

SOUTHERN INSHORE FISHERIES & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE – 8th May 2025

Minutes of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), held in the meeting room at the Southern IFCA office in Poole at 14:00 on 8th May 2025.

Present

Dr Antony Jensen	Chairman, MMO Appointee
Mr Richard Stride	Vice Chairman, MMO Appointee
Ms Elisabeth Bussey-Jones	MMO Appointee
Mr Neil Hornby	MMO Appointee
Dr Simon Cripps	MMO Appointee
Dr Heidi Guille	MMO Appointee
Mr Stuart Kingston-Turner	Environment Agency
Dr Richard Morgan	Natural England
Ms Pia Bateman	Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

Principal Deputy Chief Officer (PDCO) Sam Dell, Deputy Chief Officer (DCO) Dr Sarah Birchenough, Senior Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officer (SIFCO) Ms Emily Condie, IFCA's Ms Hester Churchouse and Mr Dominic Parry, Project Officers Ms Imogen Wright, Mr William Meredith-Davies and Ms Chelsea Perrins were also present. Cllr Paul Fuller, Chairman of the Authority also attended.

Dr Peter Davies (Angling for Sustainability, a Fisheries Industry Science Partnership Project) attended in person.

Apologies

36. Apologies for absence were received from Mr James Morgan (MMO), Mr Gary Wordsworth (MMO Appointee) and Mr Colin Francis (MMO Appointee).

Declarations of interest

37. The following non-pecuniary interests were declared: Mr R Morgan (Agenda Item 6 & 7), Mr N Hornby (Agenda Item 7). Mr R Stride declared a pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 5c.

Minutes

38. Members considered the Minutes of the meeting held on the 6th February 2025 (Marked A) and consideration of the following matters outstanding.

- a. **Resolved: Recommendation 26:** that Officers review wording under the Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Fishery Monitoring and Control Plan, SPA Monitoring Programme, Monitoring Variables 4 & 5 to:
 - a. Change the word 'significant' to a different suitable word which does not relate to a quantitative change.
 - b. To add text to outline Southern IFCA's role in monitoring for updated or new best available evidence.

The minutes were approved by mutual consent.

PROGRESS REPORTS

39. Emergent Updates

The CEO focussed her update on MPAs at a strategic level, noting that there have been some

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delays on national MPA work in anticipation of the outcomes of the UK/EU sandeel arbitration, which has now reached its conclusion. The CEO provided a brief overview of this matter, reminding Members that the UK Government had put in place a total ban on sandeel fishing in 2024 in UK waters due to the adverse impact on birds. The EU subsequently took this to court on 3 grounds 1) that the closure not based on best scientific evidence, 2) that the closure was not proportionate 3) that the closure was discriminatory, linked to social and economic impacts on communities. The CEO discussed that The UK Government has now received the sandeel Arbitration Tribunal's final ruling, with the court finding that the UK had successfully demonstrated that the measures taken to close English and Scottish waters were based on the best available science and had sufficient regard to the principle of non-discrimination. Both these matters have therefore been dismissed. The Court however, ruled that during the decision making process which led to the closure, the UK did not have sufficient regard to the principle of proportionality, specifically in relation to EU Rights during the adjustment period, a requirement under the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement.

The CEO discussed the two key areas of ongoing MPA Policy work being undertaken at a National Level. She provided an overview of the MPA Compensatory Work, reminding Members that this is a specific project, being led by Defra, which is looking to offset the impact of windfarm developments in existing and new MPAs with the aim to facilitate expansion of offshore wind generation. The CEO discussed that compensatory MPAs were likely to be consulted on in 2026.

The CEO touched on the MPA Network Review, an ongoing project looking at the current network of MPAs. She described the origins of this sat with a 'think piece' from JNCC & NE undertaken in 2022 which was submitted to Defra, with the aim of optimising the MPA network. Following Ministerial approval in November 2024 for English waters, a review is now underway. The first report is timetabled to be released in December 2025.

The CEO described how these two Policy areas exist in a wider climate of increased calls for MPA management and discussed how The Office for Environmental Protection (OEP) and the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee (EFRA) have opened investigations into management in MPAs. She discussed a recent OEP report, which highlights specific gaps in MPA management, monitoring, and reporting, matters which were identified as priorities to address, as well as key considerations for the future of the MPA network. She also touched on a film being realised by Sir David Attenborough called Ocean, which will likely renew calls for 30x30 MPA management and the impact of industrial fishing, which will of course add to the wider debates.

