

# Southern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority

Full Authority Meeting – 13<sup>th</sup> June 2024

A meeting of the Full Authority was held at 2pm on 13<sup>th</sup> June 2024 at The University of Winchester, St Alphege Building, Room 002, Sparkford Road, Winchester, SO22 4NR

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## Present

Cllr. Paul Fuller	Isle of Wight Council (Acting Chairman)
Cllr. Rob Hughes	Dorset Council
Dr Antony Jensen	MMO Appointee
Mr Richard Stride	MMO Appointee
Mr Neil Hornby	MMO Appointee
Ms Louise MacCallum	MMO Appointee
Dr Simon Cripps	MMO Appointee
Ms Elisabeth Bussey-Jones	MMO Appointee
Mr Gary Wordsworth	MMO Appointee
Mr Stuart Kingston-Turner	Environment Agency
Ms Pia Bateman	Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
Ms Maria Chaplin	Office Manager (OM)
Mr Sam Dell	Principal Deputy Chief Officer (PDCO)
Dr Sarah Birchenough	Deputy Chief Officer (DCO)
Mrs Jennifer Carr	Chartered Accountant

## Election of Chairman for 2024-2025

421. The CEO informed Members that one nomination had been received for the role of Chairman, being Cllr. P Fuller. In accordance with Standing Orders, the CEO asked Dr A Jensen to seek a seconder to support the nomination. Mr G Wordsworth seconded the nomination. All Members were in favour.

That Cllr. R Hughes be elected as Vice Chairman for the year 2024-2025. This motion was proposed by Cllr. P Fuller and seconded by Dr A Jensen. All Members were in favour.

### **Resolved**

422. That Cllr P Fuller be elected as Chairman of the Authority for the year 2024-2025.

## Election of Vice Chairman for 2024-2025

423. The Chairman, Cllr P Fuller proposed Cllr R Hughes for the Vice Chair and invited any other nominations from the Membership. No further nominations were proposed, and as such the Chairman invited a seconder. Dr A Jensen seconded the nomination, all Members were in favour.

### **Resolved**

424. That Cllr R Hughes be elected as Vice Chairman of the Authority for the year 2024-2025.

## Apologies

425. Apologies for absence were received from Cllr. Matthew Winnington (Portsmouth City Council), Dr Richard Morgan (Natural England), Cllr. Kate Wheller (Dorset Council), Mr James Morgan (Marine Management Organisation), Mr Colin Francis (MMO Appointee) and Mr Charlie Brock (MMO Appointee).

## **Declarations of Interest**

426. There were no pecuniary or non-pecuniary interests.

## **Minutes**

427. Members considered and agreed the Minutes of the meeting held on the 14<sup>th</sup> March 2024.

## **Chairman's Announcements**

428. Cllr P Fuller discussed his attendance, in his role as Acting Chairman, at the recent AIFCA Members Forum and discussed some of the highlights of this meeting. The Chairman thanked the Members for his election to Chairman, welcoming all of the challenges this may bring.

## **Sub-Committees**

429. Members received the Minutes of the Executive Sub-Committee held on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2024 and the Technical Advisory Sub-Committee held on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2024.

### **Resolved**

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

## **PROGRESS REPORTS**

### **Chief Executive Officer updates**

431. The CEO thanked the outgoing Chairman Mark Roberts for all his hard work during his tenure at SIFCA, discussing his dedication and commitment to Southern IFCA. On behalf of the Membership, the CEO offered her sincere gratitude. Dr A Jensen and Dr S Cripps discussed the huge contributions that Mark had made to Southern IFCA. All Members echoed this sentiment and wished him the best of luck for the future. Members asked that a card be sent to M Roberts on behalf of the Membership.

The CEO congratulated DCO Dell in his recent promotion to Principal Deputy Chief Officer (PDCO); a role created to fundamentally recognise the need for business continuity and decision making in the CEO's absence, for example during periods of annual leave.

The CEO informed Members that a Compliance and Enforcement Officer had 'walked off the job' in April citing constructive dismissal, advising Members that she had instructed solicitors to act on SIFCA's behalf. Accordingly, the CEO advised that SIFCA were now actively recruiting for a Compliance and Enforcement Officer.

