

SOUTHERN INSHORE FISHERIES & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE – 2nd November 2023

MARKED C

Minutes of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) held virtually via Microsoft Teams at
14:00 on 2nd November 2023

Present (Virtual)

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

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

Chairman's Welcome

21. Dr A Jensen opened the meeting, reminding Members that the meeting would be recorded for the purposes of minute taking. Dr A Jensen thanked Members for their virtual attendance following the inclement weather conditions across the District arising from Storm Ciarán.

Apologies

22. Apologies for absence were received from Dr Simon Cripps (MMO Appointee), Mr Stuart Kingston-Turner (Environment Agency) and DCO Sam Dell.

Declarations of interest

23. The following non-pecuniary interests were declared: Mr R Stride (Agenda Item 5C), Mr G Wordsworth (Agenda Item 6), Mr T Legg (Agenda Items 5e, 7&8), Dr R Morgan (Agenda Item 6)

Minutes

24. Members considered the Minutes of the meeting held on the 24th August 2023. Dr R Morgan requested the following correction to the previous minutes on page 4, where 'feature fabric' should be replaced with 'site fabric'.

The minutes were confirmed and signed.

PROGRESS REPORTS

25a. Chief Executive Officer Updates

The CEO welcomed Hester Churchouse to the Research and Policy Team and congratulated Emily Condie following her promotion to Senior IFCO in the Research and Policy Team.

The CEO discussed the newly formatted Executive Summary's which will now feature in Authority papers moving forward to provide readers with a concise overview of the main points and key findings in order to support and facilitate Members decision-making processes.

The CEO briefly discussed the MMO's inshore VMS roll out in the under 6m fleet and the funding processes that the MMO had put in place to support industry.

25b. Byelaw Submission updates

DCO Birchenough updated Members on the progress of the BTFG Byelaw 2023, which has now been submitted to the MMO for their consideration. The Pot Fishing Byelaw remains with the MMO for QA, with no updates received.

25c. Net Fishing Byelaw Implementation

In the absence of DCO Dell, the CEO provided an update on the NFB implementation, discussing that in his role as Fisheries Liaison Officer, DCO Dell was continuing to focus on community engagement with focus being in Permit Areas of Southampton Water, the River Hamble and Christchurch Harbour. To date approximately 10-12 permit applications have been received with the team continuing to work to ensure net fishing can continue within the permit areas for those that meet the eligibility criteria. The application window closes on the 9th November 2023.

The Compliance and Enforcement Team has detected 2 offences to date since the Byelaw was ratified at the end of August, which have been dealt with in accordance with The Compliance and Enforcement Framework. This area of work remains a priority for the team so that the stakeholders are in a position to understand the new requirements.

25d. Solent Scallop Fishery

DCO Birchenough provided an update on the Solent Scallop Fishery following an Extraordinary Meeting on the 26th September 2023. DCO Birchenough confirmed that Members had agreed that for the 2022-2023 (current) season there would be no fishing for scallops in October 2023 and for the forthcoming permit (2023-2024) there would be no fishing at the weekend, with restrictions between 08:00 and 16:00 on the days when fishing is permitted and the season would run from 1st November 2023 to 31st March 2024. DCO Birchenough described the engagement with the industry following the consultation.

25e. Minimum Conservation Reference Size Review

IFCO D Parry provided an update on the involvement of the working group to date and the current work being undertaken including consideration of prioritising species and defining principles for any proposed changes, drafting of evidence packages and a consultation document to support a potential informal consultation on the first set of species.

Mr T Legg (MMO) asked whether Southern were intending on aligning to FMP outcomes. The CEO discussed that the IFCA's are required to align with the Fisheries Act 2020 and therefore the outcomes of the FMP's which are routed in this legislation, confirming that IFCO D Parry had been prioritising the MCRS work to ensure alignment.

25f. Black Bream Management Development

DCO Birchenough reminded Members that as part of the Research and Policy Strategy for this year, Black Bream was one of the three workstreams under the MPA Management Review Horizon Goal that has been identified as requiring prioritisation in order to meet the Government's 2024 MPA deadline for having management measures in place.

DCO Birchenough updated Members on discussions that have subsequently been happening between Natural England and Southern IFCA with regard to Black Bream management, where

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Natural England have resolved (as supported by Southern) to approach DEFRA to revisit 2024 timelines in order for additional data outcomes from a FISP project to be considered for inclusion in the evidence base, prior to management measures being developed.

Dr R Morgan discussed the strong case for postponing the development of management measures until the conclusion of the FISP project in spring 2025. Dr R Morgan thanked the CEO and DCO Birchenough who provided supporting text to aid with making the necessary enquiries with Defra.

ITEMS FOR DECISION

26. Authorisation for Mussel Fishing 2024

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

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

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

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

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

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

27.Recommendations

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

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

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

28. Fisheries Management Plans Consultation Responses

IFCO Mullen provided an update following the DEFRA consultation for the frontrunner FMP's which finished on 1st October 2023, referring to the annexes which document Southern IFCA's response, incorporating input from a Member Workshop held in September.

IFCO Mullen submitted these responses on Friday 29th September with confirmation of receipt subsequently received from DEFRA.

29. Fisheries Management Plans

IFCO Mullen provided a status update on the FMP's, to include a summary of various online and in person events across the district, which included Gosport, Weymouth and Poole, in addition to attendance by Southern IFCA at two online events. IFCO Mullen provided a summary of the AIFCA Conference held in September, attended by the Chairman of the TAC and IFCO Mullen, which was held to discuss AIFCA responses to the Crab, Lobster & Whelk FMP's. This event was attended by IFCA representatives, Defra, the MMO and research bodies such as Cefas and SeaFish, along with representatives of the fishing industry.

IFCO Mullen advised that she has been participating in the working group for the Skates and Rays FMP, where she had managed to secure a district relevant engagement session for fishers on the 15th November in Lyme Regis running between 10:00 & 12:00.

30. Marine Licencing Update

IFCO D Parry provided an update on Marine Licensing, discussing the five applications requiring comment over the last quarter.

31. Date of Next Meeting

That the next meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee will be held on the 1st February

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2024 at Southern IFCA, Unit 3 Holes Bay Park, Sterte Avenue West, Poole Dorset BH15 2AA.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 16:10

Chairman:

Date: