

SOUTHERN INSHORE FISHERIES AND CONSERVATION AUTHORITY TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE – 2nd FEBRUARY 2023

Minutes of the Technical Advisory Committee held in the meeting room at the Southern IFCA office in Poole at **14:00 on 2nd February 2023**

Present

Dr Antony Jensen	(Chairman, MMO Appointee)
Mr Richard Stride	(Vice Chairman, MMO Appointee)
Ms Louise MacCallum	(MMO Appointee)
Mr Gavin Black	(Natural England)
Mr Phil Rudd	(Environment Agency)
Mr Neil Hornby	(MMO Appointee)
Mr Colin Francis	(MMO Appointee)
Ms Rachel Irish	(MMO Appointee)
 Ms Pia Bateman	 Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

Deputy Chief Officer (DCO) Ms Sarah Birchenough, Finance and Administration Manager (FAM) Ms Liz Walker, and IFCO Ms Emily Condie were also present. Mr Gordon Chittenden (Senior Marine Officer, MMO) and Co-opted Members Mr Steve Matthews and Ms Elisabeth Bussey-Jones were also in attendance.

Mr Gary Wordsworth (MMO Appointee), Mr Ted Legg (MMO Appointee) and Mr Lewis Tattersall (Seafish) attended the meeting virtually.

Dr A Jensen opened the meeting by welcoming Ms L Walker, Mr C Francis and Mr G Chittenden to the meeting and invited all attendees to introduce themselves.

Apologies

164. Apologies for absence were received from Dr Simon Cripps (MMO Appointee).

Declarations of interest

165. The following pecuniary interests were declared: Mr G Wordsworth (5). The following non-pecuniary interests were declared: Mr P Rudd (6 and 10), Mr N Hornby (9), Ms L MacCallum (6).

Minutes

166. Members considered the Minutes of the meeting held on 3rd November 2022 and these were confirmed and signed. It was confirmed that Recommendation 159 was completed.

Guest Speaker: Seafish Fisheries Management Plan

167. Members received a virtual presentation from Mr L Tattersall of Seafish, on the Crab, Lobster and Whelk Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs) for England. A copy of the presentation will be circulated to Members.

Dr A Jensen thanked Mr L Tattersall for an interesting and informative presentation and invited any questions.

Dr A Jensen commented on the patchwork of different FMPs across the home nations. Mr L Tattersall confirmed that Seafish were discussing this FMP with the different administrations to align them where possible.

Ms L MacCallum queried the level of confidence that this FMP will be signed off by August 2023. Mr L Tattersall confirmed that, ultimately, this will rest with Defra. Seafish will complete their work

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with the stakeholders and are working closely with the Fisheries Team in Defra. Currently, all teams are working to this deadline.

PROGRESS REPORTS

168. Chief Executive Officer Updates

The CEO announced that following receipt of £50k of the Defra funding, (intended for each IFCA to support Defra with its delivery of the Fisheries Act), a Project Officer has been recruited specifically for FMPs. The CEO confirmed that the remaining £100k of this funding is outstanding but, once received, additional Project Officer roles will be considered for recruitment.

The CEO updated Members that the MMO's current General Member recruitment campaign has been extended until the end of February. The CEO explained that following the successful appointment of Mr C Francis, it is hoped this campaign will provide the opportunity to fill the other RSA vacant position, as well as retain successful candidates on a merit list to ensure balance on the Board can be maintained.

The CEO provided an update on the IFCA Conduct and Operations Report 2018-2022. The CEO explained that Defra has yet to send the submission to the Secretary of State to agree the public consultation and content of the Expert Surveys, to include Members consultations. Taking into account of the aim for these surveys to be live by end of February, with a 6-8 week consultation period, the CEO suggested the final report could be delayed until late July/early August.

Whilst an update on the current position will feature under agenda item 4b, the CEO felt it was important Members are aware that the Net Fishing Byelaw continues to attract attention. The CEO explained that as well as DCO Birchenough working hard to respond to an extensive Freedom of Information (FOI) request on the subject, the CEO has recently been invited by The Fishing News to provide comment. The CEO committed to send a copy of the article to the full Membership for reference in due course.

The CEO discussed the ongoing formal consultations at the MMO; a call for evidence on a proposal to introduce a seasonal closure in ICES area 7d and Lyme Bay area of 7e to the king scallop dredge fishery closing on 19 March; and a formal consultation on the Marine Protected Areas Bottom Towed Fishing Gear Byelaw 2023, which prohibits the use of bottom towed fishing gear within specified areas of 13 offshore MPAs in order to conserve rock and reef habitats, closing on 28 March.

The CEO explained that in parallel with the latter, the MMO has launched a call for evidence on the impacts of remaining fishing gear interactions (anchored nets and lines and traps) on seabed features in offshore MPAs in England. The MMO are seeking views and further evidence regarding three gear-groups has been developed in specific documents to establish the evidence base relating to the impacts of different fishing gears on benthic designated features of MPAs.

Dr A Jensen commented that scientific information from University of Southampton is available for the Solent scallops, which would be of use to the consultation.

The CEO updated Members that the Crustacean Mortality Report regarding the unusual crustacean mortality in North-East England in 2021 and 2020, is now available online. The CEO explained that the independent expert panel had ruled out chemical poisoning and algae as the cause but suggested a new disease.

The CEO announced that the long-awaited Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP) has been published, which builds on the 25-Year Environment Plan and key legislative frameworks, including the Environment Act 2021 and the Fisheries Act 2020. The CEO explained that the EIP aims to create a "comprehensive delivery plan" to halt and reverse the decline in nature in the UK following the Government's commitment in December 2022 to leave the environment in a better

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state for future generations. The CEO went on to discuss some of the headlines of the EIP itself where of direct relevance to the work of the Southern IFCA, wider IFCA's and the AIFCA.

Resolved

169. That Members note the updates.

170. Deputy Chief Executive Officer Updates

DCO Birchenough updated Members that three rounds of quality assurance have been completed following submission of the Net Fishing Byelaw to the MMO in March 2022, as well as one round following the submission of the Pot Fishing Byelaw in October 2023. DCO Birchenough confirmed that no fundamental issues with the Byelaws or associated Impact Assessments have been identified to date and that, pending the MMO passing them to the Secretary of State, officers are doing as much as possible to prepare for their implementation.

DCO Birchenough discussed work in progress on the actions recommended by the Technical Advisory Committee in November 2022, and agreed at the meeting of the Authority in December 2022, to progress the Shore Gathering (SG) Review to Stage 2 of the Byelaw Making Process.

Following the informal consultation in 2022, DCO Birchenough explained that the proposed closed areas under the review of bottom towed fishing gear management are being reviewed by officers and a working group will be established late February/early March to make recommendations. DCO Birchenough confirmed that the aim is to complete the byelaw making process by Autumn 2023.

DCO Birchenough discussed the need to consider how the delivery of the various local and national workstreams align, which may require the development of priority actions to facilitate the allocation of resources. DCO Birchenough explained that the proposals will be outlined in the annual strategy for the Fisheries Management and Policy Team for the Authority to consider at their next meeting in March.

Resolved

171. That Members note the update.

ITEMS FOR DECISION

172. Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Byelaw Appropriate Assessment

DCO Birchenough provided Members with an overview of the report. Ms Elisabeth Bussey-Jones asked for clarification on the Natural England's concern outlined in paragraph 1.8 of the report. Mr G Black clarified that the concern relates to there being no new evidence available on long-term impacts on the sediment environment from pump-scoop dredging since a PhD study in 2017. The CEO confirmed that, in accordance with Defra advice, the HRA has been drafted on the best available evidence provided by Natural England (in this instance), and that it is Southern IFCA's role to manage the PHDP Fishery based on the best available evidence available.

The recommendations put forward were agreed by all Members.

Resolved

173. a) That, based on the evidence provided in the Habitats Regulations Assessment, Members agree the issuing of 45 permits for the 2023-24 dredge season under the Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Byelaw.

b) That Members authorise Officers to make any amendments to the HRA as required following feedback from Natural England.

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174. HRA – Studland to Portland SAC - Wrasse Fishery

DCO Birchenough provided Members with an overview of the report written by Project Officer Smith. Following a number of questions around process from members, DCO Birchenough explained the course of action outlined in the Monitoring and Control Plan, which requires a review of the HRA once a trigger point has been breached.

The HRA was reviewed as per this process and concluded no adverse effect on the Studland to Portland SAC from the wrasse fishery based on best available evidence. DCO Birchenough discussed the existing voluntary code of conduct in this fishery, which includes voluntary adherence to a MCRS, catch reporting via catch returns and receipt of data from buyers. Additionally, the Compliance and Enforcement team report excellent levels of compliance with the voluntary code, providing a good demonstration of where fishers are invested in the health of the fishery.

From this outcome, it was proposed that the wrasse fishery continue to be monitored in accordance with the Monitoring and Control Plan for the forthcoming season. DCO Birchenough discussed the commitment under the Monitoring and Control Plan to maintain annual reviews of this fishery and highlighted that a national Wrasse FMP would soon be developed, which would help to inform future reviews, as well as provide robust evidence of stock status. It was also recognised that, during the coming year there may be further evidence available to help support management decisions for this fishery in the form of a PhD study due for completion and that the IFCA would keep up to date with any developments in the best available evidence base and how this feeds into the FMP process.

Ms L MacCallum and Mr R Stride discussed the merits of a wrasse stock assessment to aid understanding of the impact of this fishery on wrasse stocks.

Ms E Bussey-Jones and Mr R Stride highlighted that fishers had stopped fishing when they had been advised that the trigger point had been breached.

Dr A Jensen suggested that Southern IFCA meet with the buyers and fishers to express disappointment about the situation prior to the 2023 fishing season and to encourage their commitment to the voluntary code, ensuring that the catch limit is not exceeded during the next season. Dr A Jensen added that the experiences of management of this fishery within the Southern IFCA District should feature in the wrasse FMP process. Both Dr A Jensen and Ms L MacCallum offered to represent the Technical Advisory Committee at a meeting.

The recommendations put forward were agreed by all Members, with the exception of Ms L MacCallum who abstained from the vote.

Recommendation

175. That Dr A Jensen and Ms L MacCallum represent the Technical Advisory Committee at a meeting with wrasse buyers and fishers, prior to the 2023/2024 season.

Resolved

176. a) That Members consider the updated Studland to Portland SAC Wrasse Fishery Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA), which concludes no adverse effect.

b) That the wrasse fishery continues to be managed in accordance with the Studland to Portland Special Area of Conservation (SAC) – Monitoring & Control Plan for the forthcoming 2023 season.

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ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

177. Coastal Futures

Mr N Hornby provided a background on the conference, adding that the audience generally comprises representation from across sectors of conservation, government agencies and some developers, but very few from the fishing industry.

Mr N Hornby discussed that the sessions were England-focussed and included climate, blue carbon, Fisheries Management Plans and Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). Mr N Hornby added that IFCAAs were well discussed with representation by the Association of IFCAAs.

Mr N Hornby concluded that the overall message was that the ambition is good, but that delivery is lacking, adding that the complex and competing demands were recognised with a general feeling of optimism.

Mr N Hornby confirmed that the conference was recorded and can be found online.

Resolved

178. That Members note the update.

179. Fisheries Industry Science Partnership Projects

DCO Birchenough provided Members with an overview of the report. The Angling for Sustainability Project has been successful in receiving FISP funding and is active from 1st January 2023 for a period of two years. There are two other FISP bids which the Southern IFCA is involved with, the project leads are awaiting an indication of whether those bids have been successful at this time.

Members raised a concern regarding the Angling for Sustainability Project that data collected on the location and movements of black bream could result in fishing becoming more targeted, impacting the stocks. DCO Birchenough explained that a similar concern had been raised by the RSA sector in relation to this project and that a representative from the project lead, Plymouth University, would be invited to a future meeting of the Southern IFCA Recreational Angling Sector Group to discuss the project and answer any concerns regarding the data.

Resolved

180. That Members note the report.

181. Live Wrasse Fishing Monitoring and Control Report 2022

DCO Birchenough introduced the agenda item clarifying that it was separate to agenda item 6, in that the data was collected on an annual basis and is intended to provide an overview of trends.

IFCO Condie provided Members with an overview of the report. Mr N Hornby asked if enough is understood about the life cycle of wrasse and what could be early indicators of detriment to the population. DCO Birchenough commented this is a lagging indicator and not in the scope of this report.

Mr G Black commented that Natural England has good relationships with universities and asked if the gaps in information identified by the TAC could be submitted as topic suggestions for MSc programmes. The CEO confirmed that Southern IFCA normally submit three to four projects per year to local universities, with recent years seeing a limited uptake of submissions.

Mr C Francis asked if the wrasse fishery was complying with minimum and maximum sizes. DCO Birchenough confirmed this was the case. Mr C Francis added that catch of wrasse over 5lbs was very limited.

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Resolved

177. That Members note the report

Date and time of Next Meeting

178. That the meeting of the TAC will be on the 4 May 2023 at Southern IFCA Offices, Unit 3, Holes Bay Park.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 16:28.

Chairman:

Date:

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