

SOUTHERN INSHORE FISHERIES & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE – 22ND August 2024

Minutes of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), held in the meeting room at the Southern IFCA office in Poole at **14:00 on 22nd August 2024**.

Present

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| Dr Antony Jensen | Chairman, MMO Appointee |
| Mr Richard Stride | Vice Chairman, MMO Appointee |
| Ms Elisabeth Bussey-Jones | MMO Appointee |
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| Mr Gary Wordsworth | MMO Appointee |
| Ms Louise MacCallum | MMO Appointee |
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| 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, IFCO's Ms Celie Mullen and Ms Hester Churchouse, Project Officers Ms Imogen Wright, Mr William Meredith-Davies, Ms Chelsea Perrins and Office Manager Ms Maria Chaplin were also present. Cllr Paul Fuller, Chairman of the Authority, also attended.

Mr T Ferrero (Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust) joined the meeting from the virtual public gallery.

Apologies

78 Apologies for absence were received from Mr N Hornby (MMO Appointee), Mr C Brock (MMO Appointee), Dr S Cripps (MMO Appointee), Dr R Morgan (NE), Mr S Kingston-Turner (EA) and Mr J Morgan (MMO Representative).

Declarations of interest

79. The following pecuniary interests were declared: Mr G Wordsworth (Agenda Item 8). The following non-pecuniary interests were declared: Ms L MacCallum (Agenda Item 7).

Minutes

80. Members considered the Minutes of the meeting held on the 9th May 2024, these were confirmed and signed.

PROGRESS REPORTS

81. Chief Executive Officer Updates

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

Following the change in Government, the CEO advised Members that it is likely there will be future changes in inshore fisheries and conservation management, but that any changes were unlikely to be instant, as a status quo will likely be maintained in the short term.

The CEO advised Members on an increase in the Government's Offshore wind budget. At this time, it is not known how any developments in the offshore wind program will impact the Southern IFCA District or within the 6nm boundary, but it demonstrates directional intentions of the new Government.

The CEO informed Members that the Crown Estate had confirmed in recent weeks the opening of a formal tender for the development of three offshore wind farms in South Wales & Southwest England. The newly established Government company, Great British Energy

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will work with the Crown Estate to support the delivery of required infrastructure. It is anticipated that collectively the three sites will deliver c.4GW of energy which equates to around 4 million homes. The CEO discussed that this could be complex matter, with early suggestions that the loss of biodiversity as a result of installing a windfarm may require an equitable area which match the windfarm's spatial footprint protected for conservation/biodiversity purposes. The CEO informed Members that those bidding to deliver the new wind farms will be required to consider how their proposals will consider wider social and economic benefits for coastal communities. This is in early stages and at present not of direct relevance to Southern IFCA however we maintain awareness of progress in this area.

The CEO informed Members that a Private Members Bill to regulate and limit bottom trawling in MPAs, introduced by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick has had its first reading in the House of Lords. As currently drafted it states that the regulations must be introduced to prohibit bottom trawling in MPAs. MPAs are defined as including MCZs, Nature Conservation MPAs, HPAs, SACs, SPAs, SSSIs, and an Area of Special Scientific Interest in a marine environment, or a marine Ramsar Site. The draft Bill also allows for any such regulations to make associated provisions on licensing and enforcement as well as conferring power on the Marine Management Organisation and Inshore Fisheries Conservation Authorities.

The CEO advised Members that the Private Members Bill was not a product of Government Policy and that it was at the first of 6 stages, with the second reading in the House of Lords scheduled for 6th September. The CEO informed Members that it was important to be aware of this Bill given its traction and building of social interest. The draft Bill uses loose definitions of both bottom trawling and bottom towed fishing gear, recognising it is still in its initial form, but despite this, it does suggest some of the first indications towards whole site rather than feature-based management within MPAs. It was outlined that such a move would present conflict with the IFCA legal duties in their current form and the Habitats Directive, in addition there would be large scale implications for inshore fisheries. The CEO advised Members that the RPT is compiling a status report to understand what the implications of such a Bill would be on District fisheries. The CEO outlined that this matter has been raised with all IFCO CEOs with a view to seeking input and updates from Defra through MAFCO meetings and the AIFCA.