The CEO reminded Members that General Member appraisals will be held in the summer, with the new Chairman Cllr. P Fuller working alongside Dr A Jensen and the CEO in delivering these.

The CEO discussed the impact of the Pre-Election Period and that as an Arm's Length Body (ALB) to Defra, Southern IFCA must maintain impartiality during this period, explaining that for this reason the Black seabream Working Group had been postponed.

The CEO discussed with Members that the planning had started to emerge with regard to the implementation of Tranche 1 FMPs, and that as part of this process the IFCA's (via the AIFCA) had been running a series of meetings with the MMO in order to explore implementation.

The CEO advised Members that the AIFCA were running a two-day 'small scale fisheries' workshop in Poole in September, which will be represented by Mr G Wordsworth, Mr RStride, and Mr CBrock from the Membership, in addition to local fisher Tommy Russell. PDCO Dell and Senior IFCA Mayne will also be attending on behalf of Southern IFCA. The CEO discussed the AIFCA aims, to bring together commercial fishers, fisheries organisations, regulators, and policy

members, to share their knowledge. Dr Sarah Coulthard has been working with the AIFCA on this workshop.

### **Recommendation**

**432.** That a card be sent to Mark Roberts from the Membership.

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

**433.** The CEO discussed with Members that the BCS for the 12 month period was consistent with all updates provided in year to Members. She also discussed how challenging financial reporting has been, largely due to the delay in receipt of Defra money for the 2023-2024 period, which makes business planning, as well as financial reporting somewhat challenging.

Moving to the BCS, the CEO provided a summary position, in that there is a surplus of 161k, of which 140k relates to the Defra funding, granted to IFCA's to support Defra in its delivery of key Fisheries Act objectives. The CEO provided an overview of the positive variance under main headers. The takeaway being that the surplus is positive, in that it demonstrates that Southern IFCA are understanding and managing its finances effectively, and that the surplus signifies financial stability and opportunity for the future. Importantly, it provides a buffer for staff retention initiatives and flexibility to consider how as an organisation we reward, recognise and retain staff and create a working environment where staff want to thrive and invest their time in the IFCA, recognising that other IFCA's are having to make redundancies. Further, the CEO discussed the Defra funding model; in that the surplus provides us with a buffer to weather any unexpected changes in funding structures and commitments, so that we can honour contractual agreements with fixed term members of staff.

### **Resolved**

**434.** That the report be received.

### **Marine Asset Review**

**435.** PDCO Dell informed Members that officers had attended the Ribcraft factory on the 24<sup>th</sup> May, with the build progressing through the electrical fit out stage. Since the last meeting in March, the engines and steering system have arrived and are in the process of being fitted, the seating configuration now securely in place and the internal fit out of the cabin is well underway, including internal storage arrangements and lighting in addition to other components such as spotlights, handrails and other superstructure.

PDCO Dell advised Members that procurement is being finalised, with the majority of components now on site. The main delay continues to be the window and door set which at the last meeting all agreed were critical, these are due to arrive the first week of June. Sea trials are now likely to commence the first week in July in Portland.

PDCO Dell discussed his optimism regarding progress, in that he hopes that at the next Authority meeting in September he will be reporting that FPV Vigilant has completed its first few months service and be in a position to invite Members onboard.

PDCO Dell provided an update on the approved contractual transfer of the vessel Stella Barbara to Poole Harbour Commissioners in exchange for a 5-year berthing agreement for FPV Vigilant at its intended base at the Port of Poole Marina, in that this transaction was completed on the 2<sup>nd</sup> April.

Cllr R Hughes asked how many days the sea trials will take. PDCO Dell informed Members that the sea trials will take around two weeks to carry out, this is to ensure all the equipment is working and is in order before final payment is made.

## **Resolved**

**436.** That the report be received.

### **MPA Management Update**

**437.** DCO Birchenough informed Members that due to the imminent election, it was likely that the current QA process being undertaken on the BTFG Byelaw would be delayed. There has been a final round of QA from the MMO related to the impact assessment, these comments were mistakenly missed off the information provided to Southern IFCA by the MMO during QA Round 1 and therefore needed to be addressed through a separate QA round. DCO Birchenough informed Members that the comments on the IA had been addressed and returned to the MMO but that the Byelaw would not progress through the relevant next stages until after the pre-election period. DCO Birchenough outlined that the MMO had indicated that the next stage would be to pass the Byelaw to Defra for consideration by the Secretary of State and it is hoped that the Byelaw may be ratified before the end of the year.

Ms L MacCallum asked DCO Birchenough if the MMO QA is assessing the legalities for the byelaw, and if so, what are they benchmarking against. Ms L MacCallum also asked why so many rounds of QA are required and why all comments cannot be provided in a single round of QA to expedite the process.

DCO Birchenough informed Members that the byelaw package is reviewed by the MMO, considering how Southern IFCA have reached the conclusion on proposed measures as well as the technicalities of the Byelaw and IA wording. DCO Birchenough informed Ms L MacCallum that one of the issues that has been faced in the QA process is that the staff on the MMO IFCAO Byelaws Team changes quite often. Particularly with the BTFG, a different team provided the first QA that was missing the IA comments, compared to the team who is currently providing QA. There can be a need for repeated explanations on some elements where a new team is less familiar with the byelaw package and any initial rounds of QA.

DCO Birchenough updated Members on the Shore Gathering Review, draft measures having been agreed by the TAC at the meeting in May. The Research & Policy Team (RPT) have been finalising supporting documentation, drafting the byelaw and the associated impact assessment and have submitted the full package of conservation assessments to Natural England for their Formal Advice. As part of the review, existing Southern IFCA byelaws have been reviewed and it has been determined that 5 byelaws can be revoked and 1 byelaw amended through the delivery of the proposed Shore Gathering Byelaw. DCO Birchenough informed Members that this will hopefully reduce some of the current complexity around regulations for shore gathering activities in the District. DCO Birchenough outlined that the next steps are to bring the byelaw package to the TAC in August to consider recommending that the Authority Make the Byelaw at the September Meeting. DCO Birchenough reminded Members that the Shore Gathering Review formed one of the MPA workstreams subject to the 2024 Government target and that the review continued to progress in line with meeting this target.

DCO Birchenough informed members that the TAC, at the May meeting, considered two items relating to the Black Seabream workstream. These were, the outcomes of a quantification of impact exercise that PDCO Dell, Senior IFCO Condie and DCO Birchenough undertook with stakeholders in the District and a decision paper where Members have agreed that draft measures for black seabream in Dorset MCZs will be developed with consideration of all material considerations and that a Management Matrix be developed to support the Authority when considering draft management measures and Material Considerations. Members are due to attend a working group towards the end of July to progress the workstream to the next stage.

DCO Birchenough informed Members that when it comes to Working Groups, she is struggling to get responses as to whether Members are available or not. DCO Birchenough stressed to Members the importance of Working Groups as a forum for discussion and reviewing the detail

of different stages in the process to support the progression of workstreams and provide direction to officers. DCO Birchenough recognised the time commitment from Members to the Working Groups and that this commitment was appreciated.

DCO Birchenough informed Members that she wants to be able to provide timely updates on decisions on Working Group dates, but this is becoming difficult due to an extended period of time to get an idea of Member availability. DCO Birchenough outlined that it would be a great help if Members were able to respond with their availabilities as soon as possible when the requests go out, so that dates can be finalised and communicated to Members.

Dr A Jensen supported DCO Birchenough in the request and asked Members if they could provide a response to proposed dates in all cases, so it can be determined who may or may not be able to attend. This would then allow DCO Birchenough to come up with new dates if needed.

**Resolved**

**438.** That the update be received.

**Renewal of 167 Agreement with Sussex IFCA.**

**439.** PDCO Dell reminded Members that at the March meeting, they had made the decision to renew the Section 167 agreement under the Marine Coastal Access Act 2009, which would allow for a continuation of delegated IFCA byelaw making powers to Sussex IFCA for the area of Chichester Harbour which is within the county of Hampshire. PDCO Dell provided an update in that Sussex IFCA had now formally decided to renew the Section 167 Agreement, commencing on the 30th July 2024. Accordingly, Southern and Sussex IFCAs have notified and sent a signed copy of the Agreement to Defra who are in the process of seeking Secretary of State approval, it is unlikely that we will receive any correspondence until after the election has taken place.

