

# Southern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority

Full Authority Meeting – 19<sup>th</sup> September 2024

A meeting of the Full Authority was held at 2pm on 19<sup>th</sup> September 2024 at Northwood House, Ward Avenue, Cowes, Isle of Wight PO31 8AZ.

Marked A

## Present

|                           |                                       |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Cllr. Paul Fuller         | Isle of Wight Council (Chairman)      |
| Cllr. Rob Hughes          | Dorset Council (Vice Chairman)        |
| Cllr. Kate Wheller        | Dorset Council                        |
| Cllr. Crispin Goodall     | BCP Council                           |
| Cllr. John Savage         | Southampton Council                   |
| Cllr. Matthew Winnington  | Portsmouth County Council             |
| Dr Antony Jensen          | MMO Appointee                         |
| Mr Neil Hornby            | MMO Appointee                         |
| Ms Louise MacCallum       | MMO Appointee                         |
| Ms Elisabeth Bussey-Jones | MMO Appointee                         |
| Mr Gary Wordsworth        | MMO Appointee                         |
| Mr James Morgan           | MMO Appointee (Acting)                |
| Dr Richard Morgan         | Natural England                       |
| Ms Pia Bateman            | Chief Executive Officer (CEO)         |
| Mr Sam Dell               | Principal Deputy Chief Officer (PDCO) |
| Dr Sarah Birchenough      | Deputy Chief Officer (DCO)            |
| Mrs Jennifer Carr         | Chartered Accountant (Virtual)        |
| Ms Maria Chaplin          | Office Manager (OM)                   |

## **Appointment of Sub-Committee Membership for 2024-2025 (Audit and Governance)**

1. Under general consent the Chairman appointed Cllr. R Hughes, Cllr. K Wheller, Cllr. Rod Cooper and Cllr. M Winnington to the Audit and Governance Sub-Committee.

### **Resolved**

- 1a** For three or more Council members to be appointed to the Audit and Governance Sub Committee for the year 2024-2025.

## **Appointment of Sub-Committee Membership for 2024-2025 (Executive)**

2. Under general consent the Chairman appointed Cllr. B Dunning and Cllr. C Goodall to the Executive Sub-Committee.

### **Resolved**

- 2a** For two or more Council members to be appointed to the Audit and Governance Sub Committee for the year 2024-2025.

## **Apologies**

3. Apologies for absence were received from Cllr. Pete Miles (BCP Council), Cllr. Barry Dunning (Hampshire), Cllr. Rod Cooper (Hampshire), Mr Stuart Kingston-Turner (Environment Agency), Mr Colin Francis (MMO Appointee), Mr Charlie Brock (MMO Appointee), Mr Richard Stride (MMO Appointee) and Dr Simon Cripps (MMO Appointee).

## **Declarations of Interest**

4. The following non-pecuniary interests were declared: Dr Richard Morgan (10).

## **Minutes**

5. Members considered and agreed the Minutes of the meeting held on the 13<sup>th</sup> June 2024.

## **Chairman's Announcements**

6. The Chairman discussed his attendance at the TAC meeting in August, finding it an interesting and insightful experience and informed Members that he will make it a regular attendance. The Chairman informed Members that he attended the AIFCA meeting with the CEO and the Vice Chairman.

The CEO informed Members that for each Local Authority a letter is sent at the end of financial year to inform the Council Leaders about Elected Member attendance, accompanied by the Annual Report to provide information on the work of Southern IFCA. Hampshire County Council have indicated they are keen to send Councillors to meetings, as of yet they have not attended.

## **Sub-Committees**

7. Members received signed minutes of the Executive Sub-Committee held on 11<sup>th</sup> June 2024 and the Technical Advisory Sub-Committee held on 9<sup>th</sup> May 2024.

## **PROGRESS REPORTS**

### **Chief Executive Officer updates**

8. The CEO discussed Ministerial changes under the new Government, namely the Rt Hon Steve Reed OBE MP as the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the Minister for State for Food, Farming and Fisheries, Daniel Zeichner, formally the shadow Minister for Defra from 2020 to 2024.

The CEO informed Members that the new Government will likely lead to changes in inshore fisheries and conservation management. There have been discussions regarding the increase in the Government's offshore wind budget and how this may relate to work in the inshore sector. The CEO outlined that there are early suggestions that any associated loss of biodiversity may result in a equitable spatial area being matched for conservation and biodiversity purposes, and that this may lead to complexity in the inshore area. The CEO outlined however that the geographic placement of any future wind farms and the intentional direction of the Government has not yet been defined, including whether they will be within 6nm. The CEO outlined that the IFCA remains arm's length at this point as the program is not yet impacting the inshore area or communities but updates will be provided to the Authority as this work progresses.

The CEO informed Members that a Private Members Bill, which was put forward to regulate and limit bottom trawling in MPAs had its first reading in the House of Lords in July. The CEO outlined that an update had been provided at the TAC on the proposed regulations being related to MPAs with the ability to confer power to the MMO and IFCA's. The CEO updated Members that following the second reading in the House of Lords in September, the Bill had been withdrawn.

The CEO discussed with Members the Environmental Improvement Plan, published in January 2023, building on the 25-year Environment Plan and key legal frameworks, of which relevant to Southern IFCA are the Environment Act 2021 and the Fisheries Act 2020. The EIP was described as a "comprehensive delivery plan" to halt and reverse the decline in nature in the UK via delivery of 10 goals, each with specific targets and commitments that contribute to legally binding targets set out under the Environment Act 2021.

The CEO discussed with Members that Southern IFCA had reprioritised work following the release of the EIP in 2023 to ensure that we were re-strategizing to deliver on deadlines for MPA work namely bottom towed fishing gear, shore gathering and black seabream management.

The CEO informed Members that the Labour Government launched a rapid review of the EIP which was to be completed by the end of the year. This followed the publication of a progress report on the EIP for 2023-2024 which captures terrestrial as well as marine, the latter linked to the work the MMO have done on management offshore MPAs. The report did not include information on the work that IFCA's are doing to help achieve Government objectives. The CEO advised Members that this has been raised at a national level with the Chief Officers Group and the AIFCA and the work that Southern IFCA has undertaken in this regard has been emphasised in the Southern IFCA Annual Report. The CEO outlined that the Annual Report aims to be explicit to demonstrate how, as a small organisation, Southern IFCA are making changes to support the Government's aspirations with regard to management in MPAs.

The CEO discussed that the Defra funding for the current financial year has yet to be received, noting that it is six months into the financial year. With regard to future funding, the current spending review window, SR21, ceases in 2025. The AIFCA on behalf of the IFCA's put together a funding bid to Defra, upon direction from Defra, to cover two years, 2025 which is already committed and 2026, the bid was submitted in August. Defra have advised that the next four years spending review will be split in two, 2025-2026 and 2026-2028, considered post the October budget. Mr R Clark, Chief Officer of the AIFCA will be speaking with Defra to clarify if there has been any changes in this timeline since August. The implication is that the funding that has been agreed for the current financial year may be reduced. An update will be provided to IFCA's following the AIFCA meeting with Defra on current and future funding, however it is expected that there may be a public sector reduction in funding.

The CEO provided an update relating to a staffing matter for a member of staff who walked off the job in April sighting constructive dismissal, an out of court settlement has been agreed, put forward by Southern IFCA for commercial purposes only and to avoid the need for lengthy proceedings and was not an admission of liability. The CEO informed Members that two new members of staff joining the Compliance and Enforcement Team in October. Both positions are to fill current vacancies. The CEO outlined that Mr S Kingston-Turner from the EA joined the interview panel which was beneficial due to his experience in compliance and enforcement and also a senior colleague from Devon and Severn IFCA.

The CEO, on behalf of the Chairman and the Chairman of the TAC, thanked Members who attended their appraisals and for the constructive input that was provided.

The CEO described a number of outputs from the Members Appraisals, to include Drop In Community sessions with the CEO and Chairman. This initiative is as a result of feedback from Members and will be across the district during a three to four month period where the wider community will be welcome to come and meet the CEO and Chairman on an informal basis. The aim is to increase visibility within the district and Members are also welcome to attend if they wish. The CEO discussed with Members the new Lunch time learning session which was trialled before this meeting and thanked both PDCO Dell and DCO Birchenough for putting the first session together. The running of these sessions came out of a suggestion through the Members appraisals, and will continue to run at the Authority Meetings. The CEO outlined that another suggestion which will be taken forward is to diarise Working Groups over a 12 month period and this will start from the implementation of the next year's strategy from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025. Diversity in IFCA Membership was also discussed, the CEO informed Members that this has also been raised with the AIFCA and it is hoped that this will align with work the AIFCA is undertaking nationally. The CEO also outlined that the TAC meeting room be opened ahead of the meeting for Members to engage informally ahead of the meeting taking place if they wish.