The CEO reminded Members of the Government's Environmental Improvement Plan published in January 2023, aiming to build on the 25-Year Environment Plan and key legal frameworks, of which relevant to SIFCA are the Environment Act 2021, and the Fisheries Act 2020. The overall aim being to create 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 advised Members that she has covered the EIP23 at a number of meetings and that the delivery of the Plan has had an impact on MPA work, requiring Southern IFCA to reprioritise to meet 2024 deadlines for Bottom Towed Fishing Gear, Shore Gathering and Black Seabream workstreams. The CEO informed Members that on 31st July 2024 the Labour Government launched a 'Rapid Review of the EIP' to be completed by the end of the year.

The CEO advised Members that the announcement followed the publication of a progress report on the EIP for 2023-2024. With regard to marine and coastal environments, the report discusses the MMO MPA BTFG byelaw which was introduced in March 2024 across 13 offshore MPAs. There is no information on the work that the IFCAs are doing collectively to help achieve the EIP targets, this is a matter that has been raised at a recent COG and will again be raised at the next AIFCA meeting. This is to ensure that the work of the IFCAs is filtering through to Defra at a National level. As collective, IFCAs are providing regular updates to the MMO and Defra on these matters, but this appears to not be filtering through to the end

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stages. From a Southern IFCA perspective, the work we are doing on BTFG, SG and BSB hasn't reached completion, but a high-level progress update as a minimum should be contained within the report which recognises that the BTFG Byelaw 2023 has been made by Southern and is undergoing QA with the MMO.

The CEO informed Members that under the Conservative Government Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) were required to be developed by councils in order to address declines in nature and coordinate recovery. Relevant to the Southern IFCA district, Dorset (to include BCP) and Hampshire & the Isle of Wight had both been developing LNRS including an optional extension from low water into the marine environment. In May 2024, this optional extension was removed, so the LNRS are now being prepared to low water only.

The CEO spoke to Members about a Sea Angling Report which was published by CEFAS in late July. A link to the report has been put on the Southern IFCA website and advertised across social media channels. The publication highlights the importance of sea angling, socially and economically as well as providing an understanding on the impact of this activity on fish stocks and how the sector was impacted by the Covid-19 Pandemic. The report will help IFCAs to better inform wider policy development via provision of information needed to support well-informed decision-making processes.

The CEO spoke to members about recreational fishing for Blue Fin Tuna. Following a return of this species into UK waters after many years of absence, the MMO has allocated 66 tonnes of quota for 2024 (16t to recreational fishers under a permit scheme and 39 tonnes for a commercial bycatch and tagging programme running July-Dec). Since the last TAC meeting, 89 recreational permits have been granted across English waters for catch and release via rod and line (administered and managed by the MMO and Defra).

82. Research and Policy Team updates

DCO Birchenough informed Members that the BTFG Byelaw 2023 had been subject to a further round of QA, following a review by the senior team at the MMO, with all comments addressed and re-submitted to the MMO on 22nd August. There were no material changes to the Byelaw or Impact Assessment. The indication from the MMO is that following this QA they would be looking to send the Byelaw package to Defra for consideration by the Secretary of State.

DCO Birchenough explained to Members some of the complexity that can lead to the process of QA taking an extended period of time. In the case of the BTFG Byelaw 2023 there had been issues which Southern IFCA had flagged with the MMO including version control with comments through QA being made on an older version of the Byelaw rather than the most recent version and inconsistencies in the advice provided between different rounds of QA which had resulted in further updates being required in subsequent rounds of QA.

DCO Birchenough informed Members that both of those points had been highlighted when submitting the Byelaw through the most recent round of QA. The MMO have been asked to provide an update on anticipated next steps and timelines so that we can be appropriately informed when the Byelaw package is sent to the Secretary of State for confirmation.

Mr R Stride asked DCO Birchenough if that process is likely to be interrupted by the passage of the private Members Bill? DCO Birchenough informed Members that the private Members Bill is in very earlier stages and may not progress therefore it is unlikely to impact the progress of any BTFG byelaws currently in the QA process.