The CEO invited Members to consider contributing to the Defra's ongoing consultation focused on the design of the Marine Recovery Fund (MRF); which aims to speed up the consenting of Offshore Wind projects while protecting the marine environment. She described that the MRF will be a voluntary mechanism that organisations undertaking relevant offshore wind activities (such as developers or plan promoters) will be able to pay into to secure appropriate and strategic compensatory measures to compensate for the adverse environmental impacts of their projects on protected sites. This Defra run consultation provides an opportunity for stakeholders to influence how the MRF will function. Defra will use responses to finalise the design of the MRF, including how it will operate and be managed, and to inform relevant secondary legislation.

The CEO summarised the MPA work as a busy Policy space and discussed with Members how it is likely to remain, as we move into 2026 where the renewal of the Trade and Co-operation Agreement will be on the table in Government.

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On Member matters, and for Members to note, the CEO confirmed that on the 7th May the MMO had accepted Mr Charlie Brock's resignation as a General Member. The CEO informed Members that she would be discussing this further at the forthcoming Authority Meeting, alongside other relevant matters.

The CEO invited the General Members to the next Community Forum in Swanage on Wednesday 14th between 16:00-19:30.

Dr S Cripps provided further information in regard to the Ocean film, the main messages it puts forward relating to industrial fishing, MPAs and overfishing and how these relate to wider international campaigns. Members discussed that there are strong political points being made on both sides and how this interacts with the IFCA remit and duties, and legislation related to management of MPAs. Members discussed that recent reports on MPAs had not captured all the nuances of the application of MPA management at different levels.

40. Byelaw Update

DCO Birchenough updated Members on the progress of two MPA byelaws through the MMO and Defra QA process. The BTFG Byelaw 2023 submission package has been through Defra scrutiny and has been passed to the office of the Minister for final consideration and potential ratification. The timeline for this is dependent on the availability of the Minister's office.

DCO Birchenough informed Members that the Shore Gathering Byelaw, made by the Authority in December 2024 and subsequently submitted to the MMO and Defra for consideration by the Secretary of State, had been through round one of quality assurance with the MMO. DCO Birchenough outlined that the comments received were being reviewed and actioned.

41. Black Seabream

Senior IFCO Condie outlined that a consultation on proposed Shared Principles for black seabream management, to complement existing spatial management and support black seabream during the breeding season in 3 MCZs in Dorset, has now started and will run until 22nd June 2025. Senior IFCO Condie outlined the proposed measures being consulted on, stating that the proposal is the Shared Principles would be voluntary, apply within the 3 Dorset MCZs only and during the period 1st April to 31st July only. Senior IFCO Condie informed Members that in addition, views are being sought through the consultation on the development of a voluntary data collection scheme, proposed to run year-round, with the aim of improving the evidence base for black seabream populations and fisheries to ensure that management continues to be based on best available evidence.

Senior IFCO Condie outlined that a questionnaire is available for stakeholders to complete and that port visits, an online meeting, a second Industry Workshop, the Swanage Community Drop-In and targeted patrols would all be used during the consultation to aim to maximise engagement and participation.

42. Solent Dredge Fisheries 24/25 Catch Returns

IFCO Churchouse presented Members with an overview of the 2024/25 Solent Dredge Permit fishing season, providing detail on catch rates and participation levels by permitted fishers for the King Scallop fishery and the Manila clam fishery. IFCO Churchouse provided detail from the Executive Summary on geographic scope of fishing activity and catch per unit effort, outlining that for each month the CPUE for King Scallop was below values seen for the 2023/24 season but similar to values for the 2021/22 and 2022/23 seasons and that the quantity of catch and number of participating vessels was increased for Manila clam compared to previous seasons.

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Members discussed the decreased catch for King Scallop compared to the previous season. IFCO Churchouse stated that the price paid for King Scallop had been reduced on the previous year along with some natural fluctuations in population levels, 2024/25 having been an exceptional year for the King Scallop population in the Solent. Members discussed King Scallop landings coming from the continent which had impacted the market at a national level despite management remaining consistent for international fleets.

43. REM/AI

PDCO Dell discussed how exciting this area of work is for this Authority, and provided a brief overview of where the REM/AI work sits under the provisions outlined in the Joint Fisheries Statement, specifically with reference to exploration of the use of technologies such as remote electronic monitoring for scientific purposes to aid the sustainable management and control of fisheries.

