities (high, medium, low, single pass) as identified by Hall *et al.* (2008).

Gear Type	Habitat Type	Gear Intensity*			
		Heavy	Moderate	Light	Single pass
Beam trawls and scallop dredges	Rock with erect and branching species				Medium
	Erect and branching spp. very slow growing				High

Mussels & Piddocks on intertidal clay and peat	High	Medium	Medium	Medium
Sheltered bedrock boulders & cobbles				High
Rock with low-lying fast-growing faunal turf				Low
Rock with erect and branching species				Medium
Shallow subtidal rock with kelp				Medium

There is no information on sensitivity for many of the heavy, moderate or light gear intensity as the gear types are considered unlikely to occur in these habitat types.

* **Heavy** – Daily in 2.5nm x 2.5 nm, **Moderate** – 1-2 times a week in 2.5 nm x 2.5 nm, **Light** – 1-2 times a month during a season in 2.5 nm x 2.5 nm, **Single** – Single pass of fishing activity in a year overall

6.2.4 Recovery

Since the introduction of a statutory closed area in Lyme Bay it has provided the opportunity to study the recovery of rocky reef habitats and species from the effects of scallop dredging. Three years after the gear was prohibited, overall sessile reef associated species (RAS) were significantly greater within the Marine Protected Area compared to before and still open controls (Sheehan *et al.*, 2013). The mean abundance of RAS increased by 158%. Analysis of the assemblage compositions revealed that before the closure open to fishing and MPA sites were similar to one another, however after three years before and after sites assemblage composition were significantly different. Four species (ross coral, sea squirt (*P. mammillata*), dead man's fingers and branching sponges) significantly increased in abundance from before the MPA to the after the MPA relative to open to fishing controls (Sheehan *et al.*, 2013). These species were found in coarse, cobbled and boulder sediment areas between those areas of solid bedrock, showing that the exclusion of bottom towed fishing gear not only enables the reef itself to recover, but also enables reef associated species to thrive in areas between reef structures (Sheehan *et al.*, 2013).

A longer-term study of the Lyme Bay reefs found that species recovery within these sites is linked to life history characteristics (Kaiser *et al.*, 2018). Species with high dispersal rates and less specific habitat requirement such as soft corals (dead men's fingers) and king scallops recovered within 3 years, whilst longer lived ross corals, white sea squirts and pink sea fans increased in abundance but had not fully recovered after 10 years (Kaiser *et al.*, 2018). Kaiser *et al.*, predicted that these species could take 17 to 20 years to recover fully from the damage of scallop dredging (Kaiser *et al.*, 2018).

Chalk, clay and peat support a sparse fauna, as the substrate is too hard for sedimentary species and too soft for most epifauna to attach. Therefore, species tend to be mobile or rapid colonisers. Burrowing piddock's are most commonly found. Once a juvenile has settled and developed it cannot leave its burrow, therefore recolonization and recovery of this community would have to be through settlement of juveniles. Their planktonic larvae spend 45 days in the water column (Knight (1984). Sexually mature individuals can occur at a size of 2.7 cm (Pinn *et al.* 2005). *Pholas dactylus* lives to an estimate age of 14 years (Pinn *et al.* 2005) whilst *Petricolaria pholadiformis* may attain 10 year of age (Duval 1963). *Barnea candida* which reaches a much smaller size has a lifespan of around 6 years (Pinn *et al.* 2005).

Studies into the recovery of piddocks found that substratum type was most important, with the community recovering within two years on clay, and being able to select the substrate type (Richter & Sarnthein (1976). First observation of the species in new areas suggests its ability for long range dispersal (Micu (2007). The species and habitat may be exposed to storm damage, and on-going erosion of the soft substrate (Micu, 2007; Pinn *et al.*, 2005) indicating that the communities which rely upon them must have an effective recovery mechanism such as larval dispersal from source populations (Tillin & Hill, 2016). On peat habitat the common species *Ceramium virgatum* is known to recruit rapidly (within a month) to cleared surface (Brown *et al.* 2001).

Subtidal chalk and clay deposits are formed in prehistoric periods and can therefore not be renewed by transport of sediments in the water column. Therefore, impacts which cause the direct removal of the

substrate will lead to the disappearance of the feature, as there is no mechanism by which the substratum can be replaced (Tillin & Hill, 2016).

Foden *et al.* (2010) investigated recovery of different sediment types based on the spatial and temporal distribution of benthic fishing. Vessel monitoring system data (2006 to 2007) was used to estimate the distribution and intensity of scallop dredging, beam trawling and otter trawling in UK marine waters. This data was then linked to habitat in a geographic information system. Recovery periods (days) for different habitats were estimated based on existing scientific literature for gear types and fishing intensity (Table 3), with recovery rates generally increasing with sediment hardness. It was estimated that based on mean annual trawl frequencies that 80% of bottom-fished areas were able to recover completely before repeat trawling. In 19% percentage bottom-fished areas however, the frequency of scallop dredging in sand and gravel and otter trawling in muddy sand and reef habitats occurred at frequencies that prevented full habitat recovery. At average fishing intensities (for each gear type), sand and mud habitats were able to recover fully, whilst gravel, muddy sand and reef habitats were fished at frequencies in excess of the estimated recovery period.

Table 3 Recovery rates (days) of different habitats for different fishing gear types. ND: No Data. Source: Foden *et al.*, 2010.

Gear Type	Habitat Type
	Reef
Beam trawl	ND
Otter trawl	2922 ¹⁰
Scallop dredge	1175

6.3 Evidence on Portland Mussel Beds from work by University of Southampton and Southern IFCA

Southern IFCA have worked historically with Dr Ken Collins at the University of Southampton, National Oceanography Centre to conduct specific survey work related to the mussel beds at Portland and the associated mussel fishery.

In 2011 a study of the mussel bed was undertaken using data from mussel harvesting tows (mass of mussels collected, size distribution, associated species) as well as from towed video footage (Collins, 2011). Data collection occurred primarily within the boundary of the Studland to Portland SAC (then the Studland to Portland SCI) however some sampling also took place in areas outside the site boundary. Results from the study showed that the size distribution of mussels was variable with areas subject to harvesting activity yielding typically smaller mussels (approx. 2cm) compared to the wider ground where the size was 3-5cm (Collins, 2011). Analysis of video data from the mussel dredge indicated that the efficiency is only around 50% (Collins, 2011). Comparing the coverage of the seabed by mussels in harvested versus non-harvested areas, there was a significantly higher coverage within the two harvested areas surveyed (61% and 62%) than the non-harvested areas (50% and 45%) (Collins, 2011). The study concluded that, as harvesting had remained consistent in the 20 years prior to the survey taking place that the impact of dredging on the mussel bed was sustainable and that if there had been no new settlement occurring following dredging activity then the harvesting pattern would have needed to change which has not been the case. It was concluded that it was the removal of mussels which created seabed space for new settlement (Collins, 2011). Data from this study on associated species showed that the size of the mussels off Portland, rarely reaching >5cm in length, prevented stable structures from forming and thus there was not sufficient stability to be colonized by barnacles (Collins, 2011). The most common epifaunal species notes was a fast growing hydroid species

¹⁰ Kaiser *et al.* (2006) – see reference list

with other species noted as being most common being mussel predator specie including dog whelk (*Nucella lapillus*), starfish *Asteria rubens* and plaice.

Further work was carried out by Southern IFCA in 2013 and 2014 using benthic towed video surveys of designated fishing areas within the Studland to Portland SAC (then the Studland to Portland SCI) and two control sites (1km², one near to fishing areas to replicate the same biotope and one far control site with a different biotope).

The 2013 survey indicated mussel communities within designated fishing areas were in good health with no evidence of dredge scars or damage to beds as a result of fishing (Southern IFCA, 2015). Fishing areas were found to hold almost continuous patches of 100% mussel density consisting of exclusively small (2-3cm) mussels. The smaller mussels were not appearing to settle on mobile cobbles or sand. Larger mussels (4+cm) were found in small densities (10-25%) in the north of the two fishing areas (Southern IFCA, 2015). No significant difference in mussel density, average length or species richness was found between the two designated fishing areas and the near control site (same biotope). Significant difference in mussel density and average length between fishing areas and far control site but not species richness (Southern IFCA, 2015).

The 2014 survey showed that the mussel bed communities both within and outside of designated fishing areas experienced good levels of recent spat fall with extensive beds of mussel spat <1cm in length (Southern IFCA, 2015). The average size was approximately 1-2cm and there was almost a complete absence of the larger (4+cm) mussels found in previous surveys. It was determined that as these larger mussels were found more in the northern fishing site and the far control site, these had been most affected by damage from recent winter storms which may have resulted in the lack of larger mussels (Southern IFCA, 2015). In contrast to 2013, the southern fished site showed a significantly greater average mussel length (1.96cm) than both the northern fished site (0.75cm) and the near control (0.5cm). Continuous areas of 100% mussel density were found within the southern fished site with high densities also found within the near control site and in areas of the northern fished site. A maximum density of 75% mussel coverage was found at the far control site. Mussel densities increased between 2013 and 2014 in the near control site and southern fished site where tows from both surveys overlapped. Pattern in the northern fished site appeared to be consistent between years (Southern IFCA, 2015). There were relatively few additional species found at all four sites, occasional hydroids in the southern fish site and high densities of brittle stars (*Ophiothrix fragilis*) within the far control site. There was no evidence of dredge scars found during the survey.

The most recent survey work carried out was in 2018 involving a camera survey of five sites, two of which were within the Studland to Portland SAC, two outside and one overlapping the boundary. 5 minute tows were conducted covering a distance of 300m at a speed of 5 knots and a consistent depth of around 30m (Collins, 2018). The survey noted that the region is subject to high tidal current velocities, up to 7 knot, and the sediments in the area were not silty (Collins, 2018). It was concluded that mussel dredging is unlikely to cause changes in suspended solids (water clarity) or smother and siltation rate changes (light penetration) due to the nature of the sediments in the area (Collins, 2018). The study also found that the sediments in the sampling areas supported a low diversity of organisms, dominated by mussels. The main non-target species were noted to be the starfish *Asteria rubens*, a predator of mussels (Collins, 2018). The study also noted that sediments in the area are mobile and thus contribute to the low diversity found on rock surfaces with calcareous tubeworms being the main epifauna where mussels were absent. The study concluded that the potential for impact abrasion and sediment disturbance from mussel dredging were low (Collins, 2018).

6.4 Existing Management Measures

- **Bottom Towed Fishing Gear Byelaw 2016** – prohibits all types of bottom towed fishing gear over sensitive designated features including all reef features and seagrass within the District. This Byelaw creates a prohibited area covering all the identified reef features and a buffer zone of 106m in the Studland to Portland SAC (see Figure 2), the prohibited areas cover some further seabed area beyond the boundary of the buffer zone creating a buffer between the feature and BTFG of greater than 106m

in some areas. An updated version of this byelaw, the BTFG Byelaw 2023, developed through a review of BTFG management for National Site Network Sites in the District is currently (November 2023) with the MMO for review. There are no differences in the closure areas surrounding Portland Bill in the 2023 Byelaw, maintaining the closures in place currently under the 2016 Byelaw

- **Vessels Used in Fishing** byelaw – prohibits commercial fishing vessels over 12 metres from the Southern IFCA district. The reduction in vessel size also restricts the type of gear that can be used, with vessels often using lighter towed gear and restricted to carry less static gear.
- **Fishing for Oysters, Mussels and Clam** byelaw states that when fishing for these species only the following methods are used; a) hand picking and b) dredging using a dredge with a rigid framed mouth so designed to take shellfish only when towed along the seabed.
- **Oysters, Clams, Mussels – Prohibition on Night Fishing byelaw** – No person shall dredge or fish or take any before 8.00 am or after 4.00 pm, although this byelaw does not apply to the taking of clams and mussels during any closed season for oysters. This byelaw does also not apply to the dredging or fishing or taking of clams in Southampton Water North of the line joining the Northern ends of the Hamble and Fawley Oil Terminal Jetties
- **Temporary Closure of Shellfish Beds byelaw** - allows the authority to temporarily close any bed or part of a bed of shellfish where it is the opinion of the Committee that it is severely depleted and as such required temporary closure in order to ensure recovery, or any bed or part of bed containing mainly immature or undersized shellfish which is in the interest of protection and development of the fishery, or any bed of transplanted shellfish that ought to not be fished until it becomes established. In the context of this byelaw, 'shellfish' refers to mussels, oysters and clams.
- **Mussels byelaw** - No person shall remove from a fishery any mussel less than 50mm in length except where the mussels so removed are intended for the purpose of mussel cultivation by being placed without delay on a mussel cultivation bed or laying situated within the Southern Sea Fisheries District and within such bed or laying there is at the time a several or charter or other private right of fishery for mussels. Mussels for relaying may not be removed without first obtaining from the Chief Fishery Officer of the Committee his consent in writing which consent shall be given only if in the opinion of such Chief Fishery Officer their removal will not have a detrimental effect upon the fishery. This byelaw does not prejudicially affect any right of Several Fishery under the Sea Fisheries (Shellfish) Act 1967. An authorisation for mussel fishing under this Byelaw is in place for 2023, the authorisation contains conditions which the applicant must adhere to including a restriction on quantity of mussels landed to 1000 tonnes and reporting requirements to indicate when fishing activity under the authorisation will be taking place.

7 Table 4 Summary of Impacts

Feature(s)/ Supporting habitat(s)	Attribute	Target	Potential Pressure(s) and Impacts	Nature and Likelihood of Impacts	Mitigation measures
Reefs (Infralittoral Rock, Subtidal Stony Reef, Circalittoral Rock)	Distribution: presence and spatial distribution of biological communities	Maintain the presence and spatial distribution of reef communities according to the map	Abrasion/disturbance of the substrate on the surface of the seabed and penetration and/or disturbance of the substrate below the surface of the seabed, including abrasion, and removal or target and non-target species were identified as potential pressures.	<p>Nature of Potential Impacts</p> <p>Rocky reef habitats support a wide range of fauna including algae, hard corals, soft corals, hydrozoans, sea squirts, sponges, crustaceans, echinoderms, fish and many more. In addition, they can support nationally rare species such as the pink sea fan and sunset cup coral.</p> <p>Scientific literature has indicated that dredging and trawling can have significant negative effects on the presence, diversity and abundance of many reef associated species. The intensity of the activity is linked to the severity of the affects. Recovery of reef associated species in Lyme Bay, Dorset is between 3 and 20 years depending on the life history characteristics of the species.</p> <p>Hall <i>et al.</i>, (2008) assessed the sensitivity of reef habitats to all bottom towed fishing gear types for a single pass to be medium to high.</p> <p>Likelihood of Impacts</p> <p>All the reef features in the Studland to Portland SAC are protected by the Bottom Towed Fishing Gear Byelaw 2016 and the updated BTFG Byelaw 2023 byelaw which is (as of November 2023) with the MMO for QA, which prohibits all BTFG activities over sensitive features such as reefs through the definition of prohibited areas which also include a buffer zone around designated features in accordance with NE/JNCC buffer guidance, in this case 106m. The final shapes of the prohibited areas also result in this buffer between the feature and fishing activity being greater in some areas than 106m. Therefore, mussel</p>	<p>Bottom Towed Fishing Gear byelaw 2016 – prohibits bottom towed fishing gear over sensitive features including reefs within the District, closing most of these habitats to these activities</p> <p>Further assessment of reef features in SACs across the District in 2020 under the BTFG review identified that two small areas of the SAC where no reef feature is present could remain open to other types of BTFG.</p> <p>Conditions are attached to the authorisation, proposed conditions include a TAC of 1000 tonnes, prior reporting requirements and catch reporting which has been enhanced for the 2024 authorisation to provide greater spatial information on fishing activity conducted under the authorisation. The vessel is also limited by fishing hours and the transport required for the landed mussels to be relayed</p>
	Structure and function: presence and abundance of key structural and influential species	Maintain or recover the abundance of listed species to enable each of them to be a viable component of the habitat	Bottom towed fishing gear directly impacts on rock habitats through physical passage of fishing gear over the seabed. The mesh of a mussel dredge scrapes the surface and can lead to the damage and removal of erect, branching and soft epifaunal species.		
	Structure: species composition of component communities	Maintain the species composition of component communities	Recovery of these species will take years and is dependent upon the life history characteristics of the species, with some predicted to require 20 years to recover.		

				<p>dredging will not overlap with reef habitats.</p> <p>Data from studies on the mussel fishery in 2011, 2013, 2014 and 2018 showed that sediments which are dominated by mussels showed a low diversity of other species and no difference in species richness between sites historically subject to harvesting and control sites.</p> <p>Collins (2018) concluded that impacts from abrasion from this activity are low and found that there were no observable dredge scars during survey work with no observable adverse impact to fished sites compared to non-fished sites.</p> <p>For the target species, data from specific studies on the Portland mussel bed and fished areas showed a significantly higher % coverage of mussels in harvested areas compared to non-harvested areas.</p> <p>Activity occurs from a single vessel, operating a maximum of 8 tows per day for a maximum of 40 minutes total towing time.</p>	into Poole Harbour.
	Structure: physical structure of rocky substrate	Maintain the surface and structural complexity, and the stability of the reef structure	<p>Physical impacts on the seabed from trawling and dredging include scraping and ploughing, creation of depressions, trenches, scouring and flattening of the seabed, and dragging of large boulders/rock features.</p> <p>Studies on the effects of otter trawling in variable habitats have revealed trawling can lead to the removal of biogenic structures, moved or overturn stones and boulders, smooth the seafloor and exposed sediment/shell fragments.</p>	Addressed Above	Addressed Above
	Supporting Process sedimentation rate	Maintain the natural rate of sediment deposition	Smothering and siltation rate changes (Light) and Changes in suspended solids (water clarity)	Nature of Potential Impacts Rocky reef habitats support a wide range of fauna	Addressed Above

	<p>Supporting processes water quality - turbidity</p>	<p>Maintain natural levels of turbidity (e.g., concentrations of suspended sediment, plankton and other material) across the habitat</p>	<p>were identified as potential pressures.</p> <p>The resuspension of sediment can impact upon benthic communities through smothering, burial and increased turbidity. These effects may extend to organisms living a distance away from the fished area.</p> <p>The timescale for recovery after trawling disturbance largely depends on sediment type, associated fauna and rate of natural disturbance, and variation in recovery arises from characteristics specific to the site. Generally speaking, locations subject to high levels of natural disturbance, the associated fauna are likely to be adapted to withstand and recover from disturbance.</p>	<p>including algae, hard corals, soft corals, hydrozoans, sea squirts, sponges, crustaceans, echinoderms, fish and many more. In addition, they can support nationally rare species such as the pink sea fan and sunset cup coral.</p> <p>Scientific literature has indicated that dredging and trawling may resuspend sediment which can lead to changes in smothering and siltation rate. This can negatively affect communities through smothering, burial and restriction of respiratory or feeding processes. The timescale for recovery for these processes however varies considerably depending on the scale of the impact.</p> <p>Dale <i>et al.</i>, (2011) used a model to track suspended sediment from a boat towing 8 dredges on either side. The model suggested that reefs in the area are only at risk if they are within 10m of the dredge site, and that those which lay further afield will not be significantly affected by changes in turbidity, siltation or smothering rates beyond natural levels (Dale <i>et al.</i>, 2011).</p> <p>Tillin <i>et al.</i>, (2010) completed a sensitivity assessment of reef habitats to siltation rate changes. He found that intertidal and infralittoral rock had a low or were not sensitive to this pressure. Circalittoral rock was not sensitive to high sensitivity to this pressure, whilst fragile sponge and anthozoan species showed medium sensitivity to this species.</p> <p>Likelihood of Impact All the reef features in the Studland to Portland SAC are protected by the Bottom Towed Fishing Gear Byelaw 2016 and the updated BTFG Byelaw 2023 byelaw which is (as of November 2023) with the MMO for QA, which prohibits all BTFG activities over sensitive features such as reefs through the definition of prohibited areas</p>	
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				<p>which also include a buffer zone around designated features in accordance with NE/JNCC buffer guidance, in this case 106m. The final shapes of the prohibited areas also result in this buffer between the feature and fishing activity being greater in some areas than 106m. Therefore, mussel dredging will not overlap with reef habitats.</p> <p>Activity occurring outside the boundary of the SAC is also unlikely to have an impact on features within the SAC due to the distance between the boundary of the prohibited areas and the location of the feature with a buffer of at least 106m (greater when taking into account the shape of the prohibited area in some places) between the feature and the prohibited area boundary. Wider scientific studies have shown distances smaller than this are required for their to be a significant effect of turbidity, siltation or smothering beyond natural levels (Dale <i>et al.</i>, 2011). Specific studies on the Portland mussel beds have shown that the region is subject to high tidal current velocities with sediments not being silty, concluding that mussel dredging is unlikely to cause changes in suspended solids or smothering and siltation rate changes (Collins, 2018).</p>	
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8 Management Measures

Based on the findings of the assessment, mussel dredging is unlikely to have an effect on the designated features of reef within the Studland to Portland SAC. All reef features are currently protected under the Bottom Towed Fishing Gear Byelaw 2016 and will remain protected under the BTFG Byelaw 2023, developed through a review of BTFG, currently with the MMO (November 2023).

It is therefore recommended that this fishery is managed under an authorisation issued for 1st January to 31st December 2024, to authorise mussel dredging for seed mussel for the purpose of relaying for aquaculture with the activity required, under the authorisation, to comply with the following conditions:

It is proposed that F/V Nicola L (WY37) is authorised to remove seed mussel until 31st December 2024:

- i. A total of no more than 1,000 tonnes of mussel are removed during the period for which this authorisation is valid;
- ii. All mussels landed are relayed for a minimum of 6 months on a Several Fishery lay within Poole Harbour;
- iii. Whilst fishing for mussels, the vessel is fitted with an operational VMS unit;
- iv. The Southern IFCA Office is notified by telephone no less than 12 hours and during office hours (0900-1700) prior to daily mussel fishing operations;
- v. For each month that the authorisation applies, a catch return must be submitted to the Authority, no later than the 14th day of the following month, detailing the following:
 - a. The days fished;
 - b. The time spent fishing each day;
 - c. The latitude and longitude of the start and end position of each tow of the day;
 - d. The duration of each tow;
 - e. The quantity, in kilograms, of mussels landed each day.
- vi. Based on provision of new evidence, the Authority retains the right to alter or suspend this permission.

9 Conclusion

In order to conclude whether mussel dredging under an authorisation issued under the Southern IFCA 'Mussels' byelaw would have an adverse effect on the integrity of the reef within the Studland to Portland SAC, it is necessary to assess whether the impacts of this activity will hinder the site's Conservation Objectives, namely:

Ensure that, subject to natural change, the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its qualifying features, by maintaining or restoring:

- The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats and habitats of the qualifying species
- The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats
- The structure and function of the habitats of the qualifying species
- The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats and the habitats of qualifying species rely
- The populations of each of the qualifying species
- The distribution of qualifying species within the site

The review of research into the impacts of mussel dredging (detailed in Section 6) identified that the activities have the potential to cause significant physical and biological disturbance. Physical disturbance can occur through the complete removal of biogenic reef feature or the dragging of boulders and rocks through abrasion and penetration of the gear. Biological disturbance can occur through removal, damage, burial, smothering of the biological communities associated with reef habitats. It is therefore recognised that these activities have the potential to lead to an adverse effect upon the following feature attributes:

- Distribution: presence and spatial distribution of biological communities
- Structure and Function: presence and abundance of key structural and influential species
- Structure: species composition of component communities
- Extent of subtidal biogenic reef
- Structure: population density
- Structure: physical structure of rocky substrate
- Supporting processes: water quality – turbidity
- Supporting processes: sedimentation rate.

Through this assessment, it has been demonstrated that the designated features of the Studland to Portland SAC are protected in their entirety (including with a minimum 106m buffer between feature and prohibited area boundary) through prohibited areas under the BTFG Byelaw 2016 and the proposed BTFG Byelaw 2023 currently with the MMO (November 2023). Additional consideration has also been given to this activity taking place outside of the SAC and in areas of the SAC where no feature occurs in terms of potential impact via movement of sediment onto designated features.

Based on the following rationale, it is concluded that mussel dredging under the authorisation will not have an adverse effect on the site integrity of the Studland to Portland SAC:

- Management of the entirety of mapped designated features within the site, reef, under the BTFG Byelaw 2016 and proposed to be maintained under the BTFG Byelaw 2023 which prevents any overlap between the activity and the designated features of the SAC.
- Low levels of activity with only one vessel actively participating in mussel dredging under the authorisation, undertaking a maximum of 8 tows per day for a total of 40 minutes.
- Assessment of reef features in SACs across the Southern IFCA District in 2020 under the BTFG review which identified that the two small areas of the SAC which are not included in BTFG prohibited areas do not contain designated features and therefore do not need to be closed to other types of BTFG.
- The attaching of conditions to the authorisation including a TAC of 1000 tonnes of mussels, fishing limited to certain hours in daytime only, prior reporting requirements to facilitate knowledge of when activity is taking place and thus aiding in monitoring compliance with the authorisation and catch

reporting which has been improved and made more robust in the 2024 authorisation to obtain more spatially defined quantitative data on activity under the authorisation.

- Data from specific studies on the Portland mussel beds and fishing activity which showed that:
 - Sediments dominated by mussels have a low diversity of other species and that there was no significant difference in species richness between fished and non-fished areas.
 - The potential impact from abrasion is low and that there were no observable dredge scars from the activity or observable adverse impact in fished sites compared to non-fished sites.
 - Fished areas showed a significantly higher % coverage of mussels compared to non-fished areas
- Activity occurring outside the boundary of the SAC is unlikely to have an impact on the features of the SAC due to the distance between the boundary of the prohibited areas and the location of the feature with a buffer of at least 106m (greater when taking into account the shape of the prohibited area in some places) between the feature and the prohibited area boundary. Wider scientific studies have shown distances smaller than this are required for there to be a significant effect of turbidity, siltation or smothering beyond natural levels (Dale et al., 2011). Specific studies on the Portland mussel beds have shown that the region is subject to high tidal current velocities with sediments not being silty, concluding that mussel dredging is unlikely to cause changes in suspended solids or smothering and siltation rate changes (Collins, 2018).

In summary, it is concluded that mussel dredging activity alone will not have an adverse effect on the reefs within the Studland to Portland SAC and will not hinder the site from achieving its Conservation Objectives. It is Southern IFCA's duty as the Competent Authority and relevant authority to manage damaging activities that may affect site integrity and lead to deterioration of the site.

10 In-Combination Assessment

Based on management measures in place and scientific data, no adverse effect on designated features was concluded for the effects of mussel dredging under an authorisation alone within the Studland to Portland SAC. BTFG occurs in the Southern IFCA district alongside other fishing activities and commercial plans and projects and therefore requires an in-combination assessment.

10.1 Other Fishing Activities

Fishing activity	Potential for in-combination effect
Static – pots/traps (Pots/creels – crustacean, whelk & cuttle pots)	Potting for crab and lobster takes place over rocky substrate and therefore overlaps with the feature. Potting leads to similar pressures as BTFG including abrasion and disturbance of the substrate surface. However, potting in general is considered to be low impact. In addition, static gear types such as potting and mobile gear types such as trawling and dredging are not compatible and so generally occur in different areas, thus largely eliminating any spatial overlap between the two. Finally, with the introduction of management measures which fully protect the features from BTFG, the two activities will not be able to overlap. Therefore, there will not be an in-combination effect.
Static – fixed & passive nets (Gill nets, trammels, entangling, drift nets)	It is possible that static fixed nets are used within the feature areas in shallow water and therefore, they will not overlap with trawling and dredging activity. Netting is also a low impact activity and not likely to lead to any in-combination effects. In addition, static gear types such as netting and mobile gear types such as trawling and dredging are not compatible and so often occur in different areas, thus largely eliminating any spatial overlap between the two. Passive nets do not interact with the seabed and therefore do not exert the same pressures as BTFG so no in-combination effect can be foreseen.
Lines (Longlines – demersal, Handlines)	It is anticipated that demersal longlines and handlines are used within the feature areas. The areas where the activity may take place however is unknown. Demersal longlining and handlines are low impact activities and not likely to lead to any in-combination effects. In addition, static gear types such as longlining

	and mobile gear types such as trawling and dredging are not compatible and so often occur in different areas, thus largely eliminating any spatial overlap between the two.
Intertidal work (Hand work)	Intertidal hand work leads to the same pressures as trawling and shellfish dredging. Trawling and shellfish dredging do not occur in the intertidal reef areas and management prevents BTFG from occurring over the features so there will be no in-combination effect from this activity.
Mid water trawls	Mid water trawls occur in deep waters and are not known to occur within the Southern IFCA district where demersal trawling is common. This gear type does not interact with the seabed therefore no in-combination effect can be foreseen.
Purse seine/ beach seine	Purse seine nets are not known to occur in the southern IFCA district and therefore no in combination effect is foreseen. Beach seines may occur although it is believed to be uncommon and would not occur over rocky reef habitat. Therefore, no in-combination effect is foreseen.
Commercial Diving	Commercial Diving may occur over reef habitats. However, diving is a very low impact fishing activity and does not exert the same pressures as BTFG. Therefore, no in-combination effect is foreseen.

10.2 Commercial Plans and Projects

The MMO Public Register for marine licencing was consulted and no plans or projects were found which overlapped with the Studland to Portland SAC.

11 Integrity Test

Based on the rationale provided in Section 9, it has been concluded that mussel dredging under an authorisation for the Southern IFCA 'Mussels' byelaw will not have an adverse effect on the integrity of the Studland to Portland SAC and will not hinder the site from achieving its Conservation Objectives. The in-combination assessment concluded there would be no potential for in-combination effect between BTFG and other fishing activities in areas of designated reef habitat. Management in the form of the BTFG Byelaw 2016 and proposed BTFG Byelaw 2023 ensures that the activity cannot overlap with the designated reef features with prohibited areas also accounting for a buffer of at least 106m removing the potential for any sedimentation effects in addition to direct effects.

A change in the current status of this fishery, upon which the Habitats Regulations Assessment is based, is unforeseen due to the conditions applied to the authorisation which the applicant must follow, however it is recognised that future changes could occur in future years (beyond 2024) should a request for different conditions be put forward by the applicant in future years, at which time this HRA may require an update. Southern IFCA will continue to monitor activity under the authorisation and compliance with the authorisation conditions. In the event new evidence emerges which has the potential to hinder the sites Conservation Objectives, this Habitats Regulations Assessment will be reviewed.

12 Summary of Consultation with Natural England

Consultation	Date submitted	Response from NE	Date received
Submitted to NE to seek Formal Advice	24 th Nov 2023		

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AUTHORISATION: SOUTHERN IFCA MUSSELS BYELAW

Under the provisions of the Southern IFCA Mussels Byelaw I, Pia Bateman, Chief Executive Officer of Southern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority, hereby authorise (applicant's details to be added) to remove mussels less than 50mm from the Southern IFCA District, subject to the following conditions:

- i. Mussel removal shall be by and from the fishing vessel Nicola L. WY37;
- ii. The authorisation is not transferable to another vessel or another person and the authorized person shall be on the vessel at all times during mussel removal;
- iii. A total of no more than 1,000 tonnes of mussel are removed during the period for which this authorization is valid;
- iv. All mussels landed are relayed for a minimum of 6 months on a Several Fishery lay within Poole Harbour;
- v. Whilst fishing for mussels, the vessel is fitted with an operational VMS unit;
- vi. The Southern IFCA Office is notified by telephone no less than 12 hours and during office hours (0900-1700) prior to daily mussel fishing operations;
- vii. For each month that the authorization applies, a catch return must be submitted to the Authority, no later than the 14th day of the following month, detailing the following:
 - a. The days fished;
 - b. The time spent fishing each day;
 - c. The latitude and longitude of the start and end position of each tow completed each day;
 - d. The quantity, in kilograms, of mussels landed each day.
- viii. Based on provision of new evidence, the Authority retains the right to alter or suspend this permission; and
- ix. This authorisation ceases on the 31st December 2024

Yours sincerely,

Pia Bateman
Chief Executive Officer
Southern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority

COMPLIANCE AND ENFORCEMENT QUARTERLY REPORT Paper For Information

Report by DCO Sam Dell.

A. Purpose

To report to Members on the compliance and enforcement activities for the quarter August to October 2023.

B. Annex

- I. Compliance and Enforcement Quarterly Report
-

1.0 Introduction

- This report contains information relating to our enforcement activity for this reporting period in statistical format for inspections, patrols and offences detected and a quarterly summary of key enforcement operations and activities.

2.0 Summary of Key Points

- **Background**
 - 2.1 Risk Based Enforcement
 - 2.2 Intelligence Led Approach
 - 2.3 Tactical Coordination Group
 - 2.4 Fisheries Patrol
- **Enforcement Activity**
 - 3.1 Intelligence reports
 - 3.2 Enforcement Activity Table
 - 3.3 Offence reports
 - 3.4 Offence Outcomes
- **Summary of key Enforcement Operations and Activities**
- **Compliance and Enforcement Team**

Marked I – Annex I



Compliance & Enforcement Quarterly Report

August – October 2023



Contents

- 1. Purpose**
- 2. Background**
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 - 3.1 Intelligence reports
 - 3.2 Enforcement Activity Table
 - 3.3 Offence reports
 - 3.4 Offence Outcomes
- 4. Summary of key Enforcement Operations and Activities**
- 5. Compliance and Enforcement Team**

1. **Purpose**

The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with an overview of the Southern IFCA risk-based approach to compliance and enforcement, the report also highlights key operational activities and statistical information for the previous quarter August to October 2023. The statistical data included in this report is aligned to national IFCA metrics that are reported to Association IFCAs (AIFCA) and Department for Food, Environment and Rural Affairs (Defra) on an annual basis.

2. **Background**

2.1 **Risk Based Enforcement**

Southern IFCA is committed to achieving fair, effective and proportionate enforcement. The Compliance and Enforcement Framework sets out the Authority's approach and details the general principles the Authority will follow and the enforcement actions available. The Risk Register forms part of that Framework, providing focus and priorities for Southern IFCA's compliance and enforcement activities. The Risk Register identifies priorities in specific areas at different times of the year.

2.2 **Intelligence Led Approach**

Intelligence Reports (IRs) are the Authority's method of recording, storing, collating and the dissemination of intelligence that complement our risk-based approach. Additional intelligence together with access to the UK Fisheries Monitoring, Control and Surveillance System¹ (MCSS) and Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) maximizes the efficient use and deployment of resources on the ground. Southern IFCA uses the National Intelligence Model which incorporates a tasking and coordination process.

2.3 **Tactical Coordination Group (TCG)**

The TCG meeting is chaired by the DCO who makes decisions in relation to resourcing and enforcement priorities for the upcoming period (2 weeks). The aim of this meeting is to make decisions around resource allocation in order to make best use of resources and provide the best possible protection for fisheries and the marine environment within the Southern IFCA District, the TCG also decides what operational tactics will be deployed.

2.4 **Fisheries Patrols**

Southern IFCA officers conduct both land and sea-based patrols across the district. Southern IFCA operates three patrol vessels, patrols on board these vessels may take place at any time of day or night, and are used to observe fishing activity, engage with industry, carry out boarding inspections and to target reported illegal activity. On shore, Officers conduct land patrols to engage with industry, carry out inspections, observe activity at sea and in ports, visiting a number of locations across the district including commercial premises, recreational angling hotspots, piers, ports, beaches and quaysides. The Authority has also developed a drone capability and has procured two drones to support operational activity. This has enhanced our operational delivery and is used to record evidence of possible offences using the onboard camera from perspectives not previously possible, it has improved the prevention (deterrent) and detection of offending.

[Compliance & Enforcement : Southern IFCA \(southern-ifca.gov.uk\)](https://www.southern-ifca.gov.uk)

¹ The UK reporting database of sightings, boarding, positions of vessels, prosecutions and other actions against infringements of UK and EU Fisheries. This system is managed by CEFAS on behalf of the MMO (also see RNSS). This also contains access to VMS data.

3. Enforcement Activity

3.1 Intelligence Reports

The following table demonstrates the information reports submitted for this reporting quarter.

Intelligence Reports	August	September	October	Total
IFCOs	23	10	20	53

3.2 Enforcement Activity Table

The following table demonstrates the enforcement activity and offences detected for this reporting quarter, these reporting metrics are aligned nationally to those requested by Defra. Fluctuations that occur in statistical figures can be as a result of a number contributing factors i.e. number of land based as opposed to sea-based patrols in any given month, staff resources, weather, other duties and the objectives of the patrols recognising the Authorities commitment to risk based intelligence led enforcement.

Category	Metric	August	September	October	Total
Inspections at sea	Vessel patrols	9	5	4	18
	Boardings/inspections	28	10	15	53
Inspections ashore or in a port	Metric	August	September	October	Total
	Shore patrols	13	11	11	35
	Port visits	13	12	13	38
	Premises inspections	3	1	3	7
	Landing inspections	19	8	10	37
	Vehicle inspections	6	0	4	10
	Gear Inspections	0	0	0	0
	Person Inspection	8	6	0	14
Offences Detected	Per report	August	September	October	Total
Verbal warnings		9	5	4	18
Written warnings		8	1	3	12
Advisory letter		0	0	2	2
FAP		0	0	0	0
Offence Reports		3	3	1	7

3.3 Offence reports

The following table demonstrates the offence reports & actions submitted by officers for this reporting quarter.

Date of Offence	Offence	Action
15.08.23	Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Byelaw – Repeat non-submission of catch returns	Official Written Warning Letter issued to permit holder 23.08.23
24.08.23	Breach of Seagull Island Closed Area (PHDP Byelaw)	<i>Investigation ongoing. FAP recommendation pending.</i>
31.08.23	Breach of Net Fishing Byelaw (Christchurch box)	Official Written Warning Letter issued to owner/master 08.09.23
12.09.23	Breach of Net Fishing Byelaw – Wych Lake & Middlebere Lake Prohibition Area	Advisory Letters sent to owners 04.10.23
28.09.23	Breach of Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Byelaw Permit Conditions Seagull Island Closed Area	2x Official Written Warning Letters issued to owners and master 04.10.23

28.09.23	Breach of Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Byelaw Permit Conditions Green Island Closed Area	Official Written Warning Letter issued to owner/master 04.10.23
21.10.23	Retention on board a quantity of manila clams measuring below the MCRS, contrary to Tech Con 2019/1241	<i>Investigation ongoing. PACE interview pending.</i>

3.4 Offence Outcomes

The following table demonstrates offence outcomes for this reporting quarter.

Date of offence	Offence	Action taken and date
13.07.23	Use of a fixed net contrary to the Fixed Engines Byelaw	Official Written Warning issued to master/owner of vessel 04.08.23
20.07.23	Breach of Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Byelaw Permit Conditions Green Island Closed Area	3x Official Written Warnings issued to 3x owners of vessel 04.08.23
20.07.23	Breach of Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Byelaw Permit Conditions Green Island Closed Area	Official Written Warning issued to master/owner of vessel 04.08.23
25.07.23	Breach of Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Byelaw Permit Conditions Green Island Closed Area	Official Written Warning issued to master/owner of vessel 04.08.23
27.07.23	Breach of Bass Nursery Area regulations – Fishing for and retention of bass within Portsmouth BNA.	Official Written Warning issued 04.08.23
15.08.23	Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Byelaw – Repeat non-submission of catch returns	Official Written Warning Letter issued to permit holder 23.08.23
31.08.23	Breach of Net Fishing Byelaw (Christchurch box)	Official Written Warning Letter issued to owner/master 08.09.23
12.09.23	Breach of Net Fishing Byelaw – Wych Lake & Middlebere Lake Prohibition Area	2x Advisory Letters sent to owners 04.10.23
28.09.23	Breach of Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Byelaw Permit Conditions Seagull Island Closed Area	2x Official Written Warning Letters issued to owners and master 04.10.23
28.09.23	Breach of Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Byelaw Permit Conditions Green Island Closed Area	Official Written Warning Letter issued to owner/master 04.10.23

4. Summary of key enforcement operations and activities

August

4.1 Drone Pilot Trained

Officers underwent Visual Line of Sight (GVC) training with a Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) accredited training provider. Both officers passed a theory exam, and after 3 days of practical training, passed their flight examinations and were awarded with their Remote Pilot Certificate of Competence in Visual Line of Sight., these officers are now signed off to commercially fly multi-rotor Unmanned Aircraft Systems weighing up to 25kg within the Specific Category, under the Southern IFCA's Operational Authorisation.

4.2 Southern IFCA Net Fishing Byelaw Comes Into Force

DCO Dell has been acting as the designated Fishing Liaison Officer for the Net Fishing Byelaw, main focus has been on community engagement with a particular focus on implementation of the Permit Areas for Southampton Water, the River Hamble and Christchurch Harbour, this has included face to face engagement with the Fishing Community at Warsash, this meeting was supported by the Fisherman's Mission, It is important to note we have received 17 permit applications and we will continue to work closely with the fishing community to ensure Net Fishing can continue within the permit areas for those that meet the eligibility criteria.

The other focus has been maximising voluntary compliance on the coast, the team have been out engaging and educating stakeholders, local organisations and the general public on the new management measures. This has continued to be a priority for the team.

September

4.3 Handgathering Operation Poole Harbour

Eight members of the public were spoken to following concerns over the illegal hand-gathering of shellfish. Some people were gathering for recreation or personal consumption while some were suspected to be gathering the clams and cockles for commercial reasons, On this occasion three verbal warnings were issued for non-compliance with minimum conservation references size legislation, no modern-day slavery offences or human trafficking offences were. Southern IFCA officers led the Operation with partners from BCP Council, MMO, Border Force and Dorset Police. Southern IFCA continue to work closely with partner agencies to ensure compliance that other offences are not being committed, Officers engaged with several recreational gatherers including family groups that were complying with the rules and regulations.

October

4.5 Drone Used to Monitor Net Fishing Byelaw Prohibited Areas

The Southern IFCA Net Fishing Byelaw introduces various measures to regulate fishing with nets. The Byelaw was developed following the Authority's decision to review and develop regulations for the District's harbours and estuarine waters in order to support the use of these areas as essential fish habitats, to provide protection to migratory salmonids as they transit through these areas, to balance the social and economic benefits of net fishers and to further the Conservation Objectives of Designated Sites.

The Byelaw introduces a series of prohibition areas across the district including the Western Fleet, Dorset, Officers has carried gained land owners and Natural England permission to over fly the Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) with the Drone to ensure compliance with the Byelaw.

4.7 Visit Camber Docks with Portsmouth City Council

Officers facilitated a meeting between the local fishing community and councillors from Portsmouth City Council, The Southern IFCA Chairman Councillor Roberts also attended,

5. **Compliance & Enforcement Team**

Compliance & Enforcement Team



SAM DELL
CET Deputy Chief Officer
 Joined: 2011
 Key Responsibilities:
 --Strategic Planning
 --Operational Delivery
 --Marine Operations (FPV Skipper)
 --Accountable Manager (Drone)
 --Assets
 --Policy Adherence & Development
 --Line Management
Warranted IFCO

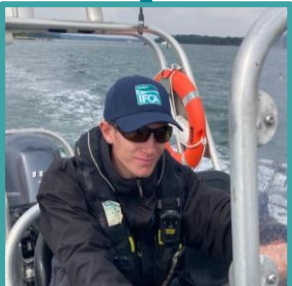
ADAM PARRY
Senior IFCO
 Joined: 2018
 Key Responsibilities:
 -- Marine Operations
 --FPV Skipper
 --Hampshire & Isle of Wight
 Area Lead
 --Compliance Patrols
 --Community Engagement
Warranted IFCO



DAVID MAYNE
Senior IFCO
 Joined: 2004
 Key Responsibilities:
 --Investigations
 --FPV Skipper
 --Marine Operations
 --Central Area Lead
 --Compliance Patrols
 --Community Engagement
Warranted IFCO



ISABEL GRIFFITHS
IFCO
 Joined: 2020
 Key Responsibilities:
 --Intelligence Lead Officer
 --Biosecurity
 --Drone Pilot
 --West Dorset Lead
 --Compliance Patrols
 --Community Engagement
Warranted IFCO



FRED HARRIS
IFCO
 Joined: 2022
 Key Responsibilities:
 --MCSS
 --Drone Pilot
 --Compliance Patrols
 --Community Engagement



MEGAN FULBROOK
IFCO
 Joined: 2022
 Key Responsibilities:
 --Intelligence Officer
 --Sightings
 --Compliance Patrols
 --Community Engagement



TBD
IFCO
 Joined:
 Key Responsibilities:
 --Compliance Patrols
 --Community Engagement

Behind the Scenes with the Research and Policy Team Paper For Information

Report by DCO Birchenough and the RPT

A. Purpose

To provide Members with an update on aspects of work that the Research and Policy Team is delivering behind the scenes.

1.0 Introduction

- This report from the Research and Policy Team (RPT) Officers captures aspects of work that they are delivering behind the scenes. This may include standalone projects or supplementary work which complements and supports the workstreams presented at meetings of the Authority, or sub-committees.

2.0 Summary of Key Points

- A report from DCO Birchenough covering the autumn quarter welcoming new member of the RPT Hester Churchouse to the team and newly appointed Senior IFCO Emily Condie to her new role.
- A report from Senior IFCO Condie on attendance at a Standards of Training and Watchkeeping for Seafarers course (STCW)
- A report from IFCO D. Parry on the Minimum Conservation Reference Size (MCRS) review, preparing for the 2024 whelk survey and responding to marine licence applications for Southern IFCA as a relevant stakeholder
- A report from IFCO Mullen on the Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs) Formal Consultation, the AIFCA FMP Conference and starting in her new role as an IFCO in the RPT
- A report from IFCO Churchouse covering her start as an IFCO with the Southern IFCA and her attendance at the STCW training
- A report from PO Perrins on engagement, surveys, training and work on MPA management workstreams

3.0 Next Steps

- That Members receive the report.



Updates from the RPT Deputy Chief Officer:

Autumn Quarter

The autumn quarter has involved concluding our survey program for the year with the successful completion of our Solent Bivalve and Juvenile Fish Surveys, the latter working with the University of Plymouth (amongst other partners) as part of the FinVision FISP project, a technology-enabled, industry co-developed approach to understanding early juvenile fish habitat requirements.

We've also responded to the FMP frontrunner consultation, have sent the proposed Bottom Towed Fishing Gear Byelaw 2023 to the MMO for QA, continue to make good progress with the MCRS Review and Shore Gathering Review and have commenced Phase 2 of the BTFG Review.

Welcome to IFCO Hester Churchouse

We are excited to have Hester join the RPT as an IFCO from October. Hester joins us after graduating from the University of Southampton where she undertook an integrated Masters in Marine Biology, during which she was involved in the research project to investigate the reproductive cycle of the Solent scallop population. This project was her first introduction to the work of Southern IFCA and being able to follow the process from data collection to policy implementation fostered her interest in regional fisheries management.

Senior IFCO for RPT Emily Condie

We also welcome Emily to her new role as a Senior IFCO in the RPT following successful promotion from her role as an IFCO.

Emily says 'I started in the role of Senior IFCO in early November and I am looking forward to the opportunities that the role presents. Since starting in this role, I have begun moving forward with Phase 2 of the BTFG Review, pulling together existing evidence with the help of other officers and I am excited for the challenges ahead'.



Surveys and training have been on the agenda for me these last few months. We have successfully completed the autumn Solent Scallop and Bivalve Surveys as well as the Juvenile Fish Surveys across the district. The highlight of the quarter, however, has been the STCW course (Standards of Training and Watchkeeping for Seafarers Course).

This course is internationally mandatory for any anyone wishing to work on commercial vessels over 24m long and ensures a standard of training across the world.

The full course covers 5 areas:

- Personal Safety and Social Responsibilities
- Proficiency in Security Awareness
- BASIC Fire Prevention and Fire Fighting
- Personal Survival Techniques
- Elementary First Aid



Not the actual training scenario



By far, the best section of the course was the Fire Fighting. Three days were spent learning the different types, causes and preventions of fire as well as how to fight them when they do occur.

The final day culminated in a full practical assessment; donning firefighting clothing, equipment and breathing apparatus before entering a burning container complex to search for casualties and extinguish the fire with your team.

The course also gave the opportunity to refresh on personal sea survival and basic first aid skills.

It was an enjoyable and informative week full of scenarios I hope we never have to deal with but are now well equipped to do so.



with IFCO D. Parry

This past quarter I have been working on a number of workstreams from my personal work plan. These include the Minimum Conservation Reference Size review, preparing for the 2024 Whelk survey, keeping on top of marine licence applications and attending stakeholder meetings.

The Minimum Conservation Reference Size review has been a large part of my current workstream. I have been creating an evidence document that provides all the relevant information regarding each species within the review. This will help make consideration of management decisions clear and concise as well as to maintain consistency throughout the review. I have also created spreadsheets to identify which species will be subject to future rounds of species reviews.

The 2024 survey prep is going really well... With fishers across the district onboard and happy to help. The fishers have all been made aware of some updates to the survey methodology from lessons learned from year 1 and the dispensations are currently being written! The MMO are being contacted with regards to dispensation logistics, but as soon as they respond the dispensation requests will be sent off and we await approval, well in advance of the late



Fishers aboard Boy Lynham in this years Whelk Survey, hauling and emptying pots onto a riddle.

Feb/ early march start date! Other than that, we are almost ready to go!

Also, I have been attending a number of industry related meetings including the Solent Seascape Project, the Shellfish Association of GB, a Fishing into the Future Meeting and a few others too!

Finally, I have picked up the Marine Case Management System work stream which looks at responding to any marine licences which may interact with the local fishing industry and interact with the South Marine Plan in a way that may need highlighting and addressing by the marine licence applicant.



The last quarter saw the end of the FMP Frontrunners' consultation period, which finished on October 1st. Southern IFCA submitted consultation responses to each of the 6 plans. These included application of each of the FMPs to the Southern IFCA District and any implication of proposed management measures.

Prior to the end of public consultation, the AIFCA held a consultation response conference over the period of 24-26th September which was attended by the Chairman of the Authority, Councillor Mark Roberts, Technical Advisory Committee Chairman, Dr. Antony Jensen and myself. The conference was held at the RNLI college in Poole and was attended by representatives from all IFCAs, governing bodies such as Defra and the MMO, research organisations such as Seafish and local fishermen. The event focused on formulating collective responses to the Crab and Lobster FMP and Whelk FMP to accurately represent the views of different stakeholders across the country. It also provided the opportunity to develop future co-working opportunities and share research initiatives currently being undertaken by each IFCA and other research bodies, with the aim to ensure research is readily available for future FMP preparations.



Top: The AIFCA conference held on the 24-26th September at the RNLI college in Poole.



Bottom: IFCO Mullen (left) and SIFCO Parry (right) on sea patrol in Lyme Bay.

Since transferring from a Project Officer to an IFCO in August, I am now settling into my new role and undertaking various workstreams within the Research and Policy team, alongside continuing to lead on the Southern IFCA requirements and deliverables during the preparation and development of the Tranche 3 FMPs. I have also now begun working with the Compliance and Enforcement Team to undertake both land and sea-base patrols and inspections throughout the Southern IFCA District.



with IFCO Churchouse

Since joining the IFCA as an IFCO in October, I have been undertaking an introduction to the varied work across the district, and to the specific work of a Research and Policy Officer. This induction, alongside highlighting key policy and fishery documents, has included several trips to key locations for compliance around the district, as well as an introduction to survey work via involvement on a Juvenile Fish Survey. In addition, I have undertaken several courses to prepare for the IFCO role, including VHF training and a STCW course.

The STCW course, undertaken over a week in Hythe, was composed of three main aspects: fire prevention and firefighting; elementary first aid; and survival techniques at sea. Each aspect was based around a practical application of skills, ranging from the use of fire extinguishers to correct CPR and defibrillator practices to the boarding of a life raft from both a vessel and the water. I found the course to be highly informative, particularly in regard to the first aid, of which I have previously done very little. Other aspects of the course I found to be reassuring, particularly the sea survival techniques, as I feel I was equipped with skills with which to



manage such a situation should it arise. Having completed the course, I am now looking forward to continuing my introduction to the district via the IFCA's marine assets, and to continuing to develop my understanding of the fisheries and my role.

Recently I have been assisting with the first stages of the Bottom Towed Fishing Gear Byelaw Phase 2. This has involved extracting information on proposed areas that were not considered under Phase 1, as well as compiling a list of potential information sources for Phase 2. This dataset can then be used to provide the IFCA with a point from which to begin this next phase of the Bottom Towed Fishing Gear Review.



with PO C. Perrins

My role as Project Officer for MPAs allows me to engage with various networks. Every month I will be joining the virtual Solent Seagrass Network meetings, the first one I attended this month. It was great to meet enthusiastic and knowledgeable individuals, and to gain an insight to their efforts at restoration and conservation of the seagrass beds. I've also attended the Solent Seascape meeting, a very interesting meeting which has enlightened me to all the various surveys and restoration projects going on within the Solent.

We recently received QGIS training from Senior IFCO Condie. It was a great team bonding session where we were given very useful tips on how to handle the different layers and to input our own data. I was able to apply these newly acquired skills to create a map of the Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Byelaw closure area in Arne Bay.

As part of the Research and Policy team, I get to assist with the Southern IFCA surveys. This Autumn we conducted our small fish surveys at Yarmouth, River Hamble, Christchurch and The Fleet.



Bivalve Surveys at Langstone, Portsmouth and Southampton.

We also conducted bivalve surveys in Langstone, Portsmouth and Southampton with the assistance of fishers who volunteered their skills and vessels.

As part of my duties as PO for MPAs, I work on literature reviews and other supporting evidence documents for Part A assessments. I'm currently working on a literature review for pump-scoop dredging in the Solent. I've also developed a document defining Shore Gathering activities and their scope across the shoreline by using definitions given in literature and by other IFCAs. It was interesting discovering that equipment can vary with region, and that in some cases this activity extends from the intertidal into the subtidal zone.

Stakeholder Groups Paper For Information

Report by DCO Birchenough

A. Purpose

To inform Members of the activity undertaken by stakeholder groups; The South Coast Fishermen's Council, The Recreational Angling Sector Group and The Dorset, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Marine Conservation Group where minutes from these meetings are available.

B. Annex

1. The South Coast Fishermen's Council Minutes – September 2023
 2. The Recreational Angling Sector Group Minutes – November 2023
-

1.0 Introduction

- The Authority currently provides a secretariat role for the Recreational Angling Sector Group and also the Dorset, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Marine Conservation Group.
- The Authority has given a grant of £300 to the Fishermen's Council in this financial year.
- All three groups are offered free use of a room, at the Committee's office, for meetings. Meetings are held both virtually and in person as required.

2.0 Summary of Key Points

- The minutes of The South Coast Fishermen's Council dated 6th September 2023 and the draft minutes of the Recreational Angling Sector Group Meeting dated 28th November 2023 are presented to the Authority for Members' consideration to appraise them of the groups' business.
- There has not been a meeting of the Dorset, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Marine Conservation Group since the last Authority meeting.

3.0 Next Steps

- That Members note the report
- That for 2024 both the Recreational Angling Sector Group and the Dorset, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Marine Conservation Group hold two meetings per year in spring and autumn. Members of the group may request an additional meeting to address a specific emerging issue or topic.

SOUTH COAST FISHERMEN'S COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE 371st MEETING HELD VIA ZOOM AT 7.00PM ON
WEDNESDAY 6th September 2023

PRESENT: P. Dadds - Mudeford & District FMA (Chairman)
T. Russell - Poole & District FMA (Vice Chairman)
A. Banfield - West Bay FMA
R. Stride - Mudeford & District FMA (Secretary)

IN ATTENDANCE

S. Dell - Deputy Chief Officer, SIFCA
R. Irish - Principal Marine Officer, MMO

I APOLOGIES J. Miller, B Pool, S Postles, T Legg, Hayley Hamlett (Fish Mish), Gordon Chittenden (MMO).

The minutes of the 370th meeting held via Teams on 16th August 2023 were taken as read and it was agreed they should be signed as a true record.

II REGIONAL FISHERIES GROUPS

SW RFG (Area 7e)

There had been no recent meeting of the SW RFG and the September meeting had been cancelled in view of the volume of consultations fishermen were having to deal with this month. R Irish informed the meeting that Anna Ni Donnchadha was organising a series of port visits to meet stakeholders, including Lyme Regis on 14th September, by which time the outcome of the Lyme Bay sole fishery work will have been published.

South RFG (Area 7d).

Likewise, the September meeting of the South RFG had been cancelled. Jonathan Brooks was organising drop-in port sessions in area 7d, including Newhaven and Eastbourne on 28th September.

III FISHERIES MANAGEMENT PLANS

Shellfish FMPs

Crab and Lobster FMP: Only A Banfield had been able to attend a live consultation event, in Weymouth. There was general consensus that the timing of the events during the working day had been an obstacle for most fishermen. It was noted that an online event was scheduled for 11th September.

There was concern that the FMP proposals did not go far enough to address the increase of effort in the offshore crab fishery. There was a lot of support for the prohibition on the landing of soft crab which was seen as the single most effective short term measure to restore crab stocks. A Banfield felt that the plan had overall merit and could be allowed to run on to the next stage.

Whelk FMP: It was noted that SIFCA is currently implementing much of what is in the draft Whelk FMP and that there are similar models of whelk fishery management

at the IFCA level. R Stride felt that as there are a number of separate whelk stocks around the country, local management would be more appropriate. Members were opposed to the introduction of a licence entitlement for whelks. Flexibility is very important to the inshore fleet and vessels must be able to access the resources that are within the relatively small operating range of the smaller vessels. Adding to the number of permutations of licence types would lead to further enforced specialisation. A permit scheme would be more acceptable. Members were not averse to pot limitations if they could be implemented effectively. R Stride felt that a closed season might impact those boats that fish for whelks seasonally. Members were not convinced that escape gaps in whelk pots would be effective.

Scallop FMP: None of the members present had any specific knowledge of the scallop fishery or members engaged in the fishery. Poole no longer has members who dive for scallops. It was noted that the Solent scallop fishery was now under local management by SIFCA under a permit scheme.

Finfish FMPs

Bass FMP: Members present were pleased that the current authorisation system was to be reviewed. However alarm was expressed at the reference in the text to “reducing latent capacity”. The fear was that this could mean the removal of the bass authorisation from vessels that had not used it fully or at all. Members would prefer the bass hand lining authorisation to be extended to all under 10 vessels and the bycatch allowance given to all of the smaller netters in the fleet. This is preferable to increasing the catch allowances for vessels that already hold entitlements.

T Russell stated that there is only a very low level of bass bycatch in lobster pots and cuttlefish traps. It is not possible to use these gears to target bass and the catches are entirely incidental. Members agreed that insisting that these catches be discarded is a waste and serves no management purpose whatsoever.

Members were not averse to an appropriate maximum size for bass as long as socio-economic factors and the impact on the targeted fishery are taken into account. The proposal for a bass management group were welcomed. The secretary was asked to submit a response.

Channel NQS FMP: Members discussed the ability of the proposals in the FMP to effectively manage the cuttlefish trawl fishery to allow a greater part of the stock to reach the inshore spawning grounds. It was recognised that the MRCS for cuttlefish was well intentioned but would probably be ineffective given the very high mortality of cuttlefish in trawls, beam trawls in particular, and would lead to high discard rates. Some members felt that this indicated that beam trawls were an inappropriate method for fishing for cuttlefish. There was support for the proposals for spatial and temporal closures to trawling to protect the pre-spawning stock and deposited eggs but members felt that detail was lacking. A Banfield explained that observations had shown that once the male cuttlefish had migrated inshore ahead of the females, the beam trawls targeted the females as they gathered to move in.. Members agreed that it is not appropriate for the stock to be targeted by the larger trawlers and that the FMP should favour lower impact fishing methods.

Members were also unanimous in calling for measures to manage the fly seine fishery in the channel to be applied as a matter of urgency before it is too late. The secretary was asked to submit a response.

IV MMO/ DEFRA MATTERS

Lyme Bay: R Irish informed the meeting that the requirements for marking of fishing gear in Lyme Bay had been issued prematurely. They had been withdrawn and would be reissued later with a 1 month notice period. A Banfield explained the practical difficulties involved in meeting the requirement for coloured bands on marker buoys and felt that adding the letters E or W would suffice. S Dell reminded the meeting that the forthcoming RFG visit to Lyme Regis will coincide with the Lyme Bay sole fishing report and would be a good opportunity to discuss the outcomes.

Grant funding: R Irish stated that all of the money allocated to the FaSS scheme had been committed, except that there was still funding available for the replacement of older engines.

Discard reform: members had looked at the proposals currently under consultation and concluded that, except that some loss of quota would be lost to support fisheries with discards, it was not an issue for their class of vessels.

iVMS Rollout

Members present were aware of the approaching deadline for applying for the grant to replace the iVMS devices that had been withdrawn by the MMO. The pros and cons of the remaining 2 available devices were discussed on the basis of the limited information available. The question was raised as to whether the inclusive airtime on offer starts at the time of installation of the device or only once the statutory instrument comes into force. There was also still some doubt about whether or not devices could be transferred to a new owner on the sale of a vessel. R Irish recommended contacting the MMO iVMS helpline or the suppliers for the answers.

V SOUTHERN IFCA MATTERS

S Dell gave an update on progress with the Netting Byelaw though the transition period:

- Net prohibition areas have immediate effect.
- Net restriction areas also have immediate effect. The IFCA has adopted a proportionate approach to enforcement
- For net permit areas, the deadline to apply for a permit is 9th November. Applicants can continue to fish once their application has been submitted.
- There was no date set for compliance with the gear marking requirements. Most fishermen already meet the requirements and enforcement will be proportionate.
- IFCA officers were fielding enquiries and visiting affected areas. He would be attending the next meeting of the PDFA.

VI TRAINING GRANT APPLICATIONS

A grant application from skipper Tom Downey to cover the sea survival course for new entrant Oscar Pitkethly was considered and approved. Proposed by T Russell, seconded by A Banfield. All in favour

VII OTHER BUSINESS

Training

The latest training newsletter with details of courses available and funding has been distributed to member associations.

Medicals

A Banfield announced that he might soon be retiring as he anticipated that an existing condition might prevent him from passing the medical after referral. Members wished him the best of luck.

VII ARRANGEMENTS FOR MEETINGS 2023.

15th November and 13th December.

All to be held via Teams at 1900 unless an opportunity to hold a face to face meeting arises.

On closing the meeting, Chairman thanked S Dell and R Irish for making time to attend and for hosting the Teams meeting.

Chairman

Recreational Angling Sector Working Group Meeting – 28/11/2023 – 19:00

Virtual Meeting – MS Teams

Attendees: Senior IFCO Emily Condie, IFCO Fred Harris, Dr Alice Hall, Mr Chris Holloway, Mr Allan Green, Mr Mike Spillsberg, Mr Sam Cumming, Dr Tim Ferrero

Agenda

1. Minutes of the previous meeting (11th September 2023) and Apologies
 - Apologies from Alan Deeming and Colin Smith.
 - Previous minutes identified to have the wrong date. Amendment made.
2. Introductions
 - Senior IFCO Condie introduced Dr Alice Hall.
3. Presentation: Dr Alice Hall and Dr Peter Davies, University of Plymouth
 - Update on FISP project Angling for Sustainability
4. Southern IFCA Updates/Ongoing items:

Staff Updates

Liberty Cast has left the Research and Policy Team (RPT), Hester Churchouse has joined the team as an IFCO and FMP Project Officer Celie Mullen has taken a permanent role as an IFCO on the RPT. Emily Condie has moved into the role of Senior Policy Officer for the RPT. The Control and Enforcement team are currently recruiting new a new Fishery Officer (IFCO).

Southern IFCA Byelaw Update

Pot Fishing Byelaw (update from IFCO Condie): No change from the previous meeting.

Bottom Towed Fishing Gear Byelaw 2023 (update from IFCO Condie): The Bottom Towed Fishing Gear Byelaw 2023 has been submitted to the MMO for the first round of QA.

Net Fishing Byelaw (update from IFCO Harris): At the previous meeting the Net Fishing Byelaw had just been confirmed as signed by the Secretary of State. The byelaw is now in force with prohibition, permit and restriction areas applying around the district. Poole Harbour, Christchurch, and Lyme Bay now have restriction areas. Southampton Water, the River Hamble and Christchurch Harbour are all Net Permit Areas and there are Net Prohibition areas across the district.

Net fishing vessels can no longer net within a bass nursery area with bass on board. Bass must be landed if caught outside a nursery area before netting recommences within the nursery area. As a result, bass fishing regulations are strengthened in bass nursery areas.

IFCO Harris will ensure leaflets are circulated, specifically for areas in Poole Harbour.

5. Any Other Business

Current Catch Limits: 10metres and under non-sector pool (Chris Holloway)

A member requested discussion on the 'Current Catch Limits: 10metres and under non-sector pool' that had been circulated by the MMO the afternoon of this meeting. The member raised concern over 0.5 tonne of Undulate Ray being permitted per trip to commercial vessels. Senior IFCO Condie will research into this figure.

Thresher Sharks – Dr Tim Ferrero

Dr Time Ferrero is involved with a project named '*Secrets of the Solent*' which has funding for satellite tagging thresher sharks. He is looking for an experienced and conservation minded shark fisher that is familiar with the Eastern end of the Isle of Wight.

Fisheries and Industry Science Partnership: FinVision (Senior IFCO Condie)

Southern IFCA are one of several partners on another project from the University of Plymouth called FinVision. Through FinVision the partnership will deploy a 'smart' underwater camera system (known as a JHaM-Cam unit), capable of seeing the smallest juvenile life-stages of fish, in a range of inshore habitats. Later in the year, anglers, and other members of the public, will be able to join in analysing the videos by counting the numbers and size of fish living in different types of habitats via a specially-developed interactive website.

There is a virtual meeting on Thursday starting at 7pm to explain more, details for sign up will be recirculated.

Skates and Rays FMP Meeting (Chris Holloway)

Meeting on the 18th of December at Broadstone Conservative Club.

Scallop Fishery (IFCO Harris)

As a result of the Autumn scallop fishery survey raising concern on scallop stocks in the Solent, the scallop fishery remained closed an extra month and the fishery is currently open for reduced hours, in order to reduce pressure of the stocks. Fishers are happy with catch levels and are catching significantly more than this time last year.

Trawler in Poole Bay

Answer by IFCO Harris

A trawler was reported in Poole Bay. Southern IFCA area aware of the vessel in question. Gear Conflict is a matter for the police, concerns to Southern IFCA would be that a vessel has the necessary permits for the activity it is undertaking and that its activity occurs outside of

closure areas. Southern IFCA has a drone that can track coordinates and fishing activity whereas AIS does not provide information on activity.

Shore Patrol Citizen Scientists (Allan Green)

A member asked if a project involving citizen scientists patrolling the shore and asking questions about catch was still ongoing.

This is thought to be an Angling Trust Project and to still be ongoing.

Meeting Dates & Venues 2024

Report by the Office Manager

A. Purpose

To receive the venues for Authority and Sub-Committee meetings for 2024.

B. Recommendation

That Members note the report.

1.0 Background

- In accordance with Standing Orders, the quarterly meeting of The Authority shall be held in the months of March, June, September (AGM) and December.
- In accordance with Standing Orders, the quarterly meeting of The Executive Sub-Committee shall be held in the months of March, June, September and December.
- In accordance with Standing Orders, the quarterly meeting of The Technical Advisory Sub-Committee shall be held in the months of February, May, August and November (AGM).
- The dates presented below were agreed by Members at the June 2023 meeting of the Authority.

2.0 Summary of Key Points

- In accordance with paragraph 10 of the Standing Orders venues for The Authority Meetings have now been booked 2024.

SOUTHERN INSHORE FISHERIES & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

AUTHORITY MEETINGS 2024

Technical Advisory Sub-Committee	1 st February 2024
Audit and Governance Sub-Committee (virtual)	12 th March 2024
Executive Sub-Committee (virtual)	12 th March 2024
The Authority	14 th March 2024
Technical Advisory Sub-Committee	9 th May 2024
Audit and Governance Sub-Committee (virtual)	11 th June 2024
Executive Sub Committee (virtual)	11 th June 2024
The Authority	13 th June 2024
Technical Advisory Sub-Committee	22 nd August 2024
Audit and Governance Sub-Committee (virtual)	17 th September 2024
Executive Sub-Committee (virtual)	17 th September 2024
The Authority (AGM)	19 th September 2024
Technical Advisory Sub-Committee (AGM)	7 th November 2024
Scrutiny and Governance Sub-Committee (virtual)	3 rd December 2024
Executive Sub-Committee (virtual)	3 rd December 2024
The Authority	5 th December 2024

The **TAC starts** at 14:00 and is held at the Southern IFCA Office.

The **AGSC** starts at 10:00 and is held virtually.

The **ESC** starts at 14:00 and is held virtually.

The meeting of **The Authority** starts at 14:00 at the venues below:

Date of Meeting	Venue
14 th March 2024	Corn Exchange, Dorchester Arts Centre
13 th June 2024	Winchester University
19 th September 2024	Northwood House, IOW
5 th December 2024	The Lighthouse, Poole