PO Meredith Davies gave Members an update on the lease program for 2025-2030 under The Poole Fishery Order 2015. He outlined that leases under The Order are issued for a five-year

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period with the current lease commencing on the 1st July 2020 and set to expire on the 1st July 2025. There will therefore be a new lease period commencing from the 1st July 2025. The process of gathering background information to inform the development of the lease program has started, and communications will be made with Lease Holders to provide information on the process as it progresses. The Authority will be kept up to date with this workstream through TAC meetings. Any decisions required as part of the process would be presented for consideration at the appropriate TAC meetings.

ITEMS FOR DECISION

83. Shore Gathering Byelaw

DCO Birchenough outlined to Members the steps involved in developing the Shore Gathering Byelaw, stating that the Shore Gathering review was one of Southern IFCA's key MPA workstreams contributing to the 2024 deadline for MPA management within IFCA Districts. The Shore Gathering Review commenced in 2022 and was then further refined in 2023 following the publication of the EIP 2023 to focus on management within National Site Network Sites, namely Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs), Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs). DCO Birchenough outlined that management principles had been developed for the Review through a series of Member Working Groups and agreed by the TAC at the meeting in May 2024 along with a set of draft management measures based on these principles and initial drafts of the Conservation Assessment Package, Site Specific Evidence Package and Literature Review as supporting documents. The draft management measures were then used to create the Shore Gathering Byelaw and a Seaweed Harvesting Code of Conduct.

DCO Birchenough outlined that the management measures in the Shore Gathering Byelaw were based around spatial management through the definition of three types of prohibited areas, year-round, winter closure areas (1st November to 31st March) and summer closure areas (1st March to 31st August). During the relevant periods, all shore gathering activities would be prohibited (covering bait digging/collection, shellfish gathering, crab tiling/collection, mechanical harvesting [by hand], push netting and seaweed harvesting), with some exceptions for certain hand worked gear types which are listed in the Byelaw. DCO Birchenough informed Members that the provisions in the Shore Gathering Byelaw ensured that all relevant activities were covered and addressed the potential impact to designated features in a proportionate way.

DCO Birchenough outlined that the Seaweed Harvesting Code of Conduct had been developed in line with other Codes of Conduct in place around the UK, primarily one which was developed by Natural England. The determination to progress with a CoC was based on the fact that the levels of activity for this particular form of shore gathering are very low in the District and therefore a CoC is the most appropriate management step that will allow the IFCA's legal duties to be met whilst being proportionate to the potential impact of the activity. DCO Birchenough informed Members that in drafting the Shore Gathering Byelaw it was identified that there are 5 existing Southern IFCA Byelaws which can be revoked. This is to avoid duplication of regulation and to reduce some of the complexity that currently exists around regulations for shore gathering activities. DCO Birchenough outlined that the proposed Shore Gathering Byelaw ensures that the legal duties of Southern IFCA can be satisfied whilst ensuring that measures can be condensed into a single byelaw.

DCO Birchenough informed Members that the Shore Gathering Byelaw requires an amendment to an existing byelaw, the Fishing for Cockles Byelaw, to create the Fishing for Cockles (Amendment) Byelaw which is included in the Byelaw package to be 'made' along with the Shore Gathering Byelaw. The original Fishing for Cockles Byelaw contains provisions related to shore gathering and to dredging, the former would be managed under the new Shore Gathering Byelaw, the latter are already managed under relevant permit byelaws. The

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amendment byelaw is required to ensure that other provisions including an MCRS for cockle and a closed season remain in place.

DCO Birchenough informed Members that the Shore Gathering Byelaw would also require a cessation of the Memorandum of Agreement for Bait Digging in Poole Harbour, a voluntary agreement in place since 2013. DCO Birchenough explained that there has been documented non-compliance with the MoA in certain areas which has supported the decision to bring the spatial provisions of the MoA into a regulatory mechanism. DCO Birchenough outlined that there are other provisions, in addition to spatial management, contained within the MoA, such as backfilling and the requirement for landowner permission for commercial harvesting, however there are other nationwide codes of conduct for bait digging in place which list these provisions, therefore there is no further need for a specific agreement for Poole Harbour in the event that the Shore Gathering Byelaw is ratified.