PDCO Dell discussed the ongoing collaboration and engagement with Defra, to include attendance at the REM Quarterly meeting in April, run by the Defra policy team and involving all ALBs working on REM including Cefas, MMO and Natural England. PDCO Dell discussed his presentation of the Southern IFCA project plan, and the IFCAs unique selling point, being low-cost REM solutions that work. PDCO discussed his future plans to continue to work with other IFCAs and across Government to continue to explore the use of REM in UK fisheries with a recent focus on “interoperability”, looking at opportunities for inshore solutions to integrate with offshore/national systems.

PDCO Dell discussed the ongoing development of a National IFCA Strategy, which further strengthens the IFCA response to “interoperability” around the inshore zone. This strategy considers three other IFCAs, in addition to Southern who are currently exploring the use of REM and AI.

PDCO Dell discussed some common issues faced nationally in the use of reliable gear sensors on the towed gear fleet, discussing this particular issue in the context of gear sensors installed on one of the Southern IFCA under 12m trawler in Lyme Bay and subsequent work with Northumberland IFCA and the suppliers to remedy via a re-installation in West Bay.

PDCO Dell looked forward to the next priority fishery, as identified in the Southern IFCA project plan, namely Potting and Netting on under 12m vessels. He described ongoing work with engineers in Lyme Bay which aims to capture videos of both whelk pots and bycatch to inform the work intended in relation to AI in these fisheries.

PDCO Dell discussed the challenges of the REM project, with regard to relying on industry volunteers and discussed how fortunate Southern are in having fishers who are forward thinking who want to volunteer as part of this project to aid in improving scientific understanding of species and quota allocation, to improve how fishers are able to demonstrate that they are fishing responsibly within MPAs, as well as other benefits such as security and safety on-board. PDCO Dell thanked all the fishers in the District who had been involved in the project to date, for the benefit of all.

Members discussed the separation of this project from the iVMS roll out, PDCO Dell confirmed that the licence condition for iVMS comes into effect on Monday 12th May 2025.

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ITEMS FOR DECISION

44. Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Fishery Monitoring and Control Plan

IFCO Parry provided Members with the outputs of the On-Site Monitoring Programme under the Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Fishery Monitoring and Control Plan (M&CP) in relation to Threshold Trigger Levels (TTL) for the Poole Harbour Bivalve Survey Data 2025 and fishery landings data for the 2024 season.

IFCO Parry outlined how data had been collected and analysed, with average values across both data variables used to indicate whether a TTL had been reached, the TTLs having been agreed by the Members of the TAC at the meeting in February when the M&CP for the fishery was formally introduced.

IFCO Parry outlined that the LPUE TTL for the landings data Monitoring Variable had been reached, with an average value of 72.41 kg/day for the 2024/25 fishing season, which is below the LPUE TTL of 78.25kg/day. IFCO Parry further outlined that the CPUE TTL for the Poole Harbour Bivalve Survey Monitoring Variable had not been reached, with an average CPUE value of 43.48kg/m of dredge/hr for the 2025 survey which is above the CPUE TTL of 34.60kg/m of dredge/hr.

IFCO Parry outlined that, as the LPUE TTL had been reached, the control mechanism had been activated, namely for the TAC to determine whether any additional management intervention would be required to support a sustainable fishery for the 2025 fishing season. IFCO Parry stated that although the LPUE TTL had been reached, results from monthly monitoring indicated that catch rates, although lower than the period 2020-2023, were consistent with catch rates from the 2016-2019 period and that anecdotal information from the Permit Holders suggested stocks can exhibit a fluctuating pattern, with a mild winter and increased freshwater inputs potentially contributing to the lower catch rates. On the basis of analysis for the LPUE TTL and CPUE TTL, IFCO Parry outlined that the recommendation was that no additional management was required to support a sustainable fishery for the 2025 season.

IFCO Parry outlined that it is recognised that the CPUE data from the 2025 survey is lower than the previous four years and that the M&CP allows the Authority to take a proactive approach to in-season monitoring as well as annual monitoring, providing for a monthly understanding of variation in catch rates as well as the introduction of a new mid-season CPUE monitoring programme, to be piloted for the 2025 season, providing further understanding of any stock changes.

IFCO Parry informed Members that Permit Holders would be informed of the TAC decision and Permits would be issued to successful applicants ahead of the start of the 2025 season on 25th May.

Members discussed the use of fisher-dependent data and fisher-independent data to inform the M&CP and how both data sources are used to help inform understanding of the sustainability of the fishery. Members also discussed how CPUE values were calculated using weight of catch obtained in the survey above and below minimum conservation reference size, IFCO Parry outlined that size frequency data is also collected as part of the survey and the full survey results will be compiled into a report for the August TAC meeting.

Mr S Kingston-Turner raised that on the Catch Zone Map provided to Permit Holders as part of the annual PHDP permit pack, the current boundary for Zone 11, which overlaps the entrance to the rivers Frome and Piddle could be misleading in identifying where dredge management for the rivers by the Environment Agency takes over from IFCA management.

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Mr S Kingston-Turner queried whether the Zone 11 boundary could be re-drawn to account for the EA management boundary.

Recommendation

45. That the Catch Zone Map for the PHDP fishery be updated for the 2025 fishing season to reflect the boundary of EA dredge fishing management at the entrance to the Rivers Frome and Piddle.

The recommendation in the paper was proposed by Ms E Bussey-Jones and were seconded by Dr S Cripps. All Members voted in favour.

Resolved

46. That Members agree that no additional management interventions are necessary under the Poole Harbour Dredge Permit for 2025/26.

47. The Poole Harbour Fishery Order 2015: Tranche 3

PO Meredith-Davies presented to Members on the process for delivering the Tranche 3 issuing of leases for the period 2025-2030 under The Poole Harbour Fishery Order 2015 ("The Order"). PO Meredith-Davies provided information on how aquaculture is managed by Southern IFCA in Poole Harbour under The Order and the duties which Southern IFCA must operate under when considering aquaculture management.

PO Meredith-Davies outlined that, under the terms of the Lease of Right of Several Fishery of Shellfish Laying in Poole Harbour, Leases undergo renewal in a series of 5-year Tranches, the current Tranche coming to an end on 30th June 2025. PO Meredith-Davies detailed the process for Tranche 3 carried out to date and the required review of supporting documentation for the issuing of Leases which included the Poole Harbour Several Order 2015 Management Plan, the Poole Harbour Fishery Order 2015 Biosecurity Measures Plan and an Appropriate Assessment for the Issue of Leases under the Poole Fishery Order 2025, the latter having been submitted to Natural England for Formal Advice.

PO Meredith-Davies provided a summary of the Business Plans for 2025-2030 which had been received from applicants for Tranche 3 Leases, detailing that the Business Plans must provide an overview of proposed activity during the Lease period. PO Meredith-Davies informed Members that there were no significant changes to species or activity proposed in the Business Plans for Tranche 3 compared to activity carried out under Tranche 2.

PO Meredith-Davies also outlined the key updates to each of the supporting documents stating that specific management for all Lease Beds would be included as a prohibition on any activity between 18:00-06:00 for November to March to ensure site integrity of the Poole Harbour SPA, SSSI and Ramsar Site. PO Meredith-Davies also outlined that specific management in relation to compatibility between aquaculture and water user interactions would also be maintained under Tranche 3.

PO Meredith-Davies informed Members that new elements had been added to the supporting document package including detail of how The Order supports delivery of national legislation and policy, an overview of research on monitoring of wild populations of Pacific oysters in Poole Harbour and Southampton Water, and a literature review on the ecosystem services provided by aquaculture with relevance to specific services provided by aquaculture in Poole Harbour.

PO Meredith-Davies outlined that, if Members resolved the recommendations in this report then a period of Formal Consultation on the Management Plan would be undertaken with the

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outcomes reviewed by the Executive Sub-Committee prior to final acceptance of the Management Plan and issuing of Leases for Tranche 3.

The CEO and Members expressed thanks to PO Meredith-Davies for his conscientious efforts on this workstream and the quality of the outputs.

Dr R Morgan provided a verbal update on Natural England's Formal Advice, outlining that NE are in agreement with the conclusion of the Appropriate Assessment drafted for Tranche 3.

Members discussed that the management of aquaculture in Poole Harbour represented a good example of how appropriate management can allow activities to take place within an MPA without an adverse risk to designated features. Members discussed the potential for publishing information from the ecosystem services literature review more widely.

The recommendations were proposed by Mr R Stride and were seconded by Mr S Kingston-Turner. All Members voted in favour, with the exception of Mr N Hornby who abstained.

Resolved

48. a. That Members approve:

- i. the Poole Harbour Several Order 2015 Management Plan: 2025 Revision
- ii. a period of public consultation to enable the Management Plan: 2025 Revision to be scrutinised by any interested parties, in line with Section (4) of The Poole Harbour Fishery Order 2015.
- iii. the Poole Harbour Fishery Order 2015 Biosecurity Measures Plan (2025 Version).
- iv. the Appropriate Assessment for the Issue of Leases under the Poole Harbour Fishery Order 2015 for 2025-2030.

b. That Members delegate to Officers the ability to make inconsequential updates to the Appropriate Assessment following the receipt of any Formal Advice from Natural England.

c. That Members note the summary of proposed activity under Tranche 3 from the submitted leaseholder Business Plans, noting that there are no proposed changes in activity from T2.

GUEST SPEAKER:

49. Angling for Sustainability, a Fisheries Industry Science Partnership Project

Members received a presentation from Dr Peter Davies, Post Doctoral Researcher in Marine Ecology and the University of Plymouth, followed by a Q&A. Dr Davies presented on the Angling for Sustainability Project, run collaboratively between scientists, fishers, conservation advisors and fisheries managers funded by the Defra Fisheries Industry Science Partnership (FISP) scheme. The project aims to support sustainable fisheries management by filling key knowledge gaps by tracking shark, ray and black seabream movements. Dr Davies presented on data from the project related to black seabream following the conclusion of the project looking at homing behaviour, fine-scale behaviours, post-release behaviours and the overall conclusions and next steps from the project. Through the Q&A Members discussed survivability of tagged fish, fish tagged in different years, seasonality of black seabream in Dorset and observations of potential nesting behaviours. Members expressed thanks to Dr Davies for providing a update on the outcomes of the project and that the information the project has been able to collect is useful in helping to inform understandings of black seabream

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which can be fed into management discussions.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

50. Exploration of the Pump Scoop Dredge as a fishing method in the Solent

Project Officer Perrins provided an overview of the matters captured in the Executive Summary. Dr R Morgan asked for further clarification on the intentions of this work and whether if evidence gaps were able to be filled to complete relevant conservation assessments, then this activity could be allowed to take place in the Solent. DCO Birchenough outlined that being able to complete the relevant conservation assessments is one part of this work, at the first stage the IFCA needs to be confident that legal duties for relevant MPA management can be met, however once this is understood there are other elements to take into consideration including stock management, combined influences of multiple fishing gears operating in the same fishery and a balance between different stakeholders.

Members discussed whether pump-scoop dredges are a lower impact dredge gear type, discussing that to date evidence is inconclusive with regard to benthic impacts and sediment parameters from that gear type and that there has not yet been a direct comparison between this and the box dredge. Members also discussed whether pump-scoop dredging in the Solent would replace existing dredge types or operate in addition to them, DCO Birchenough outlined that this formed one of the points related to this workstream which would require careful consideration.

51. Fisheries Management Plans Updates

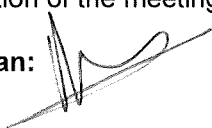
Project Officer Wright provided an overview of the matters captured in the Executive Summary. There were no subsequent questions from Members.

52. Date of Next Meeting

To confirm the date of the next meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee on the 21st August 2025 at Southern IFCA, Unit 3 Holes Bay Park, Sterte Avenue West, Poole Dorset BH15 2AA.

This section of the meeting concluded at 16:18.

Chairman:



Date: 21/8/25

All Members of the Public (in person and virtual) were invited by the Chairman to leave the meeting, due to the subsequent item involving the consideration of information which is exempt by virtue of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 and therefore the public are required to be excluded during consideration of this item.

CONFIDENTIAL ITEM

53. The Poole Harbour Fishery Order 2015: Business Plan Request – Tranche 3 Applications

Following an overview by DCO Birchenough, regarding a dispensation for an ancillary vessel over 16.5m to operate under Tranche 3 of the Poole Harbour Fishery Order 2015, Members considered the recommendations.

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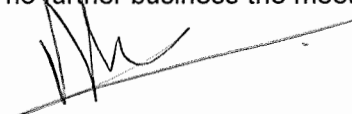
The recommendation was proposed by Dr S Cripps and were seconded by Dr H Guille. All members voted in favour.

Resolved

54. That Members approved the issuing of a dispensation for a vessel over 16.5m to operate under Tranche 3 of the Poole Harbour Fishery Order 2015 for the period 1st July to 30th June 2026 only.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 16:35.

Chairman:



Date:

21/8/25.