

Southern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority

Full Authority Meeting – 14th March 2024

A meeting of the Full Authority was held at 2pm on 14th March Best Western Hotel, 32 High West Street, Dorchester DT1 1UP.

Marked A

Present

Cllr. Mark Roberts	Dorset Council (Chairman)
Cllr. John Savage	Southampton City Council
Dr Richard Morgan	Natural England
Dr Antony Jensen	MMO Appointee
Mr Richard Stride	MMO Appointee
Mr Neil Hornby	MMO Appointee
Ms Louise MacCallum	MMO Appointee
Mr Colin Francis	MMO Appointee
Dr Simon Cripps	MMO Appointee
Mr Stuart Kingston-Turner	Environment Agency.
Ms Pia Bateman	Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
Ms Maria Chaplin	Office Manager (OM)
Mr Sam Dell	Deputy Chief Officer (DCO)
Dr Sarah Birchenough	Deputy Chief Officer (DCO)
Mrs Jen Carr	Chartered Accountant

Cllr. Paul Fuller, Isle of Wight Council (Vice Chairman) attended in a virtual capacity.

Welcome

386. The Chairman opened the meeting by welcoming Mrs J Carr to her first in-person meeting in the capacity of Southern IFCA's new Accountant, as well as Ms Mandy Wolfe from the Lyme Bay Fisherman's Community Interest Company (CIC) who was attending the meeting in person from the public gallery. The Chairman welcomed the soon to be appointed new General Member Mr Charlie Brock who attended virtually. In addition, the Chairman welcomed Mr Ted Legg and Mr Tim Ferrero in the virtual public gallery.

Apologies

387. Apologies for absence were received from Cllr. Rob Hughes (Dorset Council), Cllr. Matthew Winnington (Portsmouth City Council), Mr Gary Wordsworth (MMO Appointee), Ms Elisabeth Bussey-Jones (MMO Appointee) and Mr James Morgan (MMO).

Declarations of Interest

388. The following non-pecuniary interests were declared: Dr S Cripps (6a).

Minutes

389. Members considered the Minutes of the meeting held on the 7th December 2023. Dr R Morgan requested an amendment specific to the Portland Seed Mussel Fishery on page 7 to recognise that 'different views' relate to the difference between Natural England's statutory and non-statutory position, rather than opposing views existing within Natural England.

Chairman's Announcements

391. The Chairman informed Members that alongside the DCOs, he attended the premiere of the Lyme Bay Community Interest Company Film following an invitation from Ms Mandy Wolfe,

with the film highlighting the work and the lives of the Lyme Bay fishermen. The Chairman discussed his involvement in work relating to FPV Vigilant.

Sub-Committees

392. Members received the Minutes of the Executive Sub-Committee held on the 5th December 2023 and the Technical Advisory Committee on the 2nd November 2023. With regard to the latter, Ms L MacCallum's name was misspelt. This was noted and corrected.

Resolved

393. The Chairman proposed that the Minutes of both meetings be confirmed and signed. All Members were in favour.

PROGRESS REPORTS

Budget Control Statement to December 2023

394. The CEO introduced the Budget Control Statement (BCS) for the months April 2023 to December 2023. In her summary she discussed a deficit of income against budget of 55k. The main reason, being a deficit in projected income due to outstanding Defra grant monies (150k) for the current financial year, as well as anticipated disposal of FPV Stella Barbara following FPV Vigilant coming into service later in 2024. The CEO explained that all of the expenditure under the Major Budget Headers was positive.

The CEO thanks Mrs J Carr for her work to date, who joined Southern IFCA as a Chartered Accountant on the 1st February 2024.

Resolved

395. That the report be received.

Chief Executive Officer Updates

396. The CEO provided an update on staffing matters, including an update on recruitment of two Project Officers William Meredith-Davies and Imogen Wright and a Compliance and Enforcement IFCO Kyle Payton. In addition, the CEO introduced Mrs Jen Carr, Southern IFCA's new Chartered Accountant.

The CEO announced that, subject to MMO due process, Mr Charlie Brock had been successful in securing a General Membership position at Southern IFCA following a recent interview with the MMO Governance Team. Mr Brock will be representing the Commercial Fishing Sector, with the hope that Mr Brock will be formally inducted to the Authority prior to the May TAC.

The CEO provided an overview of a recent Defra FMP Evidence Workshop that she had attended in London with colleagues from the AIFCA and Devon & Severn IFCA. She explained that meeting considered the evidence gaps which exist within the published FMPs and that the meeting was extremely well attended and diverse, with representatives from Defra at Deputy Director level and below, MMO, NE, JNCC, Welsh Government, BLUE, academics, and CEFAS, in addition to industry representation from NFFO, NUTFA, CIC, Charlie Brock and others. From an IFCA point of view during breakout sessions IFCAs were able to highlight examples of where existing work is already being delivered in the inshore environment, emphasising the need for the data gaps to consider existing frameworks, rather than recreating the wheel. Some of the wider re-occurring matters for discussion throughout the day involved collaborative work and the need to quantify and qualify fisher evidence in a robust way to inform decision making, and the importance and often afterthought of how socio-economic data should be informing management in combination with scientific evidence. An interesting take away from the meeting was Defra making it clear that there is limited funding to plug any of the evidence gaps, calling on delegates to consider innovative funding solutions.

The CEO provided an update on the progress of 2023/2024 Defra funding, which remains ongoing. The CEO discussed a reduction in the current years (2023/2024) anticipated funding of 10k, due to Defra reconsidering the IFCA role in contributing to the National Aquaculture Strategy. In addition, on the 11th March further notification was received of an additional reduction in funding of a further 10k due to reconsideration by Defra that IFCAs would not be involved in spatial management programmes, such as Marine Plans. The CEO explained the challenges when funding commitments are changed in year and with little warning, despite a three-year commitment being made by Defra in 2022.

Ms L MacCallum discussed her huge dissatisfaction and outrage regarding the in-year changes in funding provisions. Dr A Jenson asked whether it would be appropriate to provide feedback to Defra on the challenges that changes to pre-agreed funding provisions creates to operational delivery. As a consensus, Members agreed that the AIFCA were best placed to raise this matter on behalf of all IFCAs.

The CEO provided an update on the 2024 Defra MPA deadline, following a meeting with Defra in December and again in March. During the most recent meeting Defra recognised the complexities involved when developing management for black seabream and appreciated that it was more important to deliver appropriate management outcomes in consultation with those most impacted, and in doing so any unforeseen matters that arise during the development of this area of work may mean that the strict Defra timelines are unachievable. Southern IFCA continue to commit resource and prioritise this area of work with the target of a 2024 delivery.

The CEO discussed the Conduct and Operations Report, which Defra were currently consulting on and asked that Members respond to this four yearly consultation, which focusses on the work that the IFCAs achieve in the inshore environment. The CEO referred Members to a recent email they will have received from the OM, which provided the relevant information for Members to complete the survey. The CEO reminded Members that the deadline for completion is the 22nd April 2024.

The CEO finished on an item which features in this week's edition of the Fishing News, which is an article written by Dr Sarah Coulthard, who has been working with the AIFCA on a communications project. The article discusses the challenges that are faced by IFCAs and IFCA Committees and what is described as a difficult balancing act that IFCAs must achieve. The CEO welcomed this article and invited Members to view copies provided in the meeting room.

Resolved

397. That the update be noted.

Marine Asset Review

398. DCO Dell provided an update on the new vessel Vigilant, in that he and Senior IFCO Parry attended the Ribcraft factory on 13th March. With regard to build progress, the FPV has just entered the electrical fit out stage, and since the last meeting in December the cabin is now lined, and the seating configuration is now in place with the tubes constructed. Other components are being added to the vessel for example handrails and other superstructure. Full procurement hasn't been completed yet, with the main delay according to Ribcraft being attributed to an 8-week delay on windows and doors.

The DCO confirmed that there has been further correspondence between Ribcraft and the appointed MECAL Surveyor, regarding satisfying outstanding compliance issues surrounding the build; in particular a strengthening of the transom area to support the complex steering system being fitted to the boat.

Coding category has also been an on-going discussion between Ribcraft and MECAL, which has resulted in an uplift in coding from Category 3 to Category 2 which means the vessel's operating envelope has increased from 20 miles to 60 miles from a safe haven. Sea trials are now likely to commence in May.

DCO Dell explained to Members that Southern had been negotiating a change in MCA codes of practice regarding the introduction of new workboat code edition. DCO Dell reminded members that SIFCA were going to fit a small hauler onto Vigilant for the purposes of hauling recreational pots. Should the pot fishing byelaw come into force, the new code prohibits lifting devices on RHIBs, accordingly changes have been made to the FPV design to remove this capability.

Mr R Stride asked DCO Dell if a mechanical hauler cannot be added to the new vessel could an A frame be added for hauling pots.

The Chairman asked DCO Dell if it would affect the other vessels.

DCO Dell explained to the Members that there are a number of other implications for Southern IFCA in terms of the operating parameters under workboat code edition 3, and that the aim is for all FPVs to adhere to the codes consistently. The DCO reminded Members that the Codes were in place for the health and safety of staff and the equipment that vessels carry and that all changes had been implemented through the Southern IFCA Health and Safety policy.

The DCO provided Members with an update on the disposal of FPV Stella Barbara, in that in December 2023 the Executive Committee Members approved the disposal of FPV Stella Barbara to Poole Harbour Commissioner's (PHC) in accordance with the Southern IFCA Financial Regulations. PHC submitted a formal proposal to Southern IFCA setting out the terms for a contractual transfer of the vessel in exchange for a 5-year berthing agreement for FPV Vigilant at its intended base at the Port of Poole Marina. This is due to complete on the 25th March 2024.

Resolved

399. That the update be noted.

MPA Management Update

400. DCO Birchenough reminded Members that the BTFG byelaw was submitted in October 2023 to the MMO for QA. The first round of QA was received from the MMO in February, this has been reviewed and the response has been sent back to the MMO. There were no major issues identified and so the response has been sent back to enter the next stage in the MMO QA process. It may be that there will be further rounds of QA or the MMO may make a determination to submit the byelaw to Defra. DCO Birchenough informed members that BTFG phase two is underway with Officers actively developing this work stream.

DCO Birchenough discussed that in addition to BTFG, Black Bream and Shore Gathering were the priority workstreams. With regard to Black Bream, the DCO informed the Members that the TAC had considered and agreed some general, evidence and spatial principles, as they related to underpinning the development of management, and that under the spatial principles, Members considered the identification of indicative habitat areas for Black Bream based on best available evidence of nest locations. The DCO discussed a Member Working Group which had been held to develop this work stream further, and that officers were currently working on the next stages in the process of building on the output of the TAC and discussions at that Working Group.

DCO Birchenough also provided an update on the progress of Shore Gathering, in that a Member Working group was held in February for consideration of initial principles to underpin management development and that Officers were currently working on the next phase of this process, building on the discussions that were had at that Working Group, for presentation at a subsequent TAC.

Resolved

401. That the update be noted.

ITEMS FOR DECISION

402. Annual Strategy 2024-2025

The CEO provided the background to The Annual Strategy, in that under the MaCAA Southern IFCA are required to submit to Defra and the SoS an Annual Plan which sets out Southern IFCA's main objectives and priorities for the year ahead. The CEO discussed how the plan demonstrates how Southern will continue to shape inshore fisheries and conservation management in accordance with statutory functions.

The CEO discussed the importance of the plan, when considering delivery of Southern IFCA's function as a competent inshore regulator for the marine environment alongside many competing and evolving objectives. The CEO explained that this proactive way of working, with the recognition of the need to maintain a capacity for reactive and emerging work and oncoming challenges, will provide a template for Southern IFCA and our stakeholders moving forward through 2024 and beyond.

The CEO discussed how the strategic direction allows Southern to be more transparent with the community, stakeholders, and delivery partners, through anticipation of shared goals and objectives and seek to encourage joint working initiatives and projects.

The CEO described the format of the Strategy, with overarching context provided by legislative function and overarching policy principles, and how Southern IFCA will continue to draw these components together to drive the collective delivery of the UK Government's vision, in addition to adherence with regulatory best practice when delivering a compliance and enforcement function.

Building on the National IFCA Vision, the CEO introduced the Southern IFCA's vision for the forthcoming year is to '*champion prosperous inshore fisheries founded upon thriving marine environments*', explaining that the vision recognises the symbiotic relationship which exists when well-managed inshore fisheries reap environmental and socioeconomic benefit. In championing these reciprocal relationships, Southern IFCA will continue to draw upon two key themes for 2024-2025 which will be embedded and threaded through all of our work which, as captured within and central to the wider IFCA model, are essential components to facilitate the delivery of the IFCA vision: industry collaboration and partnership working.

The CEO discussed that each team has three horizon goals set under the Annual Strategy. The BST: (1) ongoing governance improvements revolving around improved and time efficient HR solutions, (2) online permit platform delivery and (3) a review of staff personal work plans and process. The CEO explained that both DCO Dell and DCO Birchenough will draw out their team specific goals in the subsequent agenda items and thanked them both for their work here.

The CEO explained that it was the intention to send both the Annual Strategy and 2xTeam Plans to Defra in order to more accurately capture the work that Southern IFCA are committed to undertake and deliver.

Mr N Hornby suggested that a summary of the Annual Strategy be prepared to make the Strategy more accessible. Dr S Cripps suggested that impact of Horizon Goals should be measured in the Strategy.

Dr A Jensen proposed the recommendations, which were seconded by Mr S Kingston-Turner. All Members were in favour apart from Dr S Cripps who abstained from the vote.

Resolved

403. (a) That Members consider the draft Annual Strategic Plan for the forthcoming year April 2024-March 2025.

404. (b) That Members approve the Annual Strategic Plan for dissemination to the Secretary of State and publication on Southern IFCA's website prior to 31st March 2024.

405. Compliance & Enforcement Team Plan

DCO Dell informed Members that the Compliance and Enforcement Team Plan captures how the C&E Team will deliver against the Annual Strategy. DCO Dell highlighted a couple of key sections which are integral to improving operational delivery, new ways of working and supporting the implementation of new district wide byelaws.

DCO Dell focussed on how the team will deliver against IFCA Success Criteria 2 via implementation of a fair, effective, and proportionate enforcement regime via an Intelligence Led Risk Based Approach.

DCO Dell stressed the importance of community and stakeholder engagement as an integral part in successful delivery through maximising voluntary compliance. DCO Dell also discussed how the teamwork with other government departments, aligning delivery to that described in the Joint Fisheries Statement in relation to Control and Enforcement.

DCO Dell discussed the start of a pilot project using Remote Electronic Monitoring and Artificial Intelligence in the inshore under 12m fleet, to enhance local monitoring control and evidence gathering but with the intention to inform national discussions and further the outcomes and development of the Fisheries Management Plans.

DCO Dell explained to Members that the intention is to use the AI to analyse video footage captured onboard vessels in order to identify species, for example in the net fishery, this would allow greater understandings of salmonid interactions, and in the pot fishery, the technology could be used to explore pot limitations.

DCO Dell explained that Southern IFCA are looking at the towed gear fleets currently rigged on two of the line-based Lyme Bay CIC Member vessels which is being used to determine when the gear is deployed and returned to the vessel.

Dr A Jensen proposed the recommendation, which was seconded by Dr S Cripps. All Members were in favour.

Resolved

406. That Members approve the Compliance & Enforcement Team Plan, which feeds directly from the Delivery Priorities identified in the Southern IFCA Annual Strategy for April 2024 to March 2025.

407. Research & Policy Team Plan

DCO Birchenough talked Members through the Research and Policy Team Plan for 2024 to 2025 which builds on the Annual Strategic Plan and RPT Horizon goals, splitting these down into delivery priorities. The RPT Plan outlines the functions of the team which cover the development of fisheries management interventions, reviewing fisheries management interventions, monitoring, projects and emerging work and engagement. The plan covers each of those functions with the development and review of fisheries management interventions and monitoring being our core functions, all underpinned by the team's engagement work and supported by working with partners on external projects.

DCO Birchenough explained that the first Horizon Goal relates to the MPA 2024 management deadline and covers three main workstreams, BTFG, Shore Gathering and Black Bream. The outcome of the BTFG review, the BTFG Byelaw 2023, is already with the MMO for consideration. The Shore Gathering and Black Seabream reviews are being progressed through the 2024/2025 year and where possible, the delivery priorities have been broken down into quarterly timelines.

DCO Birchenough outlined that the second Horizon Goal relates to Frontrunner Fisheries Management Plans, a new avenue of fisheries management across the country. The first five front-runner FMPs have been published, covering Crab and Lobster, Whelk, King Scallop, Bass and Channel Demersal Non-Quota Species. The final of the six front runner FMP's, Southern North Sea, and Eastern Channel Mixed Flatfish, is expected within the scope of this summer. With the publication of these FMP's, IFCA's have a role to play in helping Defra in the post publication phase, working collaboratively with other arm's length bodies, FMP working groups and industry to support work around the evidence gaps identified and support the implementation of management.

DCO Birchenough informed Members that there are specific projects outlined for the RPT with the aim of helping to address identified evidence gaps which also have direct relation to important fisheries within our district. These projects will enable collaborative work with the industry to involve them in the evidence gathering process and help them integrate into the FMP post-publication phase. Two of these projects are a Whelk Catch Per Unit Effort (CPUE) pilot project, to sit alongside the Southern IFCA Whelk Stock Assessment Survey and a project to determine where updates and improvements can be made to the Solent Scallop Stock Survey. Both projects relate directly to some of the objectives identified in the relevant FMPs, and specific evidence gaps. the whelk and Solent scallop fisheries are major fishery in the Southern IFCA district, being able to collect data specific to the district and input this into the national picture is important to ensure that district specific data can be considered when making management decisions.

DCO Birchenough outlined that a further workstream under this Horizon Goal relates to the potential implementation of the Pot Fishing Byelaw, where the RPT will be working with the C&E Team to use the implementation of the permit scheme under that byelaw as a pilot for exploring how such measures can be implemented within pot fisheries and provide useful information to inform wider permit approaches for both whelk and crab & lobster fisheries.

DCO Birchenough explained that the third Horizon Goal is for the BTFG Review Phase 2, the general aims being to consider potential wider sensitive habitat management for non-designated features both within and outside of marine protected areas. DCO Birchenough reminded Members that this work is underway, and the program of work will be developed through the coming year.

DCO Birchenough informed Members that there are several additional work streams alongside the Horizon Goals which will be ongoing throughout the year. This includes the lease program for our aquaculture fishery and the need to issue leases for the next 5-year period of 2025 to 2030. There will also be reviews under two of Southern IFCA Permit byelaws as per the requirements of those review periods, which is the Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Byelaw and the Net Fishing Byelaw. There is also reference to Marine Conservation Reference Size (MCRS) review, which is ongoing, but recognises the need to reprioritize workstreams in line with the 2024 MPA management deadline and to ensure that outputs from the FMP process, as they relate to MCRS can be understood and aligned with where required. DCO Birchenough outlined that the RPT will also continue to support Defra's delivery of Fisheries Act 2020 objectives through ongoing participation in the FMP process and engagement with marine licencing. DCO Birchenough explained that the RPT Plan outlines the surveys that are undertaken along with the data sets that Southern IFCA currently hold on and involvement in other projects, which includes working on

several Fisheries Industry Science Partnership (FISP) projects and, how these will be delivered throughout the year.

Proposed by Dr A Jensen and seconded by Mr R Stride. All Members were in favour.

Resolved

408. That Members approve the Research and Policy Team Plan for April 2024 to March 2025.

409. Renewal of s167 Agreement with Sussex IFCA 2024

DCO Dell invited Members to consider a renewal of the s.167 Agreement, made under the Marine and Coastal Access Act (2009) to allow for the continued delegation from Southern IFCA to Sussex IFCA for IFCA byelaw making powers relevant to the area of Chichester Harbour.

The DCO provided background to the 167 Agreement, which has been in place since 30th July 2014 and is due to expire on the 30th July 2024.

The DCO discussed that if the Agreement be discontinued then both respective IFCAs would need to revisit spatial provisions under a number of existing byelaws.

Should the Authority agree the recommendation to renew the 167 Agreement, Southern IFCA and Sussex IFCA will seek Secretary of State approval for a 10-year period commencing the 30th July 2024.

Proposed by Dr A Jensen and seconded by Ms L MacCallum. All Members were in favour.

Resolved

410. That Members enter into a renewed agreement with Sussex IFCA (under s.167 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act, 2009) to delegate byelaw making powers to Sussex IFCA for that area of Chichester Harbour that is within the County of Hampshire.

411. Guest Speaker: Lyme Bay Fisherman's Community Interest Company (CIC)

Ms Mandy Wolfe, the CEO of the Lyme Bay Fisherman's Community Interest Company gave a presentation to the Members on the newly found Lyme Bay Fisherman's CIC. A new community interest company, Lyme Bay Fisherman's CIC, has recently been formed, supported by funding through the UK Fisheries and Seafood Scheme from Marine Management Organisation. Details can be found on their website [Home – Lyme Bay Fisherman's CIC \(lbfic.com\)](http://Home – Lyme Bay Fisherman's CIC (lbfic.com))

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION ONLY

Compliance and Enforcement Report

412. DCO Dell provided an overview of work undertaken by the Compliance and Enforcement Team, the report contains statistical data relating to the enforcement activity for the reporting period November 2023 to January 2024. These figures are reported on an annual basis to Defra via the AIFCA as well as being published on our website. The report included details relating to offences and offence outcomes which had been sanitised but provides the Members with an overview of the offending and what action is being taken.

Research and Policy Team: Behind the Scenes

413. DCO Birchenough provided a quarterly overview from the officers in the Research and Policy Team, covering recent training in coding and mapping software, a workshop run by the MMO on cuttlefish management as an output from the relevant FMP, the newly implemented mid-season Solent Scallop Survey and work by the PO MPAs across MPA workstreams.

Date of Next Meeting

414. To confirm the date of the next Authority meeting on the Thursday 13th June at Winchester University, St Alphege Building, Room 002, Sparkford Road, Winchester, SO22 4NR

The public meeting concluded at 16:24