Cllr Savage raised, in relation to new Government initiatives, the Solent Cluster Carbon Storage Scheme and related pipeline work which would take place in the western part of the Solent. The CEO outlined that the IFCA are a statutory body that responds to marine licencing and these type of works are consulted on with the IFCA through the marine licencing system, managed by

the MMO. The IFCA are aware of potential impacts from such works on the local industry and work with stakeholders to understand impacts when responding.

### **Budget Control Statement 2023-2024**

9. The CEO introduced the Budget Control Statement (BCS) up to 31st July 2024. The CEO discussed a deficit of income against budget of £97,000 at this stage of the financial year. The main reason for the deficit relates to the outstanding Defra funding. The CEO explained that the budget included £150,000 of Defra funding, since this time the funding has been decreased to £130,000.

The CEO outlined that the positive variance captured under the Compliance and Enforcement header of around £36,000, represents £10,000 of savings on Fisheries Protection Vessel fuel and maintenance costs, directly related to a delay in FPV Vigilant coming into service. She discussed an outstanding payment to be made of £10,000 related to access to a national intelligence system CLUE. This system is currently being utilised by the Compliance and Enforcement Team who are working with the MMO and other national bodies to centralise intelligence into a single system.

The positive variance captured under the Research and Policy header, of around £17,000, relates to survey work yet to be completed which is time timetabled for later in the year. No costs to date have been incurred to date for byelaw advertisement, however costs under this header are very imminent due to possible ratification of the Shore Gathering Byelaw package depending on the outcome of this meeting.

The CEO informed Members that SIFCA have completed the annual MSC audit for the Poole Harbour Clam and Cockle Fishery. There is a positive variance captured under Business Services of around £44,000 due to a reduction in staff salaries. This is attributed to one member of staff leaving in April, plus a member of staff who is currently on a 12-month sabbatical and is due back in January 2025.

The CEO informed Members that there is a positive variance in Capital Equipment of £21,000, reflecting the delay of FPV Vigilant coming into service. The budget also included an income of £50,000 related to the sale of Fisheries Protection Vessel Protector, which at some point will have to be replaced. The replacement of FPV Protector will begin to be explored at the end of 2024 beginning of 2025.

The Chairman stated that he acknowledged a previous suggestion that he writes to Mr R Clark at AIFCA, requesting the chasing up of the Defra funding, outlining the contractual commitments within SIFCA which relate to this funding and that without Defra funding Southern IFCA are required to use reserves. The Chairman asked Members for their agreement to write to Mr R Clark on this basis. All Members were in favour.

### **Recommendation**

10. That the Chairman write to Mr R Clark at AIFCA requesting an update regarding the outstanding 2024/25 Defra funding payment to Southern IFCA.

### **Marine Asset Review**

11. PDCO Dell informed Members that he is pleased to report FPV Vigilant was craned in at Portland on the 17<sup>th</sup> September and the sea trials are now underway. The Officers will continue to work through the vessel acceptance document for sea trials over the coming two weeks. The vessel acceptance document provides a structure for sea trials and involves five parts, firstly to cross check with the contractual specification to ensure the vessel is aligned to the signed contract of sale, followed by three main tests, designed around the requirements in the original

tender, this includes the Harbour Acceptance Test, Sea Acceptance Test and the Coding Acceptance Test, HAT, SAT and CAT. The 5<sup>th</sup> element of vessel acceptance is developing an agreed snagging list with Ribcraft which will include timeframes for resolving any issues, this is for any minor issues opposed to major ones, with the intention to resolve as much as possible during sea trials. Ribcraft are on hand for next two weeks for this purpose.

PDCO Dell outlined that, subject to the vessel acceptance document, it is the intention for the Authority to take ownership towards the end of September., The change of ownership requires a final stage payment which contractually is subject to satisfactory sea trials.

The Chairman referenced the information in the Annual Report about the filtering of microplastics within the engine and. asked PDCO Dell to provide an insight into this process.

PDCO Dell explained to members that the outboard engines on FPV Vigilant are unique, with Suzuki the only outboard manufacturers at this time to be installing a collection device as standard equipment on selected engines. The application of pulling micro plastics from the sea in relation to FPV Vigilant has yet to be seen but it is an exciting development.

The Chairman expressed his thanks to SIFCA for taking the lead on this positive response to the issue of microplastics and the hopeful benefit that will be realised by the use of this technology.

### **ITEMS FOR DECISION**

#### **Statement of Accounts for Year Ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024: Annual Return from PK Francis**

**12.** Mrs J Carr introduced the item, explaining that Members had previously received these papers in draft form at the June 2024 meeting, where it was resolved that they be sent to PK Francis for an Independent Assurance Review. This Review has now been completed and have provided sign off for the accounts and the annual return, there were minimal points raised and there have been no changes to the numbers from the draft versions in July.

The Chairman proposed the recommendations, which were seconded by Cllr. R Hughes. All Members were in favour.

#### **Resolved**

- 12a** That Members note the outcomes of the external audit for the financial year ended 31st March 2024.
- 12b** That Members formally accept the Statement of Accounts for the financial year April 2023 to March 2024, and that the document be signed by the Chairman, the CEO and the Accountant on behalf of the Authority.

### **Shore Gathering Byelaw**

**13.** DCO Birchenough outlined to Members that Southern IFCA had committed to reviewing shore gathering in 2022. The Shore Gathering Review was one of the workstreams which was then further informed by the EIP 2023 and subsequently was redefined to focus on feature-based management within National Site Network Sites.

DCO Birchenough stated that through a series of Working Groups and TAC meetings, Members had considered and agreed a set of Management Principles to underpin the development of measures and draft measures based on these Principles in the form of a byelaw for shore gathering and a code of conduct for seaweed harvesting. In reviewing the draft measures Members had also considered the outcomes of conservation assessments outlining how proposed measures would mitigate against any adverse impact on SACs or SPAs and would allow the IFCA to meet the Conservation Objectives of MCZs.

DCO Birchenough informed Members that at the TAC meeting in August, Members had provided comment on a final draft of the Shore Gathering Byelaw and the Seaweed Harvesting Code of Conduct. DCO Birchenough outlined that the final Byelaw and Code of Conduct reviewed in August incorporated updates made since the May TAC based on comments made by Natural England at the meeting and also following the receipt of Formal Advice from Natural England on the Conservation Assessment Package underpinning the measures. Members of the TAC had also considered the Fishing for Cockles (Amendment) Byelaw which was developed due to the necessity to remove provisions from the existing Fishing for Cockles Byelaw which related to hand picking to avoid duplication of regulations. DCO Birchenough outlined that provisions relating to dredge fishing had also been removed as there is specific management in place for both cockle fisheries in the District under separate legislation. However, there was a need to maintain provisions relating to MCRS and the cockle fishing season.

Members of the TAC at the August meeting recommended that the Authority and the Secretary of State be formally notified of the intention to Make both the Shore Gathering Byelaw and the Fishing for Cockles (Amendment) Byelaw. DCO Birchenough outlined that the appropriate notification process had been followed ahead of this meeting in line with Defra's IFCA Byelaw Guidance.

DCO Birchenough explained to Members that the rationale behind the proposed measures is to ensure that the IFCA can meet its legal duties with respect to protection of National Site Network sites from the potential impacts of shore gathering activities. DCO Birchenough outlined that the activities in question included shellfish gathering, bait collection, push netting, mechanical harvesting by hand, crab tiling and seaweed harvesting. DCO Birchenough informed Members that the Shore Gathering Byelaw, accompanied by the Seaweed Harvesting Code of Conduct and the Fishing for Cockles (Amendment) Byelaw, provided relevant, consistent and feature-based management which allows Southern IFCA to meet those legal duties.

The provisions in the Shore Gathering Byelaw were outlined, namely the creation of a series of prohibited areas for all activities which are defined as either year-round, summer closure areas (1st March to 31st August) or winter closure areas (1st November to 31st March). The definition of the activity has been carefully considered in order to not unintentionally include other activities where persons may be using hand operated equipment for non-fishing purposes but to be fully aligned to the Southern IFCA remit.

It was outlined that the Shore Gathering Byelaw spatial management is down to the 2m contour, which is consistent across the district and is appropriate given the types of activities being considered and their potential reach on the shore. This also allows for management of activities such as push netting which do occur in shallow water. The combination of permanent closure areas, summer closure areas and winter closure areas up to the 2m contour covers 24.2% of SPAs, 32.4% of SACs and 16.1% of MCZs, noting that some designations overlap and therefore the same area of closure will be applicable across more than one designated site in some cases.

It was outlined that there are some exemptions detailed in the Shore Gathering Byelaw, relating to the use of vessels and certain types of equipment, for example rod and line fishing. The Shore Gathering Byelaw will require the revocation of five existing Southern IFCA byelaws, DCO Birchenough explained that this will allow shore gathering management to be encompassed in a single measure which will aid stakeholders in understanding relevant regulations.

The Seaweed Harvesting Code of Conduct was determined to be required as an additional non-regulatory measure reflecting the current low levels of seaweed harvesting currently occurring in the district and therefore a determination that no further regulation for this activity was required outside the spatial areas defined in the Shore Gathering Byelaw. It was outlined that the CoC mirrors a Natural England CoC to ensure that appropriate provisions were included. The intention is to launch the CoC alongside the Byelaws at the point they are ratified by the Secretary of State.

Members were informed of the supporting documents which accompany the Byelaws, including an Impact Assessment which considers the potential costs and benefits of implementing the legislation. The cost relates specifically to the Shore Gathering Byelaw due to the introduction of new management and was informed by a targeted engagement exercise with key stakeholders. The maximum average annual cost to the shore gathering industry was calculated at £77,609. Members were informed that this is based on the upper cost estimates and on the basis of activity taking place every day which is known not to be the case, therefore the cost is a likely overestimate but does represent the highest end of the potential impact.

The supporting documents also includes a Conservation Assessment Package, accompanied by a Site Specific Evidence Document and a Literature Review. The TAC had previously reviewed Natural England's Formal Advice on this package and agreed a response table which was drafted indicating how the IFCA were considering each point raised by NE and any changes required. It was determined that only one change to management was required, which has been incorporated into the final Shore Gathering Byelaw, an slight extension to the closure area in The Fleet to align with management areas for bird disturbance.

DCO Birchenough outlined that should the Authority resolve to Make the two Byelaws, then the Authority will give notice of the intention to confirm these Byelaws by advertising them for two consecutive weeks in a number of publications. This includes the Fishing News and three local papers, the Southern Daily Echo, the Dorset Echo and the Isle of Wight County Press. There will then be a 28-day period of Formal Consultation during which stakeholders have the opportunity to make representations either in support or objection of the Byelaws. The IFCA will then respond to any representations, with, for objections, the aim of resolving that objection.

DCO Birchenough informed Members that the TAC will consider the summary of outcomes from the Formal Consultation prior to a full review by the Executive Sub-Committee who will make a recommendation to the Authority in December as to whether to submit the Byelaw to the MMO for Quality Assurance. Once the MMO are satisfied, the Byelaws are submitted to Defra for consideration by the Secretary of State.

Ms E Bussey-Jones asked for clarification on the three types of prohibited area and whether they overlap at all, if they do not the percentage quoted for the total area covered does not equal the total of the percentages for each type of area. DCO Birchenough confirmed that there is no overlap between different types of prohibited area and stated she would check the numbers that had been provided in relation to percentage coverage and update Members at a subsequent meeting.

Dr R Morgan commented that the response from Southern IFCA on how the points raised by NE through Formal Advice had been addressed was welcomed. NE also welcomed the extension to the management in The Fleet. Dr R Morgan stated that there were a couple of areas where NE would wish to see protections furthered, however NE recognized that there is a significant improvement on existing management and therefore NE are supportive of the Byelaws whilst maintaining the recommendations made through Formal Advice.

Dr R Morgan proposed the recommendations, which were seconded by Dr A Jensen. All Members were in favour.

### **Resolved**

- 13a.** That the Authority proceeds to make the Shore Gathering Byelaw
- 13b.** That the Authority proceeds to make the Fishing for Cockles (Amendment) Byelaw
- 13c.** That both Byelaws are advertised in accordance with IFCA Byelaw Guidance from Defra
- 13d.** That the Authority agrees to implement the Seaweed Harvesting Code of Conduct in line with the ratification of the Byelaws

- 13e.** That the TAC will consider outcomes of the Formal Consultation, prior to review by the Executive Sub-Committee, who, under delegated powers, are required to report with recommendations to the Authority following the making of statutory interventions, prior to MMO quality assurance and an application to the Secretary of State to confirm the Byelaws.

### **Draft Annual Report 2023-2024**

**14.** The CEO described the legal 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 document correlates to the extensive work that has been undertaken by Southern IFCA over the last 12 months. The CEO provided a brief overview of the report and thanked staff, Members and the wider community for their contributions.

Dr A Jensen commented that the Annual Report was very comprehensive and reflected a large volume of work completed during the year. Mr G Wordsworth commented that the Annual Report was valuable in representing the work of Southern IFCA to the wider political sphere which was echoed by the Chairman.

Cllr. R Hughes proposed the recommendations, which were seconded by Dr A Jensen. All Members were in favour.

### **Resolved**

**14a** That Members consider and provide comment on the draft Annual Report

**14b** That Members approve the Annual Report for submission to the Secretary of State.

### **Guest Speaker**

#### **Seagrass Conservation and Restoration in a WILDER Solent**

**15.** Members received a presentation from Dr Tim Ferrero, Senior Specialist – Marine Conservation at the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust (HIWWT) on seagrass conservation and restoration in the Solent including WILDER, the Trust's vision for wildlife conservation to 2030 which includes three goals looking at nature in recovery '30 by 30', 1 in 4 people taking action and nature as a solution. Dr Ferrero provided an overview of seagrass, the key benefits offered by the species, the pressures that seagrass habitats face and the intention to protect the seagrass which exists in the Solent and restore where the habitat has been lost. Dr Ferrero reviewed initiatives for protection and restoration including work by Southern IFCA in managing fishing activities and management by other authorities in the marine environment. Dr Ferrero outlined two restoration projects which are operating in the Solent, the Solent Seagrass Restoration Project and the ELSP Solent Seascape Project and the methods employed to work towards restoration, working with academic institutions and commercial companies. More information can be found at [www.hiwwt.org.uk](http://www.hiwwt.org.uk).

### **ITEMS FOR INFORMATION ONLY**

#### **Compliance and Enforcement Report**

**16.** PDCO Dell thanked Members for their comments relating to the media release sent to them on the 10<sup>th</sup> September, related to a court case heard at Poole Magistrates on the 4<sup>th</sup> September, in which a fisherman from Poole pleaded guilty to retaining a quantity of Manila clams below the minimum conservation reference size, and failing to submit monthly catch returns within stipulated deadlines. Charges were laid by the Southern IFCA and the individual was ordered to pay costs and fines totalling £9,093.10, a significant outcome for the Compliance and Enforcement Team in the last quarter.

PDCO Dell outlined the quarterly Compliance and Enforcement Quarterly Report to Members, with the report containing statistical data related to enforcement activity for the reporting period



May to July 2024. PDCO Dell informed Members that the figures are reported on an annual basis to Defra via the AIFCA as well as being published on the Southern IFCA website and in the Annual Report. PDCO Dell outlined that Section 4 of the report in relation to a summary of key enforcement operations and activities has been removed and the Compliance and Enforcement Team will be highlighting these through Behind the Scenes Reports provided later in the agenda.

### **Southern's Pilot REM Fisheries – Status Update**

17. PDCO Dell stated that Members would recall approving the Compliance and Enforcement Team Strategy for this year, which included funding a small-scale trial of REM and AI across a number of vessels in the Southern IFCA District.

PDCO Dell informed Members that the purpose of the report is to provide a status update in relation to the Southern IFCA Pilot Project for REM and AI. PDCO Dell outlined that Officers have produced the report 'Exploration of the use of REM and AI in inshore fisheries management in the Southern IFCA District' which includes a short Literature Review on the use of REM and AI in fisheries management. PDCO Dell outlined that IFCO Payton in the Compliance and Enforcement Team has been assisting with this area of work and is credited in helping to produce this report.

Mr N Hornby asked PDCO Dell how other IFCAs are undertaking similar work and questioned whether all those involved are coming together to ensure that there can be shared lessons learned. PDCO Dell informed Mr N Hornby that at present the approach is not as joined up as it could be and it is recognised that other IFCAs are now moving forward with various REM and AI projects as well as other Government departments. Southern IFCA is partnering with DSIFCA and through the report there is discussion of outputs coming from other work such as that taking place in Scotland. PDCO Dell outlined that one of the report outputs is to fully engage with Defra colleagues with Defra being a possible route for coordinating the smaller trials which are taking place.

Dr A Jensen asked if AIFCA have a role in this program. PDCO Dell outlined that the AIFCA hasn't been directly engaged but it is likely they have sight of the ongoing work across the country and agreed that it would be beneficial for AIFCA to be involved.

Cllr. M Winnington asked PDCO Dell about the reliability of REM and AI and what parameters are being used to ensure the technology is being used in a proportional way. PDCO Dell informed Cllr. M Winnington that working with industry is the best way to ensure a proportionate approach is being taken and that communication from industry will indicate if this is not the case. PDCO Dell outlined that it is a voluntary program at this stage and therefore relies on close working with industry. PDCO Dell responded that reliability is one of the most important factors as the technology needs to be reliable to be appropriate for industry, to date the trials have shown that the technology has been reliable.

PDCO Dell informed Members that General Member Dr SCripps had provided feedback on the report due to an inability to attend the meeting. PDCO Dell summarised the feedback that Southern IFCA should continue to work closely with Defra colleagues and fishers and encourage of open communication.

Mr N Hornby suggested that the project be discussed further at a TAC meeting, this was supported by the Chairman of the TAC stating that it would be on the basis of when PDCO Dell feels it appropriate to bring it to a TAC meeting.

### **Solent Scallop Fisheries 2024-2025**

18. DCO Birchenough provided Members with an update on the upcoming 2024-25 Solent scallop fishing season, commencing on 1<sup>st</sup> November. DCO Birchenough outlined that the autumn survey is complete and officers are currently working hard to analyse the data from that survey,

which will provide some indication as to the stock performance of the Solent Scallop Fishery through the closed season between the end of March to 1<sup>st</sup> November.

DCO Birchenough raised with Members that in the event that survey results suggest a further noteworthy decline in stock levels then there may be a need to hold an extraordinary TAC meeting to consider all available evidence including survey results and applications for permits and whether any further action is required in the fishery ahead of 1<sup>st</sup> November. DCO Birchenough outlined that if an Extraordinary TAC meeting was required it would be during the week commencing 7<sup>th</sup> October. DCO Birchenough outlined the importance of transparency and communications with industry and therefore if further action was determined to be required there would then be a period of consultation with the fishing industry. DCO Birchenough stated that it was recognised that there were tight timelines ahead of the start of the season but that the timing of the survey was to provide an appropriate period of time during the closed season to see any changes in stocks, however it is acutely recognised that this time period does not make it easy for the industry who wish to understand what the fishery may look like for the coming year.

DCO Birchenough outlined that if the survey shows a healthy stock communications will be had through the pre-season meeting, held each year, with permit holders and subsequently a progress report would be provided to the TAC at the meeting in November.

Ms E Bussey-Jones asked whether a particular date could be explored with Members in the event an Extraordinary TAC is required. DCO Birchenough stated that the 10<sup>th</sup> October is a possible date but this will be confirmed if required.

### **Behind the Scenes**

19. The CEO informed Members that this is the first time the Behind the Scenes item has included reports from all three teams, RPT, CET and BST. The Chairman stated his thanks to the officers for producing informative reports and the importance of Members being able to understand the full breadth of work which is undertaken.

### **Sector Group Meetings**

20. Members received the minutes from recent meetings of The Fishermen's Council and RASG.

### **AIFCA Annual Report 2023-2024**

21. The CEO informed Members that she, the Chairman, and the Vice Chairman attended a recent AIFCA forum meeting, at which the AIFCA Chief Officer Mr R Clark presented the AIFCA Annual Report. It was felt appropriate that Members have sight of this report to see the scope of the work that the AIFCA have achieved over the last 12 months. The CEO stated that it is also important for Members and elected Members to understand the work that the AIFCA do on behalf of IFCAs, as a collective voice for the IFCAs at a national level and as a conduit between the IFCAs and Defra, with all of the 10 IFCAs paying an annual subscription to the AIFCA.

The CEO informed members that Mr R Clark was previously also invited to provide an update to Members the AIFCA Annual Plan for 2022/23. The Chairman informed Members that he has recently spoken with Mr R Clark who is pleased that Southern IFCA are highlighting the work undertaken by the AIFCA work and that he would be happy to receive any comments from the Members.

### **Date of Next Meeting**

22. That the date of the next Authority meeting be on the Thursday 5th December 2024 at RNLI Poole. A Christmas meal will follow the meeting.

**The meeting concluded at 16:06**