**Resolved**

**440.** That the update be received.

**REM Project**

**441.** PDCO Dell reminded Members that as part of this year's Compliance and Enforcement Strategy, the Authority had agreed to fund a small-scale trial of Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) across a number of vessels in the district that predominantly work within MPAs, including netting activity in harbour and estuarine areas, in addition to exploring the use of REM and AI in the potting fleet, with anticipation of the Pot Fishing Byelaw being ratified.

By way of update, since March, officers carried out preliminary work, including meeting with suppliers to obtain final costings for the equipment and discuss the logistics of getting vessels fitted. Southern IFCA have also met with other government partners, including Marine Scotland, who recently carried out a comprehensive trial in the Inshore creel fishery, as well as other partners including Devon & Severn IFCA who are closely working with Southern IFCA on the project.

The PDCO explained that Southern IFCA have also furthered engagement with the industry, via the NFFO, and have scheduled meetings with other interested partners such as Natural England. Providing a national context, PDCO Dell discussed Defra's published response to a public consultation on the use of REM in England, in which they have indicated that their next steps will be to work with volunteers across five priority fisheries.

Despite these fisheries falling out of the scope in terms of Southern IFCA's intended trials, there are similarities that can be made, for example, the use of REM to monitor bycatch in net fisheries.

The PDCO discussed a Literature Review that had been drafted by the Compliance and Enforcement Team which focussed on the use of REM and AI in inshore fisheries management.

In summary, the PDCO discussed plans to share the Project Proposal Document and Literature Review with Members in due course

**Resolved**

**442.** That the update be received.

**ITEMS FOR DECISION**

**Draft Statement of Accounts for Year Ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024.**

**443.** Mrs J Carr discussed with Members the Draft Statement of Accounts for Year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024, explaining the parallels of this item with the previous BCS.

There were no questions from Members on the draft Accounts. Cllr. P Fuller proposed the Recommendation, which was Seconded by Mr G Wordsworth. All Members were in favour.

**Resolved**

**444.** That Members authorise the submission of the draft Statement of Accounts to the external auditors for the financial year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024.

**Guest Speaker**

**Angling for Sustainability, a Fisheries Industry Science Partnership Project**

**445.** Members received a presentation from Dr Peter Davies, Post Doctoral Researcher in Marine Ecology at the University of Plymouth on a collaborative project run between scientists, fishermen, conservation advisors and fisheries managers, funded by the Defra Fisheries Industry Science Partnership (FISP) scheme. The project, Angling for Sustainability, aims to support sustainable fisheries management by filling key knowledge gaps by tracking shark, ray and black seabream movements. Dr Davies presented an overview of the methods used in the project which involves the deployment of receivers, including in fine scale arrays, in locations across Dorset and Hampshire, and the tagging of black seabream and elasmobranch species with acoustic tags so that movements can be tracked using the receiver network. Dr Davies presented some initial findings from the project and outlined that the further receiver downloads which are planned for the autumn will provide further data to inform reporting on these key species. This was followed by a Q&A. Members expressed their thanks to Dr Davies for an interesting and informative presentation and that the work of the project would be helpful in providing evidence to support discussions on potential management in the future.

**ITEMS FOR INFORMATION ONLY**

**Compliance and Enforcement Report**

**446.** PDCO Dell provided an overview of work undertaken by the Compliance and Enforcement Team for the reporting period February to April 2024.

**Research and Policy Team: Behind the Scenes**

**447.** DCO Birchenough provided a summary of the work undertaken by the Research and Policy Team, to include recent surveys, mapping work, training and representation at regional meetings.

### **Sector Group Meetings**

**448.** Mr R Stride highlighted to Members the South Coast Fishermen's Council concerns about IVMS and the implications that its introduction could have on fishers.

### **Proposed Meeting Dates 2025**

**449.** Ms M Chaplin presented the proposed dates for the 2025 meetings. Following brief discussion, the dates were proposed by Chairman P Fuller and seconded by Dr S Cripps. All members were in favour.

#### **Resolved**

- 450.** a) That Members note the draft meeting dates and times for 2025.  
b) That Members contact the Office Manager via [enquiries@southernifca.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@southernifca.gov.uk) before the 28th June 2024 if they have any concerns with regard to the draft dates set.

### **Date of Next Meeting**

**451.** That the date of the next Authority meeting be on the Thursday 19th September 2024 at Northwood House Isle of Wight.

**The meeting concluded at 16:28**

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