DCO Birchenough outlined that an Impact Assessment has been drafted to support the Byelaw and, in order to understand the potential economic cost of the Byelaw, Senior IFCO Condie undertook targeted engagement with specific stakeholders. The economic cost identified through this exercise is represented in the IA and has been determined to be relatively low. The nature of the Review, focusing on National Site Network Sites and feature-based management means that the IFCA has not gone beyond the achievement of its legal duties in this regard, therefore the socio-economic impact of measures is not a factor which can be taken into consideration when making decisions on management, but that the cost has been identified through the IA as a requirement of the byelaw making process. The proportionate approach to the development of this management will enable the Southern IFCA to meet duties under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 for MCZs and the Conservation Regulations for SACs and SPAs, whilst minimizing impact on the industry where possible.

Senior IFCO Condie informed Members that following comment from NE at the May TAC meeting and following the provision of Formal Advice by NE on the Conservation Assessment package, two changes had been made to the draft management measures. One in Langstone Harbour to increase prohibited areas to year-round to provide appropriate protection for tern species and an extension of the year-round prohibited area in The Fleet to fully cover areas already subject to exclusions/management by local conservation managers. Senior IFCO Condie outlined that there had also been some minor wording updates to the Seaweed Harvesting Code of Conduct and inconsequential updates to the Conservation Assessment Package. Members were informed that the Formal Advice received from NE had been annexed to the report along with a table outlining how each point raised by NE had been responded to by Southern IFCA.

Dr A Jensen thanked DCO Birchenough and officers for a detailed set of documents. Dr Jensen informed Members that they had been asked to provide comments on the Shore Gathering Byelaw, Fishing for Cockles (Amendment) Byelaw, Seaweed Harvesting Code of Conduct and supporting documents. Dr Jensen outlined that if Members agreed the recommendations, then the Authority would be formally notified of the intention to Make the Byelaws at the September meeting along with the MMO and Secretary of State.

Ms L MacCallum queried how enforceable the regulations under the new Shore Gathering Byelaw are. PDCO Dell informed Members that the Byelaw has been reviewed by members of the Compliance and Enforcement Team and he is confident that the Byelaw is enforceable. Dr A Jensen informed Members that any comments received during the Formal Consultation on the Byelaws would help understand any potential issues.

Mr R Stride asked for areas which are prohibited either year-round or seasonally, where these are expressed as a percentage of the Southern IFCA District, did this relate to the whole

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District or the intertidal area. Senior IFCO Condie outlined that it was applicable to the whole District.

Mr R Stride stated that the Seaweed Harvesting Code of Conduct states to obtain relevant permissions and that NE should be consulted before harvesting takes place in a protected site. Mr R Stride queried whether anyone undertaking this activity should be consulting NE and what it is that the consultation is for, i.e., is it related to permissions to undertake the activity and how is this granted. DCO Birchenough replied that Southern IFCA have not prescribed processes for this in the CoC as it is a determination for NE as to the most appropriate processes through which any consultation is undertaken or any permissions sought for activities as per their own requirements. DCO Birchenough emphasised that the wording in the CoC is taken directly from NE's own CoC and that while appropriate protections have been provided in the Shore Gathering Byelaw where prohibitions for this activity are required and through the CoC, there is overlap with other designations such as SSSIs where NE consent is required for certain activities. DCO Birchenough explained that it would be for NE to regulate whether those permissions have been obtained rather than Southern IFCA.

DCO Birchenough informed Members that this is the first set of Byelaws that the current Research & Policy Team have developed in their entirety and all members of the RPT have had input into the process. DCO Birchenough expressed her thanks to the RPT for their input.

The recommendations were proposed by Mr R Stride and seconded by Mr G Wordsworth; all Members voted in favour.

Resolved

84. That Members:

- a. Provide comment on the draft Shore Gathering Byelaw and supporting documentation.
- b. Provide comment on the draft Seaweed Harvesting Code of Conduct.
- c. Provide comment on the draft Fishing for Cockles (Amendment Byelaw)

85. That, in accordance with IFCA Byelaw Guidance, Members agree to formally notify Authority Members and the Secretary of State of the intention to make the Shore Gathering Byelaw and the Fishing for Cockles (Amendment) Byelaw at the Authority meeting on 19th September 2024.

86. Solent Oyster Survey Report 2024 & Solent Dredge Permit Category B Permits

IFCO Churchouse presented the survey report from the 2024 Solent Oyster Survey to Members. The survey was run for three days from the 22nd to 24th July, during which 72 tows were completed in 16 beds over all of the six Bivalve Management Areas defined in the Solent Dredge Permit Byelaw.

IFCO Churchouse informed Members that this survey was last carried out in 2022, with a decision being made following that survey to move to surveying every two years due to low stock levels which showed minimal change each year. In total across those 72 tows, 42 oysters were sampled which were above or equal to the 70 mm, Minimum Conservation Reference Size (MCRS), 56 oysters were sampled that were under 70 mm.

IFCO Churchouse outlined that The Solent Dredge Permit Byelaw Management Intentions Document sets out CPUE threshold levels for both individual oyster beds and at the level of a BMA, the CPUE relates to oysters at or above the MCRS. These thresholds are designed to inform the management of the fishery. For individual beds the threshold is set at 15 kilograms per meter per hour, and for a BMA the threshold is set at 5 kilograms per meter hour. For the 2024 survey, two BMAs had seen CPUE values above the threshold, BMA 3 - Eastern Solent

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with an average CPUE of 5.63 kilograms per meter per hour, which corresponded to 13 oysters above 70 mm over 9 tows, and BMA 2 – Northern Solent, which had an average CPUE of 5.48 kilograms per meter per hour which corresponded to 20 oysters over 70mm over 18 tows. There was only one individual bed, the North Channel in BMA 2 where the CPUE exceeded the threshold, with an average CPUE of 17.55 kilograms per meter per hour, which corresponded to six oysters over three tows. IFCO Churchouse reminded Members that although the threshold levels had been reached in those cases, it was important to reflect on the number of oysters that these values corresponded to which are still very low.

IFCO Churchouse informed Members in comparison to 2022, seven of the beds sampled in 2024 saw an increase in CPUE, 6 sites saw a decreased CPUE to a value of 0 and three sites maintained a CPUE of 0. The results of the survey show that oyster stocks still remain low across the Solent and in consideration of the number of oysters represented by the CPUE values and the decrease in areas of CPUE to 0 it was recommended that Members maintain a closure of all BMAs for the harvesting of native oyster for the 2024/2025 and 2025/2026 fishing seasons, the next survey taking place in July 2026.

The recommendations were proposed by Ms E Bussey-Jones and seconded by Ms L MacCallum; all Members were in favour.

Resolved

87. That members approve The Solent Native Oyster Survey 2024 report.

88. That Members maintain a closure of all BMAs for harvesting of native oysters for the 2024/2025 and 2025/2026 seasons.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

89. Poole Bivalve Survey Report 2024

IFCO Mullen presented the survey report for the 2024 Poole Harbour Bivalve Survey, informing Members that the survey is conducted annually prior to the opening of the Poole Harbour Dredge Permit fishery in May. For 2024 the survey was completed between 8th – 11th April.

The report shows analysed Catch Per Unit Effort (CPUE) and size frequency data from the survey and catch data from the fishery for 2023 across the 11 catch reporting zones, comparisons are made to data from the last three years. The CPUE data shows that higher CPUE values reflect environmental stimuli which drives the distribution of different species across the Harbour, Manila clam favouring finer grained muddy sediments whereas cockles favour coarser, sandier sediments.

IFCO Mullen outlined that over the last three years there have been fluctuations in catch data and also CPUE survey data but there have been no statistically significant differences, indicating that, according to the survey results, the population of Manila clam appears stable. Results for common cockle have shown either no significant difference in catches or CPUE data from the survey in the last three years or an increase in CPUE which has been seen in the last two years. It was noted that CPUE data from Zone 3 for common cockle was higher in previous years but not significantly so.

IFCO Mullen outlined that catch data for Manila clam peaked in October 2023, consistent with previous years, whereas there was a peak in landings for common cockle also in October 2023 which has not been consistently seen over the past three years. For size frequency data from the survey, the length distribution of Manila clam showed smaller lengths than in 2023, but these were not statistically significant, and lengths of common cockle were seen to fluctuate between zones as has been the case in previous years.

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IFCO Mullen outlined that, although analysis of survey data indicated that stocks are stable, Southern IFCA have received reports from permit holders following the start of the fishing season in May that there has been an observable decline in catches of Manila clam compared to the previous few seasons. On the basis of this information Southern IFCA have been monitoring the catch data supplied monthly by permit holders and have, to date, analysed data from May, June and July comparing data from 2024 to 2016-2023. IFCO Mullen provided a graph to Members, outlining that data for May and June had been provided as part of the TAC report and data from July had been added, and presented verbally, due to catch data for July not being received prior to the TAC agenda being published. IFCO Mullen outlined that the data is provided as CPUE values, representing kg of Manila clam per hour per fisher, this removes any influence of changes in the number of permit holders fishing, or the number of hours fished.

IFCO Mullen informed Members that for May 2024, the CPUE was 0.7kg per hour per fisher, a decrease of 39.1% compared to 2023 (1.15 kg per hour per fisher). Comparing to catch data from May 2016-2019, the CPUE for 2024 was between a 29.6% increase (2017) and a 48.9% increase (2016) on levels seen during those years for that month, therefore catch levels remain higher in 2024 for May than they did in the 2016-2019 period.

For June 2024, the CPUE was 0.45kg per hour per fisher, a decrease from 2023 of 31.8% (0.66 kg per hour per fisher). Comparing to catch data from June 2016-2019, the CPUE for 2024 was between a 2% decrease (2017) and a 12.5% increase (2016).

For July 2024, the CPUE was 0.37kg per hour per fisher, a decrease from 2023 of 51.3% (0.76 kg per hour per fisher). Comparing to catch data from July 2016-2019, the CPUE for 2024 was between a 24.5% decrease (2017) and a 10.4% increase (2016). Looking at the data for 2016-2024, there was a relatively consistent catch rate for 2016-2019 followed by a large increase in 2020, a slight decline through to 2022 and then a slight increase in 2023 prior to the pattern being seen for the 2024 season. IFCO Mullen outlined that whilst the 2024 data reflects a decline in landings from the previous 4 years, at present levels are not inconsistent with those seen during the 2016-2019 period.

Members were informed that the reason for the decline in catch levels during the 2024 season is currently unknown. Officers have engaged with key stakeholders and experts in the fishery and there has been a suggestion, although not confirmed, that a spring mortality may have potentially occurred in late April, after the Poole Harbour Bivalve Survey was carried out, due to warmer temperatures over winter. IFCO Mullen outlined that catch data would continue to be reviewed on a monthly basis and analysed in relation to previous seasons.

Ms E Bussey-Jones asked whether there was anything significant that occurred between 2016-2017 to see an increase in catch rates. IFCO Mullen responded that there was no significant change that the IFCA are aware of, the stocks remained relatively stable between 2016-2019, however there was a large increase in catch levels in 2020, the reason for this is also not known. Ms E Bussey-Jones asked whether the 2020 catch data was as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. DCO Birchenough responded that fishing practice remained largely unchanged during the pandemic for the majority of permit holders as most operate single handed.

Dr A Jensen informed Members that the Manila clam is not native to temperate areas and therefore do not have some of the physiological coping mechanisms that native bivalve species exhibit. Primarily this is related to not having the same reduction in metabolic rate in response to temperature, for example oysters and common cockle will noticeably reduce the filtrations rates during colder weather, however in a winter where there are relatively warm

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temperatures, Manila clam will continue to pump water expending energy, as the light levels increase in spring there is then an increase in phytoplankton which increases this energy expenditure further, this can result in a spring mortality if energy has not been sufficiently conserved during the winter period.

The CEO outlined to Members that an action will be taken to communicate with Permit Holders as soon as possible on the data presented to the TAC and the intended course of action by the IFCA on how the fishery will be monitored and managed going forward. This will hopefully allay concerns and emphasise to permit holders that the situation is being taken seriously. Officers will also explore the possibility of a proactive agreement on further action, agreed by permit holders ahead of time so if action is required, it can be taken with the agreement of those involved.

Recommendation

90. It is recommended that the Southern IFCA communicates with Permit Holders in the PHDP fishery on the catch data for the 2024/2025 season to, as presented to the TAC, and the intended course of action by the IFCA on how the fishery will be monitored and managed going forward.

91. Fisheries Management Plans Update

PO Wright updated Members on the FMP program. Due to the General Election, the majority of work on the FMP program had been paused. IFCO Wright informed Members that she and DCO Birchenough had attended a workshop run by Seafish in relation to the Whelk FMP, to discuss draft reports produced by Seafish on proposed management and evidence gathering based on the objectives highlighted in the published FMP. Southern IFCA also attended a Whelk Management Science Group meeting and have subsequently been asked to comment on a draft paper related to whelk MCRS. PO Wright informed Members that she had also attended an initial scoping meeting for the Celtic Sea and Western Channel demersal FMP and has been working with DCO Birchenough to respond to a data request from MRAG, who are supporting the MMO as the Delivery Partner, in relation to the Wrasses Complex and Black seabream FMPs.

The CEO informed Members that there had also been meetings held between the IFCAs and the MMO, arranged by AIFCA and KEIFCA where each relevant IFCA presented on the work that they currently do in relation to the published FMPS. The MMO were receptive to this and indicated the importance of continuing to work with IFCAs in this process. The intention of the meetings was to ensure that IFCAs are involved in the implementation process, something which is also being raised with the AIFCA. There are multiple groups and a complex picture regarding FMP implementation, and it is important that IFCAs can feed their work and information into this process. The advantage provided by AIFCA is having a member of staff, Mr Tim Smith, who is coordinating IFCA work related to the FMP program and providing a channel for IFCAs to other organisations. There do however remain challenges in also independently reminding lead organisations on FMP implementation that IFCAs have management and research programs in place that could be beneficial to this delivery.

92. Marine Licencing Update

IFCO Churchouse presented Members with the Marine Licencing update. Between May and July of this year, Southern IFCA have been consulted on 28 applications through the MMO licencing portal (MCMS), 12 of which have required a response. Each application requires a review to determine any potential comments which may need to be provided, therefore even the applications which are deemed not to require a response require an investment of time to make this determination. IFCO Churchouse outlined that the detail of applications which required a response can be found in the table accompanying the report, in summary the

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majority of the responses have been for dredging applications, the majority of which have been within the Solent. In addition, there have been environmental impact assessments and construction work applications which have also required comment.

Responses for dredging works have focused mainly on the impact of dredging disposal on local fisheries in the Solent, as well as providing information on fishing activity and species in the vicinity of proposed works and the potential impact of increased suspended sediment concentration. It is frequently noted that whilst consideration is given to the dredging site, less assessment is carried out for impacts at disposal sites which Southern IFCA feel is important to highlight.

IFCO Churchouse outlined that Members have also been provided with a copy of the response sent to the application for the IFA 2 Cable works. This response focuses on the location of key fisheries in the area of the proposed works, reiterates points raised under the initial application for this project (the current application being for a required additional works) and referenced points raised by the fishing industry in an industry response which the Southern IFCA was given permission to reference. Following the submission of the Southern IFCA response a meeting was held with the applicant, and it was reinforced that further engagement with industry was required which the applicant stated would take place.

IFCO Churchouse outlined that since the TAC agenda was published a further 11 applications have been received for consultation. These are also mainly related to dredging works and are being reviewed. IFCO Churchouse informed Members that in total, the number of applications received to date in 2024 was a 30% increase on the total number received for the 2023-2024 financial year.

Ms L MacCallum asked IFCO Churchouse about the Lymington Harbour maintenance dredge application, and whether fishers are concerned about the impact of dredge disposal where that is being used to regenerate saltmarsh areas or whether it is the disposal at sea.

IFCO Churchouse informed Ms L MacCallum that it is commonly the disposal at sea which raises concerns in the fishing industry. The disposal sites used are at the NAB tower and at Hurst spit, with anecdotal evidence received from the fishing industry that this is having an impact on stocks of crab and lobster in these areas and the wider Solent. In responding to applications which reference these disposal sites this point is emphasised and the corresponding need for assessment of impacts at these sites as well as the primary dredging site.

93. Date of Next Meeting

To confirm the date of the next meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee on the 7th November 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 15.51

Chairman:

Date: