

## SOUTHERN INSHORE FISHERIES & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE – 1<sup>st</sup> February 2024

Minutes of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), held in the meeting room at the Southern IFCA office in Poole at **14:00 on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2024**.

### Present

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

Deputy Chief Officer (DCO) Dr Sarah Birchenough, Senior IFCO Ms Emily Condie, IFCO Ms Megan Fullbrook and Office Manager Ms Maria Chaplin were also in attendance.

Mr Stuart Kingston-Turner (Environment Agency), Dr Simon Cripps (MMO Appointee) and Project Officers Mr William Meredith-Davies, Ms Imogen Wright and Ms Chelsea Perrins (PO) attended the meeting virtually.

### Apologies

**32.** Apologies for absence were received from DCO Mr Sam Dell.

### Declarations of interest

**33.** The following pecuniary interested were declared: Mr G Wordsworth (Agenda Item 7 & 11). The following non-pecuniary interest were declared: Dr R Morgan (Agenda Item 6 & 7), Mr R Stride (Agenda Item 6) and Ms L MacCallum (Agenda Item 8).

### Minutes

**34.** Members considered the Minutes of the meeting held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2023, these were confirmed and signed.

### PROGRESS REPORTS

#### **35a. Chief Executive Officer Updates**

The CEO discussed that following the release of the frontrunner FMPs in December 2023, nationally discussions were now due to take place regarding the implementation of the FMP outcomes. The CEO confirmed that nationally IFCA's are ensuring that they are involved in these conversations, with Tim Smith of the AIFCA representing the collective and from a district perspective, Southern are ensuring that we are in the relevant rooms when it comes to matters of district importance.

The CEO discussed that she would be involved in an FMP Evidence Workshop in February alongside industry representatives and other regulators to begin discussions on evidence gaps. The CEO informed Members, as captured in the pending draft Annual Strategy (for consideration by the Members in March 2024) how Southern are ensuring that our work aligns with the frontrunner outputs and new directions at a district wide level, with application and movement from theory to practice demonstrable at Southern.

The CEO provided an overview of her virtual attendance at the annual Coastal Futures

## **SOUTHERN INSHORE FISHERIES & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE – 1<sup>st</sup> February 2024**

Conference, describing the underlying theme for this year being 'inclusivity', a model which Southern IFCA champion in the delivery of everyday work and more widely throughout all IFCAs, when considering the IFCA model which seeks to achieve just that. Dr Sarah Coulthard from Nottingham University, who has been working with the AIFCA, delivered a presentation on the challenging participatory decision-making work that IFCAs do. Dr Coulthard did a great job at flying the IFCA flag where she could, but the CEO was disappointed to say that the talk did lead to some less positive conversations regarding IFCAs. The CEO has subsequently spoken with Rob Clark at the AIFCA and the extensive work which Dr Coulthard has achieved will be shared in due course. The AIFCA aims to build on this work, providing a detailed examination of IFCAs and the role IFCAs perform and challenges faced.

The CEO discussed a number of relevant live consultations, to include the recent launch of new measures by the Government to halt and reverse a decline in nature. The CEO described that this comes a year after the publication of the Environment Improvement Plan in January 2023. The main headlines accompanying this announcement were the permanent closure of the North Sea sandeel fishery from April 2024 and further targeted restrictions on bottom trawling. The CEO reminded Members that the MMO last year consulted on proposals to restrict BTFG over reef and rock habitats in offshore MPAs across a further 13 MPA sites. Yesterday it was confirmed that a byelaw will be introduced to bring these proposals into effect.

The CEO described how she was working with national IFCA partners and the AIFCA to consider a joint response to the MMO regarding the preliminary draft management proposals across these 13 MPAs, which is particularly important where the MMO and IFCAs share straddling or adjacent MPAs. Of relevance for Southern is a small section of the Offshore Overfalls MCZ that sits south of Chichester and east of the IOW, a larger (but still relatively small area) sits within the Sussex IFCA jurisdiction.

The CEO described how Southern have been working with colleagues in D&S, Cornwall and the IoS to help frame and support a response from the SW IFCAs to Defra on the introduction of a by-catch only fishery for Pollock by Defra following receipt of ICES advice in mid-2023. The main fisheries for Pollock are west, with less reliance on this fishery in the Southern District when compared with others. This has been quite a complex matter regarding Defra process and procedure and timelines surrounding engagement pre-implementation, as well as management solutions. Industry in general accept that management is required in this fishery and welcome effort control, however, do feel that the bycatch only fishery solution will not be effective and likely have a huge impact on displacement, pressure on other stocks and of course huge socio-economic impacts. The Fisheries Minister Mark Spencer this week confirmed that these fishers will not receive compensation, however, will be encouraged to seek support via the Fisheries and Seafood Scheme to help diversify.

The CEO discussed the closure for crawfish for ICES Area 7 by the MMO. The closure will be in place from 5<sup>th</sup> Feb to 30 April and has been introduced via a licence variation. From a District perspective, the largest impact is likely further west looking towards our Devon and Cornish colleagues, however, we are aware that crawfish are moving east along the channel, so it maybe in future that this species is more prevalent in the district.

The CEO discussed that the MMO are currently seeking views on proposals to close VIId and the area of Lyme Bay falling in VIle to king scallop over 10m dredge fishing in summer 2024. The proposed closures are to protect stock during spawning season and limit impact on juvenile settlement. Consultation closes on the 14<sup>th</sup> Feb.

The CEO provided an update on inshore VMS, in that the rollout programme closed in December 2023. There was an 80% uptake in the under 12 sector. The MMO are asking that all vessels will need to have a type of approved device installed and operating when the new

## SOUTHERN INSHORE FISHERIES & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE – 1<sup>st</sup> February 2024

legislation comes into effect, which is anticipated April 2024. The legislation will require all vessels under 12m to have iVMS installed and transmitting data to the MMO when in English waters. The MMO are urging those who have purchased a device to arrange for installation so that they will be compliant when the legislation comes in. The CEO invited those requiring assistance to contact the MMO on a dedicated helpline, details of which can be found on the MMO website.

The CEO finished on an AIFCA initiative, which had been launched in recent months, which are online learning sessions aimed at Members and officers. The CEO provided a summary of the two sessions to date, the first session looked at decision making processes and the role of 'statutory advice' and how IFCA's consider this alongside our legal duties when considering management interventions and the second was chaired by Dr S Cripps and covered Marine Natural Capital. The CEO summarised that both sessions were extremely valuable and that she was pleased to see so many of our Members and staff in attendance.

With regard to the Coastal Futures Conference, Ms L MacCallum agreed with the CEO that fishing was underrepresented at the conference and informed members it was "like the elephant in the room". Despite IFCA and other fisheries representatives being present, none presented. Mr N Hornby advised members that he attended one day this year and agreed that fisheries wasn't well represented.

With regard to Inshore VMS, Mr R Stride informed Members that most fishers he knows have had letters from the MMO, however, it is not in their power to begin installation as the manufacturer has to arrange installation.

### **35b. BTFG Byelaw 2023**

DCO Birchenough advised members that SIFCA made the BTFG Byelaw 2023 at the September Authority meeting with the Byelaw subsequently submitted to the MMO and Defra for consideration in October 2023. The first round of QA from the MMO was received at the end of December and DCO Birchenough outlined that the comments provided by the MMO are currently being reviewed. To date there are no comments which relate to proposed changes to the management itself under the Byelaw.

## **ITEMS FOR DECISION**

### **36. Black Sea Bream Principles**

DCO Birchenough outlined that, at the November TAC meeting, Members were informed that advice was going to be sought from Defra as to the application of the 2024 Government deadline for MPA management to the development of management for Black Sea Bream, which is designated in three of our Dorset Marine Conservation Zones, Purbeck Coast, Poole Rocks and Southbourne Rough. DCO Birchenough outlined that a meeting had been held with herself, the CEO and Defra on this subject. There was a clear indication from Defra that the development of management of Black Sea Bream should be delivered in line with that 2024 deadline.

DCO Birchenough advised members that the discussion with the TAC in November included the potential for pausing this work stream dependent on the outcome of the conversation with Defra, based on the steer received from Defra two Member Working Groups have been held in January 2024 to progress this workstream. DCO Birchenough thanked the Members for their input into the working groups.

DCO Birchenough outlined that the paper presented to the TAC at this meeting outlined General, Evidence and Spatial principles to underpin the development of management for black seabream in the three Dorset MCZs.

## **SOUTHERN INSHORE FISHERIES & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE – 1<sup>st</sup> February 2024**

DCO Birchenough advised Members that the IFCA duties for management within MCZs are set out in the Marine and Coastal Access Act, where Southern IFCA are required to ensure that the conservation objectives of MCZs are furthered.

DCO Birchenough outlined the General Principle which covers a definition of 'further' in line with the Oxford English Dictionary definition, and the Evidence Principles which outline the four evidence sources used to inform nest locations for black seabream and how any additional evidence sources, post a certain date, would be considered either through the Formal Consultation Phase or in subsequent byelaw reviews as determined under the provisions of any byelaw which is developed.

DCO Birchenough outlined that the four evidence sources had fed into the development of the Spatial Principles and passed to Senior IFCO Condie who provided a more detailed overview of the process which was followed in the development of each of the 6 Spatial Principles, resulting in the development of 'Indicative Habitat Areas'.

Senior IFCO Condie outlined that 'nest data' had been used, in combination with a 'GPS Buffer' of 10m to create 'nest units' and that where three or more nest units existed within 320m of each other these would be grouped to form 'hotspots'. The culmination of this process is the identification of the 'Indicative Habitat Areas'.

Mr R Stride asked, given those characteristics how significant is the existence of a nest, a position of a nest and then a buffer around that. He commented that on the basis of the principles, the denser the nests are then that becomes an area which is of greater interest, however the hotspot areas seem like a very low density.

DCO Birchenough explained that the identification of nests is based on the current best available evidence of where nests have been mapped. The presence of a nest indicates that the area is suitable nesting habitat and thus grouping nests to form indicative habitat can only be done based on the current best available evidence. It is recognised that the nests won't necessarily be found in exactly the same locations each year but the evidence used is the only evidence currently available to indicate where this suitable habitat may be found.

Mr R Stride queried whether the Conservation Objectives require the nesting areas to be maintained in favourable condition and questioned how a nest would end up in unfavourable condition unless it was fully covered with sediment or had fishing gear towed over it.

Dr A Jensen suggested that during the winter storms, bad weather events can redistribute sediments and would potentially affect the area used, and then the following year, the bream would determine the best nest locations based on conditions. Dr A Jensen advised that he is not aware of any data that suggests bream return to the same nest in subsequent years.

DCO Birchenough advised that there is a need to consider the impact of fishing gear on the eggs which are present on nests in addition to the nest itself, as well as the impact that removing the guarding male fish would have on spawning success.

Dr A Jensen explained that whilst reading the Marine Licensing agenda item, there was a suggestion that there is disposal of dredged material occurring at a site near Swanage. Dr Jensen said he was under the impression that the Swanage dumping site off Old Harry Rocks had been closed down and, if not, whether the MMO were aware of the proximity to the designated areas for black seabream and the potential impact from dredge disposal on nests. DCO Birchenough responded that the IFCA is able to comment on the relationship between licence applications and fishing activity, it is the remit of other bodies such as Natural England, to respond to licence applications in relation to features of designated sites.

## SOUTHERN INSHORE FISHERIES & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE – 1<sup>st</sup> February 2024

Mr N Hornby asked whether there was a proposal to consider temporal management under the principles? DCO Birchenough explained that a consideration of any seasonal element to management will come through discussions on what type of management may be required once the General, Evidence and Spatial principles have been considered. Members will need to consider what they feel “furthering” the conservation objectives looks like. This will consider application of spatial areas, consideration of whether any management should be seasonal and what measures may be required for different gear types.

Mr N Hornby suggested that there could be temporal measures without a spatial element. DCO Birchenough explained that this would be moving towards whole site management as opposed to feature-based management. The Southern IFCA’s legal duties are for feature based management within MCZs. The feature is Black Seabream with the conservation objectives relating to the spawning habitat, and the use of this habitat.

Ms L MacCallum asked what percentage of the habitat is suitable and is included in the Indicative Habitat Areas that had been outlined. She stated that, if the black seabream are not fixated on a specific spot, and that each year they can nest in these areas, then temporal measures would make sense because it can’t be predicted year to year where the nests are going to be. DCO Birchenough explained that we can quantify the percentage of ‘nest data’ or ‘nest units’ that are included in Indicative Habitat Areas but not the percentage of overall suitable habitat as the only evidence available to indicate where this is, is the nest data from the identified evidence sources.

Dr S Cripps stated that if the area for management was of sufficient size to allow black seabream to move around from year to year then there wouldn’t be a need for temporal measures. As there is limited data available, would there be a requirement for a large enough area to allow for variation in nest location. He queried how often surveys are carried out to determine where nests are located and whether the areas identified for management would be in place, for example, for the next 10 years or whether they would be re-evaluated year on year because nests move around.

DCO Birchenough advised that Southern IFCA would look to Natural England to provide any updated evidence on nest location resulting from any additional survey work. There is an ongoing tagging project for black seabream, actively tagging bream in the Dorset MCZs, therefore there will be data available from this project over the next couple of years which may help inform future management.

The CEO discussed why the spatial principles have been built from nest data to create Indicative Habitat Areas. The nest data represents where spawning habitat is located and is currently the best available evidence, the development of Indicative Habitat Areas from this data has increased the size of the areas of spawning habitat from 21 to 222 football pitches in size. At subsequent Working Groups Members will be able to consider how to apply these areas in the development of management measures.

Dr Jensen reflected that Members generally appear to be supportive of the principles presented in the paper. He acknowledged the useful discussion on more detailed management measures but reminded Members that, at this meeting, the consideration needs to be on the General, Evidence and Spatial principles.

Mr N Hornby asked whether the available evidence was of sufficient quality to be able to take a spatial decision. He queried whether the Authority can know that it is protecting the right areas.

## **SOUTHERN INSHORE FISHERIES & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE – 1<sup>st</sup> February 2024**

Dr Richard Morgan advised some degree of caution is often the case with providing data. Ultimately it will still come back to the suitable habitat, so the nest data that is available is indicative of where this suitable habitat occurs. He referred to the reference in the Conservation Objectives that black seabream should be free of disturbance when they aggregate. He outlined that if there is only a focus on nests, then the aggregation element may not be fully considered. He outlined that the collection of data on suitable habitat requires a large amount of work and that there are sometimes issues with data collection, such as the Cefas survey which was affected by weather conditions. He commented that Matt Doggett has done a lot of work on identifying the location of bream nests and behaviours.

Ms E Bussey-Jones queried whether single, or double nests which do not form part of the Indicative Habitat Areas under the prescribed methodology would then therefore be just as important as they are indicating that suitable habitat is present.

Mr C Francis commented that the concern amongst the angling community is that there's going to be large scale closures to their activities. He commented that black seabream are thriving as a population and spreading, yet management may affect all the angling activity which takes place in these areas.

Mr R Stride reiterated that the criteria for calling a particular set of nests a hotspot was actually quite a low density of nest units based on it being three or more within in 320 meters of each other.

The CEO informed Members that there will be a need for Members to consider what percentage of these Indicative Habitat Areas identified may require management in order to satisfy a furthering of the Conservation Objectives. It will be key to define what 'further' means in this context and how the Authority can demonstrate that it is meeting its legal duties. For the Indicative Habitat Areas that have been discussed, there may or may not be a need to manage all of these areas, rather, depending on the Members consideration 50%, 80% or another percentage for example, may require management in order to achieve 'further'. At this point, a good working model has been developed.

Mr C Francis queried the compliance and enforcement element, stating that if the areas for management are too large the IFCA will be unable to enforce them.

Mr N Hornby asked if the principles are agreed whether management can then only be considered for these areas or whether management could be considered more widely at the next stage. The CEO described the iterative process, in that the principles will remain in draft format but at this stage allow us to maintain momentum in evolving this area of work.

Ms E Bussey-Jones proposed the recommendations which were seconded by Dr A Jensen. Four Members voted in favour of the vote (Dr A Jensen, Ms E Bussey-Jones, Mr N Hornby and Mr G Wordsworth). The following members abstained, Dr R Morgan, Mr C Francis, Mr R Stride and Ms L MacCallum.

### **Resolved**

**37.** That Members agree the General, Evidence and Spatial Principles.

### **38. Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Byelaw HRA 2024-2025**

DCO Birchenough outlined that the Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Byelaw HRA relates to the Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Byelaw which regulates the use of dredges within Poole

## SOUTHERN INSHORE FISHERIES & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE – 1<sup>st</sup> February 2024

Harbour. The byelaw has been in place since 2015, and every year there is a requirement to review the HRA, related to the issuing of permits under the byelaw, to make sure that the Southern IFCA continues to meet its legal duties for Poole Harbour as a designated site, and the management provided by the byelaw continues to provide suitable mitigation for that purpose.

DCO Birchenough outlined that 45 permits are issued each year, with the proposal that the same number is issued for the coming season, which starts on the 25th May 2024. DCO Birchenough stated that the HRA has been reviewed, and that there has not been a permit condition review since the previous season, therefore there are no changes in management to consider. Data has been updated to include landings from the previous season and outputs from the 2023 stock assessment. Both of those indicate that the stocks continue to be sustainable. It was noted that landings have been up on the previous couple of years and although not as high as for 2020. There is no indication from the stock survey that any impact is being felt on the stock and there have been no changes related to the designation of the Harbour that require consideration. Therefore, the conclusion of the HRA was that the management continues to meet the requirements of the site and the issuing of 45 permits for the coming year will not have an adverse effect on Poole Harbour as a designated site.

DCO Birchenough outlined that two inconsequential amendments had been made to the HRA, based on Formal Advice received from Natural England, which could be accepted if Members agree this is appropriate. The updates were to one of the tables which references draft supplementary advice for conservation objectives, which is now formal advice, and an update to reflect that the water bird assemblage covers all of the relevant species as well as those specifically named. DCO Birchenough outlined that there were no other amendments required following the receipt of Formal Advice from NE and that NE supported the conclusion of the HRA.

Mr R Stride proposed the recommendation which was seconded by Ms E Bussey-Jones. All members were in favour with the exception of Mr G Wordsworth who abstained.

### **Resolved**

**39.** That, based on the evidence provided in the HRA, Members agree the issuing of 45 permits for the 2024-25 season under the PHDP Byelaw.

**40.** That Members authorise inconsequential amendments to be made to the HRA as required following any advice received from Natural England.

### **ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

#### **41. Wrasse Fishery Report 2023**

Senior IFCO Condie provided a summary of the data outputs and fishing activity from the 2023 wrasse season. The fishery took place over a 12 week season starting from 1<sup>st</sup> July. Communication was maintained with the fishers and buyers throughout the season which allowed for a proactive approach to monitoring landings. The fishery concluded with no trigger points, as outlined in the M&CP for the fishery, being reached. Senior IFCO Condie outlined the compliance and enforcement work that had been carried out in relation to the fishery and that the Southern IFCA will continue to monitor the fishery in line with the Wrasse Fishery Guidance, M&CP and the MCRS Byelaw for the 2024 season.

Dr A Jensen queried whether there was any information on how the wrasse are processed once they reach the salmon farms in Scotland and whether there are any reports on the

## SOUTHERN INSHORE FISHERIES & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE – 1<sup>st</sup> February 2024

welfare of the fish. It was asked whether more detail could be provided to Members on what happens once the fish have fulfilled their role in relation to salmon farming and whether there are any concerns in this regard.

### **Recommendation**

**42.** That Senior IFCO Condie explore matters concerning wrasse welfare following capture and report back to the TAC.

### **Resolved**

**43.** That Members note the update.

### **44. Fisheries Management Plans**

DCO Birchenough presented the report and provided an update on the Authority's work under the FMP Program to support Defra's delivery of the Fisheries Act Objectives. DCO Birchenough outlined work undertaken by Southern IFCA under the FMP program since autumn 2022 outlining that the IFCAs, through the AIFCA, had been invited to provide this information to Defra to support reporting on the provision of Defra funding for this workstream. DCO Birchenough also provided updates on five published frontrunner FMPs under T1 and T2 and progress updates on the development of relevant T3 FMPs, Skates and Rays, Queen Scallop and Cockle. The deadline for submission of T3 FMPs to Defra by Delivery Partners for QA is 9<sup>th</sup> February 2024.

### **Resolved**

**45.** That Members note the update.

### **46. Marine Licensing Update**

Senior IFCO Condie provided an update on Marine Licence Applications that the Southern IFCA have received as a consultee, from the MMO. Between November 2023 and January 2024 two MLAs required a response, two MLAs were deemed to not require a response. Detail on the two MLAs requiring a response was provided as part of the report.

Dr A Jensen queried the use of the Swanage Bay disposal site under one of the MLAs listed in the provided table and how the suitability of this site is assessed and how it relates to the presence of fisheries and features of relevant MPAs.

### **Recommendation**

**47.** That DCO Birchenough seeks further information on the use of the Swanage Bay disposal site from the MMO and report back to the TAC verbally.

### **Resolved**

**48.** That Members note the update.

### **49. CONFIDENTIAL Poole Harbour Several Order – Request to Amend Business Plan**

In accordance with the consideration of information which is exempt by virtue of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 the public were excluded from the meeting (virtually and in person) during consideration of this item.



**SOUTHERN INSHORE FISHERIES & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY  
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE – 1<sup>st</sup> February 2024**

Following an overview provided by IFCO Fullbrook, regarding a change in methodology for a number of lease beds in Poole Harbour, Members considered the recommendations.

Ms E Bussey-Jones proposed and Mr R Stride seconded, all Members eligible to vote were in favour.

**Resolved**

**47.** That Members approve the proposed changes to the Business Plan 2020-25 for Lease Beds 1, 5, 9, 11 and 12.

**Date of Next Meeting**

**50.** That the meeting of the TAC will be on the 9<sup>th</sup> May 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 16:25

**Chairman:**

**Date:**