

Southern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority

Pia Bateman – Chief Executive Officer



Unit 3 Holes Bay Park
Sterte Avenue West
Poole, Dorset, BH15 2AA
Tel: 01202 721373
enquiries@southern-ifca.gov.uk

24th October 2023

Dear Member,

MEETING OF THE TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE – 2nd November 2023

A meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee will be held in the meeting room at Unit 3 on Thursday 2nd November 2023 at 14:00 to discuss the business on the under mentioned Agenda. Parking is limited, please consider other forms of transport, or share lifts. The nearby Holes Bay pub/restaurant allows parking if you partake of their refreshments and **ensure you enter your vehicle registration at the bar**. The Premier Inn also allow you to use their parking facilities, **please ensure you register your vehicle at their reception desk**. Poole railway station is approximately a 15-minute walk from the office.

Members of the public can request a guest telephone dial-in code from enquiries@southern-ifca.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely,

Maria Chaplin
Office Manager

AGENDA

1. Welcome

2. Apologies

To receive apologies for absence.

3. Declaration of Interest

All Members are to declare any interests in line with paragraphs (16) and (17) of the Southern IFCA Code of Conduct for Non-Council Members.

4. Minutes – 24th August 2023

To confirm the Minutes of the Technical Advisory Committee meeting held on 24th August 2023 (Marked A).

PROGRESS REPORTS

5. To consider the following:

- a. **Chief Executive Officer updates** – To receive an update from the CEO on any matters of relevance.
- b. **Byelaw Submission updates** – to receive an update from DCO Birchenough.
- c. **Net Fishing Byelaw Implementation** – to receive an update from DCO Dell.
- d. **Solent Scallop Fishery** – to receive an update from DCO Birchenough.
- e. **Minimum Conservation Reference Size Review** – to receive an update from IFCO D. Parry.
- f. **Black Bream Management Development** – to receive a verbal report from DCO Birchenough.

ITEMS FOR DECISION

6. Authorisation for Mussel Fishing 2024 – to consider the application and supporting documentation for an authorisation to fish for seed mussel in the Southern IFCA District for 2024 (Marked B)

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

7. Fisheries Management Plans Consultation Responses – to receive a report from IFCO Mullen (Marked C)

8. Fisheries Management Plans – to receive a report from IFCO Mullen (Marked D)

9. Marine Licencing Update – to receive a report from IFCO D. Parry (Marked E)

10. Date of Next Meeting

To confirm the date of the next meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee on the 1st February 2024 at Southern IFCA, Unit 3 Holes Bay Park, Sterte Avenue West, Poole Dorset BH15 2AA.

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TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE – 24th August 2023

MARKED A

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) held in the meeting room at the Southern IFCA office in Poole at **14:00 on 24th August 2023**

Present

Dr Antony Jensen	Chairman, MMO Appointee
Mr Richard Stride	Vice Chairman, MMO Appointee
Dr Simon Cripps	MMO Appointee
Mr Colin Francis	MMO Appointee
Ms Louise MacCallum	MMO Appointee
Mr Gary Wordsworth	MMO Appointee
Mr Stuart Kingston-Turner	Environment Agency
Ms Pia Bateman	Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

Deputy Chief Officers (DCOs) Ms Sarah Birchenough and Mr Sam Dell, Office Manager Ms Maria Chaplin, Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officers (IFCOs) Ms Emily Condie, Mr Dominic Parry, Ms Celie Mullen and Project Officer (PO) Ms Chelsea Perrins were also present.

Ms Elisabeth Bussey-Jones (MMO Appointee), Mr Tedd Legg (MMO Appointee), Jess Taylor (Natural England) attended the meeting virtually.

Mr Tim Smith (Association of IFCAs) and Mr Mike Bennet attended the virtual public gallery.

Chairman's Welcome

Dr A Jensen opened the meeting, reminding Members that the meeting would be recorded for the purposes of minute taking. Dr A Jensen welcomed new Members Ms Elisabeth Bussey-Jones (MMO Appointee) and Mr Stuart Kingston-Turner (Environment Agency), as well as Maria Chaplin at her inaugural meeting as Southern IFCA's new Office Manager.

Election of Chairman for 2023-2024

1. That Dr A Jensen be elected as Chairman for the year 2023-2024. This motion was proposed by Mr R Stride and seconded by Mr G Wordsworth. All Members were in favour.

Election of Vice Chairman for 2023-2024

2. That Mr R Stride be elected as Vice-Chairman for the year 2023-2024. This motion was proposed by Dr A Jensen and seconded by Ms L MacCallum. All Members were in favour.

Apologies

3. Apologies for absence were received from Mr N Hornby (MMO Appointee) and Ms R Rachel Irish (MMO Appointee).

Declarations of interest

4. The following pecuniary interests were declared: Mr G Wordsworth (Agenda Item 4&12: relevant item as captured in these Minutes:6&18), Mr R Stride (Agenda Item 7, relevant item as captured in these Minutes 10), Mr T Legg (Agenda Item 6&8: relevant item as captured in these Minutes 8&12). The following non-pecuniary interests were declared: Mr R Stride (Agenda Item 10 relevant item as captured in these Minutes 16).

Minutes

5. Members considered the Minutes of the meeting held on the 4th May 2023. DCO Birchenough provided an update on Recommendation 189, confirming that officers had discussed options regarding areas which were proposed to be reopened under the BTFG Byelaw 2023 in accordance with Phase 1 Principles at a recent meeting of a Working Group. These discussions concluded that the areas are to remain closed, for subsequent review during Phase 2 of the BTFG Review, in order to consider socio-economic and environmental impacts that a change in management may have in these areas.

The CEO provided an update on Recommendation 192, that in accordance with Standing Orders and the Local Government Act 1972, where a Member is unable to vote on an item due to a pecuniary interest, the Member remains present in the meeting, and therefore where relevant, maintains quorum.

The minutes were confirmed and signed.

Guest Speaker: Cockle Fisheries Management Plan (FMP)

6. Members received a virtual presentation from Mr Tim Smith of the Association of IFCA's, on the development of the Cockle FMP to date. Mr T Smith provided a background to the FMP, which is inclusive of four key cockle fisheries (Southern, Northwestern, Kent & Essex, Eastern), with the aim to provide a blueprint FMP which builds on the existing and successful management models being employed by the four IFCAs. Mr T Smith discussed timelines which culminate in submission to Defra in February 2024. Mr T Smith encouraged any Members with an interest to contact him direct.

Mr G Wordsworth asked how the differing nature of the cockle fisheries, which includes the Poole Harbour MSC certified fishery, would be considered under the FMP, raising concerns of a 'one model fits all approach'. Mr T Smith recognised the success and variation of existing management regimes, and discussed how the FMP intends to build a blueprint for emerging cockle fisheries to use.

The CEO asked how open Defra are to seeing the outcomes of an FMP which recognises existing management that is working well. Dr A Jensen asked whether the FMP will consider the impact of warming weather on species movements around the coast, in order to future proof the plan. Mr T Smith intends to include this consideration into the development of best practice.

Dr A Jensen thanked Tim Smith and looks forward to how this develops.

PROGRESS REPORTS

7. Chief Executive Officer Updates

The CEO began with an update of the Net Fishing Byelaw (NFB), confirming that the Secretary of State had now signed this Byelaw. The CEO provided Members with a background to this area of work, which had been submitted to the MMO in March 2022. On the 3rd April 2023, the NFB was passed to Defra for consideration and subsequently the Authority has now received confirmation of its ratification.

The CEO thanked Members for their hard work since 2017, with a particular focus on work that Members and Officers had more recently undertaken since 2021, in response to the TAC membership rejecting a recommendation in February 2021 to 'make' the proposed draft byelaw, instead recommending that the Net Fishing Review undergo an internal evaluation to

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ensure its robustness in accordance with the IFCA duties. This review led to innovative solutions where, as an Authority, Southern are able to demonstrate how we are seeking to balance the needs of the fishing community with those of conservation, in accordance with our legal duties. The risk based models that were developed to facilitate co-use of space in functionally linked areas, draw together risk components which were identified for functionally linked areas utilised by salmonids and Essential Fish Habitats (EFH) in order to inform, in combination, the site specific management outcomes, as well as capturing the legislative drivers underpinning the management intentions as well as those areas already subject to existing governance.

The CEO recognised that following the ratification of the NFB, that not all stakeholders will be supportive of its introduction and that as an Authority Southern are acutely aware of the impact that its introduction may have on fishers' livelihoods. The CEO discussed that in delivery of the IFCA duties as an Authority, Southern will never be able to satisfy all parties however, the CEO reminded Members of the unique legislative remit of the IFCA, with the NFB encapsulating a balance across social, economic and conservation in accordance with these duties. The CEO discussed the next stages, where the IFCOs will focus on communication, which will include reference to the mutual benefits of the NFB across all sectors that Southern IFCA represent.

Ms L MacCallum asked whether the uniqueness of the NFB was the cause of the delay in the MMO Quality Assurance (QA) process and eventual ratification. The CEO could not expand on the reasons for the delay, however, was aware that there had been significant interest from stakeholders throughout, with direct communications between industry and Defra ongoing during the QA process. The CEO was also aware of previous resource challenges in the MMO legal team. In addition, due to the complexity of the byelaw through its development stages (covering a period of five years), coupled with the district-wide evidence packages which underpin the byelaw, it would be right to assume that thorough scrutiny by the MMO and subsequent Defra will have taken place over a prolonged period of time.

Mr R Stride asked if the ratification could be challenged by industry now that the Byelaw has been signed by the Secretary of State. The CEO responded, that to the best of her knowledge and in accordance with Defra Guidance, the window for public enquiry closes once the Byelaw has been ratified. The CEO reminded Members that stakeholders have a defined period of time to respond to the formal public consultation, where they are able to object to the byelaw. These objections are then considered by the MMO and Defra as part of the wider QA process.

Dr S Cripps reflected on the impact on livelihoods that the Byelaw may bring, discussing the fact that if the NFB hadn't been made, livelihoods would still be impacted via a degradation of the marine environment. Further, Dr S Cripps asked that when officers begin to communicate the news of the byelaw, that, we remind all stakeholders that the point of the byelaw is not to restrict, rather it is part of a wider approach which will enhance industry at the same time as protecting the environment upon which the fisheries depend.

Dr A Jensen discussed the differing approaches to net fishing regulations by other IFCAs, recognising that it may have taken six years at Southern to get to a point of byelaw ratification, but this time was essential in developing solutions which could support and facilitate net fisheries in the district's harbours and estuaries, whilst achieving conservation objectives.

The CEO provided Members with an overview of the current Defra consultations, which form part of the UK Government's proposals for fisheries reform policy, released on the 17th July 2023. The CEO explained the importance of these consultations and provided a user friendly paper to help Members and the wider stakeholder community navigate and be informed so that they can feed into the consultations. The CEO discussed Defra's virtual attendance

following the meeting of the TAC, where more in-depth information on the consultations would be provided.

ITEMS FOR DECISION

8. Bottom Towed Fishing Gear Byelaw 2023

DCO Birchenough provided an overview of Phase 1 of the BTFG Byelaw Review, reminding Members that the Authority had approved the 'making' of the Byelaw on the 8th June 2023. Subsequently a period of formal consultation was held, ending the 28th July 2023.

DCO Birchenough highlighted that the majority of responses were received from the conservation sector (1: letter of support & 6 objections). In addition, two industry responses were received outside of the formal consultation window, DCO Birchenough informed Members that these would be considered under Phase 2. In summary, the objections received considered whole site management versus feature-based management, the extent of the site-specific boundaries, and the evidence based that had been used to develop the draft byelaw.

In consideration of the objections received, DCO Birchenough invited Members to consider whether there was a need to make any subsequent changes to the draft byelaw, prior to consideration by the Executive Sub-Committee, who will be reviewing the letters of objections and draft responses provided by Southern IFCA, prior to consideration by the Authority to submit the Byelaw to the Secretary of State.

Dr A Jensen acknowledged the objections received regarding whole-site management, recognising the widely accepted frustrations associated with feature-based management, and suggested that these objections were taken forward into Phase 2 of the BTFG review, where the Authority will be considering management beyond a feature-based resolution, where socio-economic and environmental matters can be considered in combination.

Dr S Cripps asked for clarification of feature-based management vs. whole site management. In response, Dr A Jensen discussed the rationale underpinning the phased approach, which will allow Southern to achieve the Government deadline of 2024 for management within MPAs (National Site Network Sites), with Phase 2 allowing for a wider review of sensitive habitat management, both within and outside of MPAs, considering what management may be required beyond designated feature-based management, incorporating extensive consultation to incorporate socio-economic as well as conservation evidence.

Ms J Taylor asked whether there would be an opportunity to discuss the area in Studland to Portland where management is not suggested based on the low confidence in the evidence. DCO Birchenough confirmed that she had had in depth discussions with NE in January 2023, where it was agreed that the evidence was not robust enough to support a closure.

Dr S Cripps asked why some protected area boundaries were larger than the location of the designated features. Mr R Stride had asked this question during the MCZ development process and had been informed that the boundaries were drawn to ensure the smallest number of lines. Ms J Taylor defined these areas in question as 'feature fabric', namely those areas of the site which don't include the designated feature.

Dr A Jensen proposed the first recommendation which was seconded by Mr R Stride. All Members were in favour, with the exception of Dr S Cripps and Mr S Kingston-Turner who abstained.

Dr A Jensen proposed the second recommendation which was seconded by Mr R Stride. The Members unanimously supported the proposal.

9. Resolved

- a) On reviewing the feedback from the formal consultation, it is recommended that no amendments are made to the Byelaw or supporting documentation.
- b) That a summary of the TAC discussion is provided to the Executive Sub-Committee in order to inform their subsequent decision to make recommendations to the Authority regarding the submission of the byelaw to the MMO for confirmation by the Secretary of State

10. Black Seabream Management Development

DCO Birchenough provided an overview of the Black Bream Review to date, explaining that this MPA work falls in line with 2024 government deadline for MPA management. This overview included the designation of Black Bream in the following MCZs 1) Purbeck Coast, 2) Poole Rocks 3) Southbourne Rough, as part of the 2019 Tranche 3 MCZ process.

DCO Birchenough guided Members through the summary conclusions from Part A MCZ Assessments, as well as a site-specific evidence package which in combination provided information on the locations of black bream nests and fishing activity locations.

DCO Birchenough discussed the recommendations, namely that the officers draft management principles relevant to the three MCZ's, for consideration and approval by Members at a subsequent working group, with the intention that these outcomes are formally considered alongside the development of draft measures at the November TAC.

Mr R Stride raised his concerns regarding the use of sightings data as robust evidence. Members discussed the abundance of black seabream across the District, and asked why the Conservation Objective was set to recover, questioning its accuracy and asking for clarification of what we are required to protect and to what degree.

Ms J Taylor discussed 'recover targets' as a general management approach, which would have been based on exposure to certain activities and their impacts. She discussed that NE have now provided updated and focussed advice which is supplementary to the Conservation Objectives.

Mr R Stride questioned that if the Conservation Objective of recovery is set because the species is subject to a pressure which might be producing an impact, then by definition we are locked into removing that pressure. If it is not in need of recovery it's already doing ok, it should be maintained, highlighting that we are never going to succeed because we can't recover it if it's already recovered.

Members were in agreement that as part of this review we must fully understand the 'Recover' Conservation Objective, given the importance of this fishery, in particular for sea anglers.

Ms L MacCallum discussed the Fisheries Industry Science Partnership Project (FISP) for tagging Bream and asked whether this data could be introduced into the review.

The recommendations were taken on mutual consent, with all in favour.

11. Resolved

- a) That in accordance with the best available evidence, officers develop a set of draft Management Principles relevant to the three Dorset MCZs, for consideration at a subsequent TAC Working Group.

- b) That the outcomes of this Working Group will inform the development of draft management measures prior to consideration at the November TAC.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

12. Fisheries Management Plans

DCO Birchenough provided an update on the FMPs and reminded Members that a Workshop was being held on the 7th September which would facilitate Members input into the consultation response to Defra.

13. Resolved

That Members note the update

14. Southern IFCA Survey Reports

IFCO Mr D. Parry began by providing an overview of the Southern IFCA Whelk Survey 2023.

Members discussed the challenges of annual data comparisons and the methodologies regarding pot design. IFCO Parry described how the survey was designed to be undertaken at the same time each year, and that it had been considered that there would be differences in pot design, however each set of pots has been adapted to fish in certain conditions and areas of the District and are therefore optimised for capture. Mr R Stride suggested a need to undertake the survey more frequently to achieve a more accurate picture, however acknowledged resource challenges with this approach.

DCO Birchenough recognised the caveats of all survey work, explaining why it was important to try and maintain survey variables where possible, such as timing etc. Whilst recognising this isn't a perfect science, in following a set methodology, repeated each year, mitigation against possible bias could be demonstrated. Additionally, consideration of variables is taken into account when undertaking comparisons in data.

IFCO Ms E. Condie provided an overview of the Southern IFCA Juvenile Fish Surveys 2017 to 2023.

Members asked about data comparisons with previous years across sites and changing methodologies and welcomed the approach to citizen science, where other partners are taking an active role in this survey. In addition, Members asked for the data analysis to be clearer visually for ease of understanding, with a summary considered for all future survey reports where Members and the wider community alike can assess the information in a more user friendly format.

Members thanked both IFCOs for their reports

15. Resolved

That Members note the update

16. Marine Licensing Update

IFCO Ms E. Condie provided a quarterly update on Southern IFCA's input into the marine licensing process since May 2023.

17. Resolved

That Members note the update

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18. Poole Harbour Several Order – Requests to Amend Business Plans

In accordance with Schedule 12A of The Local Government Act 1972, members of the public were excluded during the consideration of this item.

IFCO Ms I Griffiths provided an overview of the matters under consideration. Following discussion amongst the Membership, the recommendations were taken on mutual consent, with all in favour. Mr G Wordsworth was unable to vote due to a pecuniary interest in the matter.

19. Resolved

a) That Members approve the proposed changes to Business Plan 2020-2025 for Lease Bed 3.

b) That Members approve the proposed changes to Business Plan 2020-2025 for Lease Bed 4.

20. Date of Next Meeting

That the next meeting of the TAC will be on the 2nd November 2023 at Southern IFCA, Unit 3 Holes Bay Park, Sterte Avenue West, Poole Dorset BH15 2AA.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 16:37.

Chairman:

Date:

Portland Seed Mussel Fishery Authorisation Application Decision Paper

Report by IFCOs Condie and Griffiths

A. Purpose

Under the Southern IFCA ‘Mussels’ Byelaw, an authorisation may be granted for the removal of mussels under the Minimum Conservation Reference Size (MCRS) of 50mm for the purpose of relaying. An application has been made for an authorisation for 2024 from a vessel which is currently authorised for this activity. This report considers the potential effects of the proposed activity in line with the Authority’s statutory duties and proposes authorisation conditions for 2024.

B. Recommendation(s)

- 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.
- 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.

C. Supporting Documentation for Further Information

- **Annex I:** Test of Likely Significant Effect, Studland to Portland SAC – Mussel Dredge – Mussel Seed Fishery 2024
 - **Annex II:** Draft Authorisation: Southern IFCA Mussels Byelaw
-

1.0 Introduction

- The Authority has issued an authorisation under the Southern IFCA ‘Mussels’ byelaw to allow the removal of mussel under 50mm for the purpose of relaying in relation to the Studland to Portland SAC since 2011, following the designation of the candidate SAC and subsequently the full SAC designation. Fishing activity for mussels in the area to the east of Portland Bill has been taking place since 1991.
- The area of seabed to the east and southeast of Portland Bill, within 6 nautical miles, is a known settlement site for mussels (*Mytilus edulis*) with dense communities forming over areas of rocky and coarse sediment seabed, mostly between 30-50m depth in areas associated with strong currents.
- A large area of the mapped mussel beds falls within the Studland to Portland SAC, designated for Annex 1 reef habitats.
- Since 2022, the Authority has authorised the removal of no more than 1,000 tonnes of mussel from a defined area of seabed east of Portland Bill.

2.0 Summary of Key Points

- The Authority has received a request from the current vessel/skipper authorised under the ‘Mussels’ byelaw for an authorisation to undertake the activity during 2024. As part of this request, the applicant asked the Authority to consider whether the activity would be able to

take place over a wider area than under the 2023 authorisation (the area in which activity can take place is spatially defined under the 2023 authorisation) and within the boundary of the Studland to Portland SAC due to the presence of mussels in this site.

- The Authority, as a Competent Authority under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 (referred to jointly as the “Conservation Regulations”) is required to undertake a Habitats Regulations Assessment for activities which have the potential to damage, disturb or have an adverse effect on features within or adjacent to an SAC.
- A Test of Likely Significant Effect (Annex 1) has been carried out on the proposed activity and has concluded that there is not likely to be a significant effect on the Studland to Portland SAC. This conclusion is partly based on consideration of the following:
 - Whilst activity would have the potential to occur in two small areas of the SAC (see Figure 1, p. 5 of Annex I), these are areas which have been subject to a separate Habitats Regulations Assessment for all types of bottom towed fishing gear (BTFG). Assessments on the reef features of this site have been carried out since 2013 with all mapped designated features within the site, including buffer zones in line with JNCC/NE buffer guidance (of 106m), having received protection through prohibited areas for BTFG under the BTFG Byelaw, BTFG Byelaw 2016 and under the proposed BTFG Byelaw 2023.
 - The most recent assessment of the designated features, carried out in 2020 utilising the best available evidence base provided by Natural England which, to date remains the best available evidence base, concludes that the current prohibited area under the BTFG Byelaw 2016 protects all designated features and associated buffers.
 - On the basis of this existing protection, with the vessel under the authorisation being required to comply with all other Southern IFCA legislation, the activity of mussel dredging as a form of BTFG was screened out at the TLSE stage therefore a specific Appropriate Assessment is not required.
- It is recommended that the authorisation for 2024 does not need to include spatial restrictions as, outside of areas closed under the BTFG Byelaw 2016, there is no risk to the SAC. Without specific spatial restrictions, the vessel undertaking mussel dredging would only be accessing areas which are open to all other types of BTFG.

3.0 Key Considerations

- On the basis of the outcomes of the TLSE it is recommended that the authorisation for 2024 (1st January to 31st December) under the ‘Mussels’ byelaw contains the provisions as listed in Annex II to this report.
- It is proposed that a new authorisation condition be added, condition (vii) in Annex II, to require the applicant to provide catch and fishing effort data to the Southern IFCA to aid in monitoring compliance with the TAC for mussel fishing (condition (iii) in Annex II) throughout the season and to provide information to aid understanding of the operation of this fishery in relation to the areas of the SAC which are not closed to BTFG and in general, in case this information should be required to inform the issuing of any future authorisations.

4.0 Next Steps

- The TLSE has been submitted to Natural England for Formal Advice
- Following receipt of this Advice, subject to there being no substantial changes required, it is proposed that the authorisation for 2024 be issued ahead of the 1st January 2024

Document Control

Title	Studland to Portland SAC – Mussel Dredge - Mussel Seed Fishery 2024
SIFCA Reference	SIFCA/TSLE_PP/2024PPMusselDredge
Author	Emily Condie & Sarah Birchenough
Approver	
Owner	Southern IFCA
Template Used	TLSE Template Plan/Project v1.3

Revision History

Date	Author	Version	Status	Reason	Approver(s)
20/10/2023	E Condie	1.0	Initial Draft		S Birchenough

This document has been distributed for information and comment to:

Title	Name	Date sent	Comments received
Senior Advisor	Dr Richard Morgan	24 th October 2023	

Southern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (IFCA)

Habitats Regulations Assessment for Plans/Projects

European Marine Site: Studland to Portland Special Area of Conservation

Plan/Project: Mussel Dredge - Portland Mussel Seed

Feature: Reefs

Sub-feature(s): Infralittoral Rock, Subtidal stony reef, Circalittoral Rock

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1. Portland Mussel Seed Fishery

Activity

The purpose of the proposed activity is to remove commercial quantities of seed mussel (*Mytilus edulis*) from the fishery, for relaying in aquaculture operations, with no adverse effect to the designated features of the Studland to Portland Special Area of Conservation (SAC). Fishing for seed mussel within the Southern IFCA District may only take place with the Authority's consent as detailed in the Southern IFCA 'Mussels' byelaw¹.

The area of seabed to the east and southeast of Portland Bill, within 6 nautical miles, is a known settlement site for mussels (*Mytilus edulis*). In this location mussels form dense communities over areas of rocky and coarse sediment seabed, mostly between 30 and 50 metres water depth, in areas associated with strong currents. The area has historically been subject to mussel dredging activity. Much of the mussel bed area falls within the Studland to Portland Special Area of Conservation (SAC), designated for Annex I reef habitats. Mussel beds are referenced as being associated with bedrock in the infralittoral zones east of Portland Bill but are not a designated feature of the site. The proposed mussel seed collection activity falls primarily outside of the designated SAC boundary however the areas within the SAC where activity is proposed to be allowed to take place are outside of areas determined to require closure to bottom towed fishing gear (BTFG) including buffer zones.

Seed mussels (*Mytilus edulis*) are removed from the fishery using steel framed dredges with a mesh collection bag, operated from a vessel, as defined in Southern IFCA 'Fishing for oysters, mussels and clams' byelaw². The dredging will be carried out by the fishing vessel (F/V) Nicola L (WY37), a historic participant vessel in the fishery. Fishing usually commences towards the end of a tide and over slack water. Each dredge tow lasts between 2 and 4 minutes and covers approximately 100 meters. On each fishing trip an average of 8 tows are completed with approximately 8 tons of mussel seed harvested.

From the 2022 Authorisation onwards, the total allowable catch (TAC) was raised to 1000 tonnes (from 500 tonnes) in order to support year-round laying and harvesting of mussels from the area outside the SAC. To end of September 2023 (data only available to this date at this time) 772.5 tonne of mussel has been removed under the 2023 authorisation (MMO, 2023).

¹ Southern IFCA Mussels Byelaw - [Mussels.pdf \(toolkitfiles.co.uk\)](#)

² Southern IFCA Fishing for Oysters, Mussels and Clams Byelaw - [Fishing-for-Oysters-Mussels-and-Clams.pdf \(toolkitfiles.co.uk\)](#)

2. 2024 Authorisation

Subject to the following conditions, it is proposed that F/V Nicola L (WY37) is authorised to remove seed mussel until 31st December 2024:

- i. A total of no more than 1,000 tonnes of mussel are removed during the period for which this authorisation is valid;
- ii. All mussels landed are relayed for a minimum of 6 months on a Several Fishery lay within Poole Harbour;
- iii. Whilst fishing for mussels, the vessel is fitted with an operational VMS unit;
- iv. The Southern IFCA Office is notified by telephone no less than 12 hours and during office hours (0900-1700) prior to daily mussel fishing operations;
- v. For each month that the authorisation applies, a catch return must be submitted to the Authority, no later than the 14th day of the following month, detailing the following:
 - a. The days fished;
 - b. The time spent fishing each day;
 - c. The latitude and longitude of the start and end position of the first tow of the day;
 - d. The latitude and longitude of the start and end position of the last tow of the day; and
 - e. The quantity, in kilograms, of mussels landed each day.
- vi. Based on provision of new evidence, the Authority retains the right to alter or suspend this permission.

Authorised Area

To protect the SAC from any potential effects caused by mussel dredging it is proposed that mussel dredging activity be excluded from the area of the SAC closed to bottom towed fishing gear (BTFG) (Figure 2). This area has been subject to assessment since 2013 under the BTFG Byelaw and the BTFG Byelaw 2016. The most up to date assessment of this area is contained within the Southern IFCA 'HRA – Bottom Towed Fishing Gear Review 2020 – Reefs' and outlines that, based on the current best available evidence used to inform the review, namely the Natural England evidence base on feature extent and location provided to Southern IFCA in 2020, all designated features of the site are included within existing BTFG closed areas and those proposed under the BTFG Byelaw 2023.

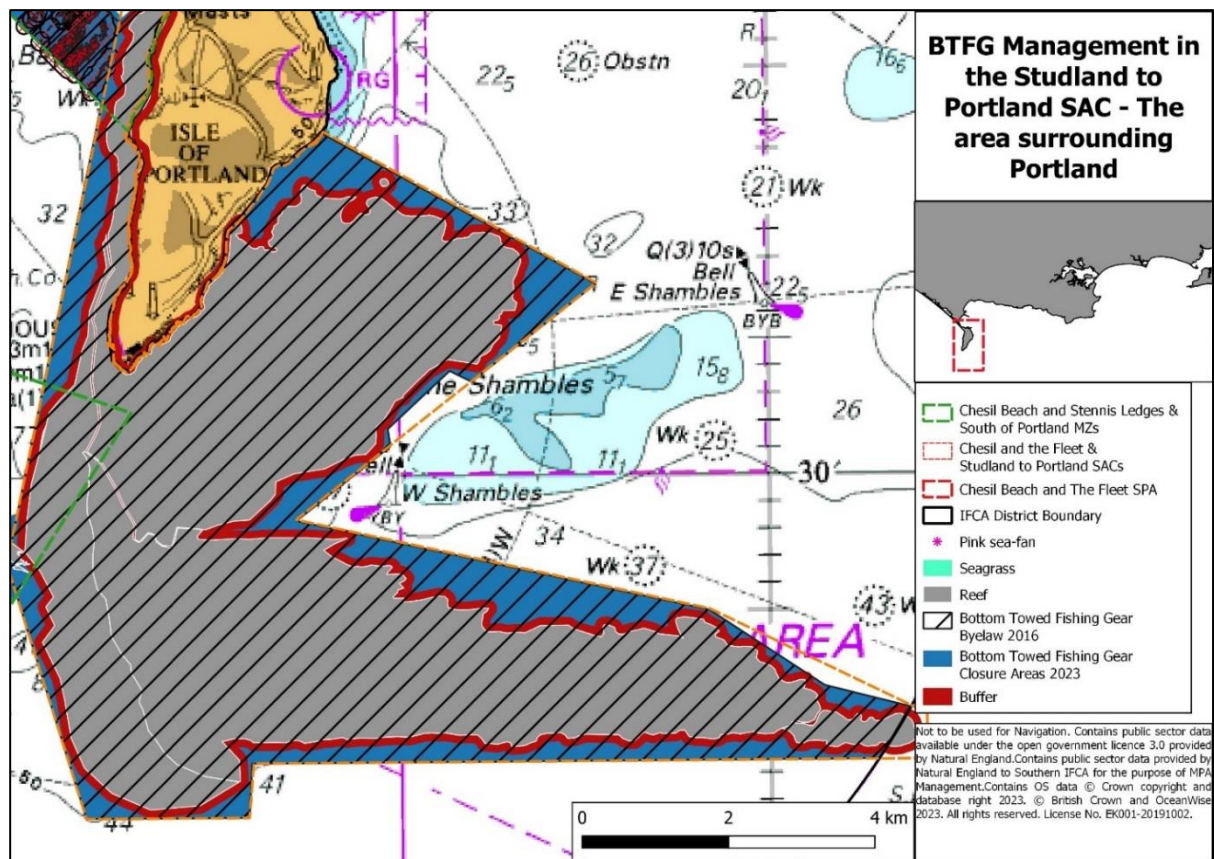


Figure 1. The boundary of the Studland to Portland SAC (orange dashed) showing the designated reef features (grey) surrounded by a 106m wide buffer (red). Also shown is the current closure area under the BTFG Byelaw 2016 (black hashed) and the proposed closure area under the BTFG Byelaw 2023 (blue).

The features protected by BTFG closed areas also incorporate a buffer zone, calculated using JNCC/NE buffer guidance. In shallow waters ($\leq 25\text{m}$) the buffer applied equals 4 x actual depth of water. In deeper waters (25-200m) the buffer applied equals 3 x actual depth of water³. For the reef features in this site this results in a 106m buffer being applied.

3. Test for Likely Significant Effect

A Test for Likely Significant Effect (TLSE) has been carried out for mussel fishing in the Studland to Portland SAC in accordance with the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017⁴ and the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019⁵ (referred to jointly in this document as the “Conservation Regulations”), See Table 1. This has been produced using Natural England’s Conservation Advice Package for Studland to Portland SAC, specifically the Advice on Operations (AoO) component. The AoO lists ‘dredging’ as the most comparable fishing gear type, this is the same AoO category that has been used in all BTFG assessments for the Studland to Portland SAC through reviews of BTFG management.

The test has indicated that, on the basis of the 2020 assessment carried out for all types of BTFG in the Studland to Portland SAC and the management of BTFG through the BTFG Byelaw 2016 (and the proposed maintenance of this management under the BTFG Byelaw 2023), all effects can be screened out and therefore no further assessment is required for the Portland Seed Mussel Fishery Authorisation.

Table 1. The Test for Likely Significant effects for the Portland Seed Mussel Fishery.						
1. Is the activity/activities directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site for nature conservation?					No	
2. Is the feature(s)/sub-features(s) likely to be exposed to the pressure(s) identified and What potential pressures exerted by the gear type(s) are likely to affect the feature(s)/sub-feature(s)?						
	Sensitivity - Infralittoral Rock		Sensitivity - Subtidal stony reef		Sensitivity - Circalittoral Rock	
Abrasion/disturbance of the substrate on the surface of the seabed	<u>S</u>	OUT - whilst activity may occur within small areas of the SAC, these are areas which have been subject to assessment for BTFG in relation to designated features and determined not to require management due to the absence of any designated feature. All designated	<u>S</u>	OUT - whilst activity may occur within small areas of the SAC, these are areas which have been subject to assessment for BTFG in relation to designated features and determined not to require management due to the absence of any designated feature. All designated	<u>S</u>	OUT - whilst activity may occur within small areas of the SAC, these are areas which have been subject to assessment for BTFG in relation to designated features and determined not to require management due to the absence of any designated feature. All

³ Natural England advice on the use of margins and buffers in protecting MPA features from the effects of fishing activities, 2015.

⁴ [The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

⁵ [The Conservation of Habitats and Species \(Amendment\) \(EU Exit\) Regulations 2019 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

		<p>features within the entirety of the site including buffer zones in line with JNCC/NE buffer guidance are protected from BTFG through the BTFG Byelaw 2016 and these closures are proposed to be maintained through the BTFG Byelaw 2023 which is currently with the MMO for QA. Therefore, there will not be any significant abrasion/disturbance to infralittoral rock.</p> <p>Based on the BTFG management in place in the District, the small areas of the SAC where mussel dredging would be able to occur are areas where any other type of BTFG can currently occur.</p>		<p>features within the entirety of the site including buffer zones in line with JNCC/NE buffer guidance are protected from BTFG through the BTFG Byelaw 2016 and these closures are proposed to be maintained through the BTFG Byelaw 2023 which is currently with the MMO for QA. Therefore, there will not be any significant abrasion/disturbance to subtidal stony reef.</p> <p>Based on the BTFG management in place in the District, the small areas of the SAC where mussel dredging would be able to occur are areas where any other type of BTFG can currently occur.</p>		<p>designated features within the entirety of the site including buffer zones in line with JNCC/NE buffer guidance are protected from BTFG through the BTFG Byelaw 2016 and these closures are proposed to be maintained through the BTFG Byelaw 2023 which is currently with the MMO for QA. Therefore, there will not be any significant abrasion/disturbance to circalittoral rock.</p> <p>Based on the BTFG management in place in the District, the small areas of the SAC where mussel dredging would be able to occur are areas where any other type of BTFG can currently occur.</p>
<p>Changes in suspended solids (water clarity)</p>	<p><u>S</u></p>	<p>OUT - whilst activity may occur within small areas of the SAC, these are areas which have been subject to assessment for BTFG in relation to designated features and determined not to require management due to the absence of any designated feature. All designated features within the entirety of the site including buffer zones in line with JNCC/NE buffer guidance are protected from BTFG through the BTFG Byelaw 2016 and these closures are proposed to be maintained through the BTFG Byelaw 2023 which is currently with the MMO for QA. Therefore, there will not be any changes in suspended solids that will cause significant impact to infralittoral rock.</p>	<p><u>S</u></p>	<p>OUT - whilst activity may occur within small areas of the SAC, these are areas which have been subject to assessment for BTFG in relation to designated features and determined not to require management due to the absence of any designated feature. All designated features within the entirety of the site including buffer zones in line with JNCC/NE buffer guidance are protected from BTFG through the BTFG Byelaw 2016 and these closures are proposed to be maintained through the BTFG Byelaw 2023 which is currently with the MMO for QA. Therefore, there will not be any changes in suspended solids that will cause significant impact to subtidal stony reef.</p>	<p><u>S</u></p>	<p>OUT - whilst activity may occur within small areas of the SAC, these are areas which have been subject to assessment for BTFG in relation to designated features and determined not to require management due to the absence of any designated feature. All designated features within the entirety of the site including buffer zones in line with JNCC/NE buffer guidance are protected from BTFG through the BTFG Byelaw 2016 and these closures are proposed to be maintained through the BTFG Byelaw 2023 which is currently with the MMO for QA. Therefore, there will not be any changes in suspended solids that will cause significant impact to subtidal circalittoral rock.</p>

		Based on the BTFG management in place in the District, the small areas of the SAC where mussel dredging would be able to occur are areas where any other type of BTFG can currently occur.		Based on the BTFG management in place in the District, the small areas of the SAC where mussel dredging would be able to occur are areas where any other type of BTFG can currently occur.		Based on the BTFG management in place in the District, the small areas of the SAC where mussel dredging would be able to occur are areas where any other type of BTFG can currently occur.
Penetration and/or disturbance of the substratum below the surface of the seabed, including abrasion	S	<p>OUT - whilst activity may occur within small areas of the SAC, these are areas which have been subject to assessment for BTFG in relation to designated features and determined not to require management due to the absence of any designated feature. All designated features within the entirety of the site including buffer zones in line with JNCC/NE buffer guidance are protected from BTFG through the BTFG Byelaw 2016 and these closures are proposed to be maintained through the BTFG Byelaw 2023 which is currently with the MMO for QA. Therefore, there will not be a significant penetration/disturbance to infralittoral rock.</p> <p>Based on the BTFG management in place in the District, the small areas of the SAC where mussel dredging would be able to occur are areas where any other type of BTFG can currently occur.</p>	S	<p>OUT - whilst activity may occur within small areas of the SAC, these are areas which have been subject to assessment for BTFG in relation to designated features and determined not to require management due to the absence of any designated feature. All designated features within the entirety of the site including buffer zones in line with JNCC/NE buffer guidance are protected from BTFG through the BTFG Byelaw 2016 and these closures are proposed to be maintained through the BTFG Byelaw 2023 which is currently with the MMO for QA. Therefore, there will not be a significant penetration/disturbance to subtidal stony reef.</p> <p>Based on the BTFG management in place in the District, the small areas of the SAC where mussel dredging would be able to occur are areas where any other type of BTFG can currently occur.</p>	S	<p>OUT - whilst activity may occur within small areas of the SAC, these are areas which have been subject to assessment for BTFG in relation to designated features and determined not to require management due to the absence of any designated feature. All designated features within the entirety of the site including buffer zones in line with JNCC/NE buffer guidance are protected from BTFG through the BTFG Byelaw 2016 and these closures are proposed to be maintained through the BTFG Byelaw 2023 which is currently with the MMO for QA. Therefore, there will not be a significant penetration/disturbance to circalittoral rock.</p> <p>Based on the BTFG management in place in the District, the small areas of the SAC where mussel dredging would be able to occur are areas where any other type of BTFG can currently occur.</p>
Removal of non-target species	S	OUT - whilst activity may occur within small areas of the SAC, these are areas which have been subject to assessment for BTFG in relation to designated features and determined not to require management due to the absence of any	S	OUT - whilst activity may occur within small areas of the SAC, these are areas which have been subject to assessment for BTFG in relation to designated features and determined not to require management due to the absence of any	S	OUT - whilst activity may occur within small areas of the SAC, these are areas which have been subject to assessment for BTFG in relation to designated features and determined not to require management due to the

		<p>designated feature. All designated features within the entirety of the site including buffer zones in line with JNCC/NE buffer guidance are protected from BTFG through the BTFG Byelaw 2016 and these closures are proposed to be maintained through the BTFG Byelaw 2023 which is currently with the MMO for QA. Therefore, there will not be a significant removal of any species in designated infralittoral rock.</p> <p>Based on the BTFG management in place in the District, the small areas of the SAC where mussel dredging would be able to occur are areas where any other type of BTFG can currently occur.</p>	<p>designated feature. All designated features within the entirety of the site including buffer zones in line with JNCC/NE buffer guidance are protected from BTFG through the BTFG Byelaw 2016 and these closures are proposed to be maintained through the BTFG Byelaw 2023 which is currently with the MMO for QA. Therefore, there will not be a significant removal of any species in designated subtidal stony reef.</p> <p>Based on the BTFG management in place in the District, the small areas of the SAC where mussel dredging would be able to occur are areas where any other type of BTFG can currently occur.</p>	<p>absence of any designated feature. All designated features within the entirety of the site including buffer zones in line with JNCC/NE buffer guidance are protected from BTFG through the BTFG Byelaw 2016 and these closures are proposed to be maintained through the BTFG Byelaw 2023 which is currently with the MMO for QA. Therefore, there will not be a significant removal of any species in designated circalittoral rock.</p> <p>Based on the BTFG management in place in the District, the small areas of the SAC where mussel dredging would be able to occur are areas where any other type of BTFG can currently occur.</p>
<p>Removal of target species</p>	<p><u>S</u></p>	<p>OUT - whilst activity may occur within small areas of the SAC, these are areas which have been subject to assessment for BTFG in relation to designated features and determined not to require management due to the absence of any designated feature. All designated features within the entirety of the site including buffer zones in line with JNCC/NE buffer guidance are protected from BTFG through the BTFG Byelaw 2016 and these closures are proposed to be maintained through the BTFG Byelaw 2023 which is currently with the MMO for QA. Furthermore, Portland Mussel is not a designated feature of the Studland to Portland SAC.</p>	<p>OUT - whilst activity may occur within small areas of the SAC, these are areas which have been subject to assessment for BTFG in relation to designated features and determined not to require management due to the absence of any designated feature. All designated features within the entirety of the site including buffer zones in line with JNCC/NE buffer guidance are protected from BTFG through the BTFG Byelaw 2016 and these closures are proposed to be maintained through the BTFG Byelaw 2023 which is currently with the MMO for QA. Furthermore, Portland Mussel is not a designated feature of the Studland to Portland SAC.</p>	<p><u>S</u></p> <p>OUT - whilst activity may occur within small areas of the SAC, these are areas which have been subject to assessment for BTFG in relation to designated features and determined not to require management due to the absence of any designated feature. All designated features within the entirety of the site including buffer zones in line with JNCC/NE buffer guidance are protected from BTFG through the BTFG Byelaw 2016 and these closures are proposed to be maintained through the BTFG Byelaw 2023 which is currently with the MMO for QA. Furthermore, Portland Mussel is not a designated feature of the Studland to Portland SAC.</p>

		<p>Based on the BTFG management in place in the District, the small areas of the SAC where mussel dredging would be able to occur are areas where any other type of BTFG can currently occur.</p> <p>Therefore, there will not be a significant removal of any species in designated infralittoral rock.</p>		<p>Based on the BTFG management in place in the District, the small areas of the SAC where mussel dredging would be able to occur are areas where any other type of BTFG can currently occur.</p> <p>Therefore, there will not be a significant removal of any species in designated subtidal stony reef.</p>	<p>Therefore, there will not be a significant removal of any species in designated circalittoral rock.</p> <p>Based on the BTFG management in place in the District, the small areas of the SAC where mussel dredging would be able to occur are areas where any other type of BTFG can currently occur.</p>
<p>Smothering and siltation rate changes (Light)</p>	<p>S</p>	<p>OUT – The dredging for mussels occurs on sediments which will not release significant quantities of silt into the water column as these sediments have a very low silt content due to high tidal velocities in the area (Collins, 2018). Activity may occur within small areas of the SAC, these are areas which have been subject to assessment for BTFG in relation to designated features and determined not to require management due to the absence of any designated feature. The consideration of the required area for management of these features included consideration of potential smothering and siltation rate changes.</p> <p>All designated features within the entirety of the site including buffer zones in line with JNCC/NE buffer guidance are protected from BTFG and the associated effects of smothering through the BTFG Byelaw 2016 and these closures are proposed to be maintained through the BTFG Byelaw 2023 which is currently with the MMO for QA.</p>	<p>S</p>	<p>OUT - The dredging for mussels occurs on sediments which will not release significant quantities of silt into the water column as these sediments have a very low silt content due to high tidal velocities in the area (Collins, 2018). Activity may occur within small areas of the SAC, these are areas which have been subject to assessment for BTFG in relation to designated features and determined not to require management due to the absence of any designated feature. The consideration of the required area for management of these features included consideration of potential smothering and siltation rate changes.</p> <p>All designated features within the entirety of the site including buffer zones in line with JNCC/NE buffer guidance are protected from BTFG and the associated effects of smothering through the BTFG Byelaw 2016 and these closures are proposed to be maintained through the BTFG Byelaw 2023 which is currently with the MMO for QA.</p>	<p>S</p> <p>OUT - The dredging for mussels occurs on sediments which will not release significant quantities of silt into the water column as these sediments have a very low silt content due to high tidal velocities in the area (Collins, 2018). Activity may occur within small areas of the SAC, these are areas which have been subject to assessment for BTFG in relation to designated features and determined not to require management due to the absence of any designated feature. The consideration of the required area for management of these features included consideration of potential smothering and siltation rate changes.</p> <p>All designated features within the entirety of the site including buffer zones in line with JNCC/NE buffer guidance are protected from BTFG and the associated effects of smothering through the BTFG Byelaw 2016 and these closures are proposed to be maintained through the BTFG</p>

		<p>Furthermore, due to the high tidal velocities sand mobilisation will be common, therefore habitats and species within the area will likely be adapted to cope with this pressure. Therefore, there will not be a significant effect to changes in light in the SAC as a result of mussel dredging.</p> <p>Based on the BTFG management in place in the District, the small areas of the SAC where mussel dredging would be able to occur are areas where any other type of BTFG can currently occur.</p>		<p>Furthermore, due to the high tidal velocities sand mobilisation will be common, therefore habitats and species within the area will likely be adapted to cope with this pressure. Therefore, there will not be a significant effect to changes in light in the SAC as a result of mussel dredging.</p> <p>Based on the BTFG management in place in the District, the small areas of the SAC where mussel dredging would be able to occur are areas where any other type of BTFG can currently occur.</p>		<p>Byelaw 2023 which is currently with the MMO for QA.</p> <p>Furthermore, due to the high tidal velocities sand mobilisation will be common, therefore habitats and species within the area will likely be adapted to cope with this pressure. Therefore, there will not be a significant effect to changes in light in the SAC as a result of mussel dredging.</p> <p>Based on the BTFG management in place in the District, the small areas of the SAC where mussel dredging would be able to occur are areas where any other type of BTFG can currently occur.</p>
Visual disturbance	NS	The feature is not sensitive to the pressure.	NS	The feature is not sensitive to the pressure.	NS	The feature is not sensitive to the pressure.
Deoxygenation	S	<p>OUT - Portland mussel dredging will occur in shell, sand, gravel, cobble and rock habitat (outside of designated features which are afforded protection through the BTFG Byelaw 2016). Therefore, the dredging for mussels will not release significant quantities of suspended solids/ silt/ bacteria into the water column as these sediments have a very low silt/organic matter content due to high tidal velocities in the area (Collins, 2018). Therefore, there will not be a significant effect of deoxygenation into the water column.</p>	S	<p>OUT - Portland mussel dredging will occur in shell, sand, gravel, cobble and rock habitat (outside of designated features which are afforded protection through the BTFG Byelaw 2016). Therefore, the dredging for mussels will not release significant quantities of suspended solids/ silt/ bacteria into the water column as these sediments have a very low silt/organic matter content due to high tidal velocities in the area (Collins, 2018). Therefore, there will not be a significant effect of deoxygenation into the water column.</p>	S	<p>OUT - Portland mussel dredging will occur in shell, sand, gravel, cobble and rock habitat (outside of designated features which are afforded protection through the BTFG Byelaw 2016). Therefore, the dredging for mussels will not release significant quantities of suspended solids/ silt/ bacteria into the water column as these sediments have a very low silt/organic matter content due to high tidal velocities in the area (Collins, 2018). Therefore, there will not be a significant effect of deoxygenation into the water column.</p>

Hydrocarbon & PAH contamination	NA	OUT – Mussel dredging is unlikely to lead to any release of hydrocarbon & PAH contamination from the vessel or sediments. Therefore, there will not be a significant effect on the SAC.	NA	OUT – Mussel dredging is unlikely to lead to any release of hydrocarbon & PAH contamination from the vessel or sediments. Therefore, there will not be a significant effect on the SAC.	NA	OUT – Mussel dredging is unlikely to lead to any release of hydrocarbon & PAH contamination from the vessel or sediments. Therefore, there will not be a significant effect on the SAC.
Introduction of light	S	OUT - Portland Mussel dredging activity may occur in small areas of the Studland to Portland SAC during daylight hours. Equipment located within the water column does not require lighting, whilst one boat will not produce significant amounts of additional light. Therefore, there will not be a significant effect on light within the SAC.	S	OUT - Portland Mussel dredging activity may occur in small areas of the Studland to Portland SAC during daylight hours. Equipment located within the water column does not require lighting, whilst one boat will not produce significant amounts of additional light. Therefore, there will not be a significant effect on light within the SAC.	IE	OUT - Portland Mussel dredging activity may occur in small areas of the Studland to Portland SAC during daylight hours. Equipment located within the water column does not require lighting, whilst one boat will not produce significant amounts of additional light. Therefore, there will not be a significant effect on light within the SAC.
Introduction of microbial pathogens	S	OUT - Portland mussel dredging will occur only within the local area, by a local vessel so it is not likely that there will be an introduction of microbial pathogens. Therefore, there is unlikely to be a significant effect to the designated SAC.	S	OUT - Portland mussel dredging will occur only within the local area, by a local vessel so it is not likely that there will be an introduction of microbial pathogens. Therefore, there is unlikely to be a significant effect to the designated SAC.	S	OUT - Portland mussel dredging will occur only within the local area, by a local vessel so it is not likely that there will be an introduction of microbial pathogens. Therefore, there is unlikely to be a significant effect to the designated SAC.
Introduction or spread of invasive non-indigenous species (INIS)	S	OUT - Portland mussel dredging will occur only within the local area so it is not likely that there will be an introduction/spread of invasive non-indigenous species. Therefore, there is unlikely to be a significant effect to the SAC.	S	OUT - Portland mussel dredging will occur only within the local area so it is not likely that there will be an introduction/spread of invasive non-indigenous species. Therefore, there is unlikely to be a significant effect to the SAC.	S	OUT - Portland mussel dredging will occur only within the local area so it is not likely that there will be an introduction/spread of invasive non-indigenous species. Therefore, there is unlikely to be a significant effect to the SAC.
Litter	NA	OUT – Mussel dredging does not lead to marine litter as the dredged remains always attached to the vessel. Therefore, there is unlikely to be a significant effect to the SAC.	NA	OUT – Mussel dredging does not lead to marine litter as the dredged remains always attached to the vessel. Therefore, there is unlikely to be a significant effect to the SAC.	NA	OUT – Mussel dredging does not lead to marine litter as the dredged remains always attached to the vessel. Therefore, there is unlikely to be a significant effect to the SAC.

Nutrient enrichment	<u>NS</u>	OUT - Portland mussel dredging will occur in shell, sand, gravel, cobble and rock habitat (outside of designated features which are afforded protection through the BTFG Byelaw 2016). Therefore, the dredging for mussels will not release significant quantities of nutrients into the water column as these sediments have a very low silt content/organism diversity due to high tidal velocities in the area (Collins, 2018). Therefore, there will not be a significant effect of organic enrichment into the water column in the SAC.	<u>NS</u>	OUT - Portland mussel dredging will occur in shell, sand, gravel, cobble and rock habitat (outside of designated features which are afforded protection through the BTFG Byelaw 2016). Therefore, the dredging for mussels will not release significant quantities of nutrients into the water column as these sediments have a very low silt content/organism diversity due to high tidal velocities in the area (Collins, 2018). Therefore, there will not be a significant effect of organic enrichment into the water column in the SAC.	<u>NS</u>	OUT - Portland mussel dredging will occur in shell, sand, gravel, cobble and rock habitat (outside of designated features which are afforded protection through the BTFG Byelaw 2016). Therefore, the dredging for mussels will not release significant quantities of nutrients into the water column as these sediments have a very low silt content/organism diversity due to high tidal velocities in the area (Collins, 2018). Therefore, there will not be a significant effect of organic enrichment into the water column in the SAC.
Organic enrichment	<u>S</u>	OUT - Portland mussel dredging will occur in shell, sand, gravel, cobble and rock habitat (outside of designated features which are afforded protection through the BTFG Byelaw 2016). Therefore, the dredging for mussels will not release significant quantities of organics into the water column as these sediments have a very low silt content/organism diversity due to high tidal velocities in the area (Collins, 2018). Therefore, there will not be a significant effect of organic enrichment into the water column in the SAC.	<u>S</u>	OUT - Portland mussel dredging will occur in shell, sand, gravel, cobble and rock habitat (outside of designated features which are afforded protection through the BTFG Byelaw 2016). Therefore, the dredging for mussels will not release significant quantities of organics into the water column as these sediments have a very low silt content/organism diversity due to high tidal velocities in the area (Collins, 2018). Therefore, there will not be a significant effect of organic enrichment into the water column in the SAC.	<u>S</u>	OUT - Portland mussel dredging will occur in shell, sand, gravel, cobble and rock habitat (outside of designated features which are afforded protection through the BTFG Byelaw 2016). Therefore, the dredging for mussels will not release significant quantities of organics into the water column as these sediments have a very low silt content/organism diversity due to high tidal velocities in the area (Collins, 2018). Therefore, there will not be a significant effect of organic enrichment into the water column in the SAC.
Physical change (to another seabed type)	<u>S</u>	OUT - whilst activity may occur within small areas of the SAC, these are areas which have been subject to assessment for BTFG in relation to designated features and determined not to require management due to the absence of any designated feature. All designated features within the entirety of the site	<u>S</u>	OUT - whilst activity may occur within small areas of the SAC, these are areas which have been subject to assessment for BTFG in relation to designated features and determined not to require management due to the absence of any designated feature. All designated features within the entirety of the site	<u>S</u>	OUT - whilst activity may occur within small areas of the SAC, these are areas which have been subject to assessment for BTFG in relation to designated features and determined not to require management due to the absence of any designated feature. All designated features within the entirety of the site

		<p>including buffer zones in line with JNCC/NE buffer guidance are protected from BTFG at all times through the BTFG Byelaw 2016 and these closures are proposed to be maintained through the BTFG Byelaw 2023 which is currently with the MMO for QA. Past surveys of historically mussel dredge sites within the candidate SAC(cSAC) now designated, showed that there was little evidence of dredge scars within the mussel beds which had been previously fished and therefore either the dredges were not 100% efficient at removing the mussel beds or they recovered quickly i.e. within three months (Southern IFCA, 2013).</p> <p>Based on the BTFG management in place in the District, the small areas of the SAC where mussel dredging would be able to occur are areas where any other type of BTFG can currently occur.</p>		<p>including buffer zones in line with JNCC/NE buffer guidance are protected from BTFG at all times through the BTFG Byelaw 2016 and these closures are proposed to be maintained through the BTFG Byelaw 2023 which is currently with the MMO for QA. Past surveys of historically mussel dredge sites within the cSAC now designated, showed that there was little evidence of dredge scars within the mussel beds which had been previously fished and therefore either the dredges were not 100% efficient at removing the mussel beds or they recovered quickly i.e. within three months (Southern IFCA, 2013).</p> <p>Based on the BTFG management in place in the District, the small areas of the SAC where mussel dredging would be able to occur are areas where any other type of BTFG can currently occur.</p>		<p>of the site including buffer zones in line with JNCC/NE buffer guidance are protected from BTFG at all times through the BTFG Byelaw 2016 and these closures are proposed to be maintained through the BTFG Byelaw 2023 which is currently with the MMO for QA. Past surveys of historically mussel dredge sites within the cSAC now designated, showed that there was little evidence of dredge scars within the mussel beds which had been previously fished and therefore either the dredges were not 100% efficient at removing the mussel beds or they recovered quickly i.e. within three months (Southern IFCA, 2013).</p> <p>Based on the BTFG management in place in the District, the small areas of the SAC where mussel dredging would be able to occur are areas where any other type of BTFG can currently occur.</p>
Synthetic compound contamination (incl. pesticides, antifoulants, pharmaceuticals)	NA	<p>OUT – Mussel dredging is unlikely to lead to any release of synthetic compounds from the vessel or sediments. Therefore, there will not be a significant effect on the SAC.</p>	NA	<p>OUT – Mussel dredging is unlikely to lead to any release of synthetic compounds from the vessel or sediments. Therefore, there will not be a significant effect on the SAC.</p>	NA	<p>OUT – Mussel dredging is unlikely to lead to any release of synthetic compounds from the vessel or sediments. Therefore, there will not be a significant effect on the SAC.</p>
Transition elements & organo-metal (e.g., TBT) contamination	NA	<p>OUT – Mussel dredging is unlikely to lead to any release of transition elements & organo-metal from the vessel or sediments. Therefore, there will not be a significant effect on the SAC.</p>	NA	<p>OUT – Mussel dredging is unlikely to lead to any release of transition elements & organo-metal from the vessel or sediments. Therefore, there will not be a significant effect on the SAC.</p>	NA	<p>OUT – Mussel dredging is unlikely to lead to any release of transition elements & organo-metal from the vessel or sediments. Therefore, there will not be a significant effect on the SAC.</p>

Underwater noise changes		The feature is not sensitive to the pressure.	NS	The feature is not sensitive to the pressure.	NS	The feature is not sensitive to the pressure.
3. What key attributes and conservation objectives of the site are likely to be affected by the identified pressure(s)?					None	
4. Potential scale of pressures and mechanisms of effect/impact (if known)					None	
5. Is the potential scale or magnitude of any effect likely to be significant?		Alone No	In-Combination No foreseen in combination effects, all types of BTFG have been assessed and managed through the BTFG Byelaw 2016.			
6. Have NE been consulted on this LSE? If yes, what was NE's advice?					The TLSE has been submitted to Natural England for Formal Comment.	

4. References

Collins. K., 2018. Preliminary survey of the Portland/Shambles mussel dredging grounds September 2018. Ocean and Earth science, University of Southampton

MMO, 2023. Landings data for WY37 Nicola L provided under a Freedom of Information Act 2000 request for the purpose of reviewing mussel dredging activity under the Southern IFCA 'Mussels' byelaw authorisation, provided on 20th October 2023.

Southern IFCA, 2013. Studland to Portland candidate Special Area of Conservation (cSAC) Appropriate Assessment Mussel Seed Fishery 2014.

AUTHORISATION: SOUTHERN IFCA MUSSELS BYELAW

Under the provisions of the Southern IFCA Mussels Byelaw I, Pia Bateman, Chief Executive Officer of Southern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority, hereby authorise (applicant's details to be added) to remove mussels less than 50mm from the Southern IFCA District, subject to the following conditions:

- i. Mussel removal shall be by and from the fishing vessel Nicola L. WY37;
- ii. The authorisation is not transferable to another vessel or another person and the authorized person shall be on the vessel at all times during mussel removal;
- iii. A total of no more than 1,000 tonnes of mussel are removed during the period for which this authorization is valid;
- iv. All mussels landed are relayed for a minimum of 6 months on a Several Fishery lay within Poole Harbour;
- v. Whilst fishing for mussels, the vessel is fitted with an operational VMS unit;
- vi. The Southern IFCA Office is notified by telephone no less than 12 hours and during office hours (0900-1700) prior to daily mussel fishing operations;
- vii. For each month that the authorization applies, a catch return must be submitted to the Authority, no later than the 14th day of the following month, detailing the following:
 - a. The days fished;
 - b. The time spent fishing each day;
 - c. The latitude and longitude of the start and end position of the first tow of the day;
 - d. The latitude and longitude of the start and end position of the last tow of the day; and
 - e. The quantity, in kilograms, of mussels landed each day.
- viii. Based on provision of new evidence, the Authority retains the right to alter or suspend this permission; and
- ix. This authorisation ceases on the 31st December 2024

Yours sincerely,

Pia Bateman
Chief Executive Officer
Southern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority

Fisheries Management Plans Consultation Responses Paper For Information

Report by IFCO Mullen

A. Purpose

For Members to receive the Southern IFCA responses to the public consultation on the 6 frontrunner Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs)

B. Annex

- Annex I: Southern IFCA Consultation Response, Crab & Lobster FMP
- Annex II: Southern IFCA Consultation Response, Whelk FMP
- Annex III: Southern IFCA Consultation Response, King Scallop FMP
- Annex IV: Southern IFCA Consultation Response, Channel Demersal Non-Quota Species FMP
- Annex V: Southern IFCA Consultation Response, Bass FMP
- Annex VI: Southern IFCA Consultation Response, Southern North Sea and Eastern Channel Mixed Flatfish FMP

1.0 Introduction

- FMPs, developed under the Joint Fisheries Statement (JFS) aim to carry out the objectives of the Fisheries Act 2020 by ensuring the continued provision of a shared natural resource for future generations, through the management of fish stocks, geographic area and fishing methods.
- There were 6 frontrunner FMPs which formed the first part of the FMP program, these were for the following stocks/geographic areas; Crab & Lobster, Whelk, King Scallop, Channel Demersal Non-Quota Species, Bass and Southern North Sea and Eastern Channel Mixed Flatfish.
- The 6 frontrunner FMPs were subject to public consultation between July 2023 and 1st October 2023 with the opportunity for stakeholders, including the Southern IFCA, to provide responses on the proposals contained in each FMP.
- The Southern IFCA submitted a response to each of the frontrunner FMPs as all had a geographic overlap with, and involved a fishery which is known to take place in, the District.

2.0 Summary of Key Points

The responses are provided as Annexes I to VI to this report, a summary of the key areas covered in each response are provided below. For each response an outline of the application of the FMP to the Southern IFCA District was provided along with an overview of any relevant research currently or historically carried out by Southern IFCA.

Crab and Lobster FMP (Annex I)

Points were made in relation to the following topics covered/proposed by the FMP:

- *Harmonisation for crawfish and lobster MCRS*
- *Prohibition of landing soft brown crab for bait*
- *Pilot finer scale management of CFUs and LFUs*
- *Implement measures to improve recreational database*
- *Long-term measures* – points made in relation to managing recreational effort, seasonal closures, assessing the impact of fishing effort within the fleet and pot limits, catch limits and effort limits

Whelk FMP (Annex II)

Points were made in relation to the following topics covered/proposed by the FMP:

- *Permit scheme/licence entitlement with conditions and seasonal closures as proposed measures*
- *Improving the evidence base*
- *Long-term measures* – points made in relation to pot limits, harmonisation of pot design and gear marking regulations, catch limits, gear requirements i.e., mandatory escape gaps and minimum landing size variations

King Scallop FMP (Annex III)

Points were made in relation to the following topics covered/proposed by the FMP:

- *The Solent Dredge Fishery* - information on the fishery provided and emphasised the need for inclusion in the FMP which has to date been based on data which does not take account of this fishery
- *Dive fisheries*
- *Reviewing and improving current measures*
- *Addressing gear and other inefficiencies to reduce environmental impact and seek opportunities to align gear requirements*
- *Development of scientific evidence based to develop harvest strategies and harvest control rules for individual stocks*
- *Exploring and developing science-based input and output controls*

Channel Demersal Non-Quota Species FMP (Annex IV)

Points were made in relation to the following topics covered/proposed by the FMP:

- *Cuttlefish proposed measures including consideration of a temporary seasonal closure for trawlers, MCRS and codes of practice on cuttlefish trap handling and investigations of underwater structures to benefit egg survival*
- *Proposed MCRS for NQS species*
- *Supporting the recreational sector to introduce voluntary guidelines and education on how recreational fishers can fish more sustainably*
- *Monitoring octopus catch, creating a research plan and gathering evidence* - indicating that this should be prioritised for cuttlefish due to proposed measures

Bass FMP (Annex V)

Points were made in relation to the following topics covered/proposed by the FMP:

- *Having an inclusive stakeholder engagement structure*
- *Using adaptive management*
- *Reviewing the current authorisation system*
- *Improving the evidence base*
- *Reviewing appropriate size limits for bass stocks (MCRS, MSL)*
- *Long-term measures related to net fishing*
- *Developing handling guidance*

Southern North Sea and Eastern Channel Mixed Flatfish FMP (Annex VI)

Points were made in relation to the following topics covered/proposed by the FMP:

- *Researching and reconsidering the opening of a survey for common sole in the Eastern channel*
- *MCRS for species included in the FMP*
- *Reviewing the Total Allowable Catch (TAC) for lemon sole, witch, turbot and brill*
- *Research on socio-economic aspects alongside stock and environment base research*
- *Southern IFCA also requested that national research on flounder should be included in the FMP*

General Points

The following general points were raised through the responses:

- *Inconsistent used of MCRS and Minimum Landing Size (MLS) and the different implications of each term/alignment with current Southern IFCA management*
- *Different engagement approaches by different FMPs and the need for engagement events to consider timings appropriate for the fishing industry to maximise opportunities for attendance*
- *Consideration of the mixed nature of inshore fisheries and that diversification is common and that opportunities for alignment between FMPs and consideration of how management of one species may affect this diversification should be a high priority*

3.0 Next Steps

- Defra are reviewing responses provided through the consultation.
- Defra are aiming to publish the Crab & Lobster, King Scallop, Bass and Channel Demersal NQS FMPs in December 2023. The Southern North Sea and Eastern Channel Mixed Flatfish FMP is expected to be published in January 2024.



Southern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority's
consultation response to the proposed Crab and Lobster Fisheries Management Plan

Southern IFCA District Application

- Pot fishing for the purpose of landing shellfish is an integral part of the commercial fishing sector throughout Hampshire, Dorset, and the Isle of Wight. There are currently 178 fishermen in under 10m vessels registered to fish using pots in the Southern IFCA District ('the District') and 14 fishermen registered for pot fishing with over 10m vessels. The size of vessel in the District is limited to 12m under the Southern IFCA 'Vessels Used in Fishing Byelaw 2012' (with certain exceptions applying to historic use and charter vessels)¹. There is also a small recreational pot fishery within the Southern IFCA District, however the effort in this fishery cannot be quantified as recreational pot fishers are currently not required to register with Southern IFCA.
- Key crab and lobster fisheries can be found in Lyme Bay, the Purbeck Coast, Poole and Christchurch Bays and the South of the Isle of Wight. These areas are covered by the following ICES rectangles with corresponding MMO landings data², 253 tonnes brown crab and 54 tonnes lobsters were caught in ICES rectangles 29E7, 30E7 and 30E8 in 2021.
- The importance of crab and lobster fisheries and the spread across the District results in the proposed FMP having potential impacts for a large proportion of our stakeholders, therefore we wish to raise specific points on proposed management through this response.

Southern IFCA Research

- To develop understanding of sea fisheries resources, Southern IFCA undertake and/or participate in surveys and research projects within the District.
- Specific to crab and lobster fisheries:
- A collaborative research project with the University of Southampton from 2012-2015, focused on the effectiveness of escape gaps in lobster, edible crab and velvet swimming crab pots within the District. The results from this study helped inform a decision to promote and encourage voluntary uptake of 45 x 87mm escape gaps across the District. This research is available on the Southern IFCA website³ and could help contribute to the wider evidence base proposed to be gathered under the Annex II Crab and Lobster FMP Evidence and Research Plan.

¹ [Vessel-Used-In-Fishing-Byelaw.pdf \(toolkitfiles.co.uk\)](#)

² [2022 UK and foreign vessels landings by UK port and UK vessel landings abroad: provisional data - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

³ [Pot & Trap Fisheries : Southern IFCA \(southern-ifca.gov.uk\)](#)



Short Term Measures

1. Harmonisation of crawfish and lobster Minimum Landing Size.

- Regarding the Minimum Landing Size proposed measure, Southern IFCA would recommend altering the terminology used to Minimum Conservation Reference Size (MCRS). This would be to adapt to the terminology more commonly used for inshore fisheries management and align with that used in Southern IFCA (and other IFCA) specific management so as to refer to the size of marine organisms at any stage in the supply chain rather than just the point of landing thus providing protection to these stocks at all points and ensuring that non-compliance with regulations can be addressed through the supply chain. The Southern IFCA MCRS byelaw⁴ for example uses the term MCRS for all harvested species. It is noted that MLS is commonly used throughout both the Crab and Lobster, and Whelk FMPs, however, the use of MCRS in comparison to MLS is interchangeable across all 6 frontrunner FMPS. For example, under the Channel Demersal Non-Quota Species FMP, the term MCRS is used but the document also references that the term is “also known as MLS” (NQS FMP, page 3). Whereas the Bass FMP uses MCRS, describing it as “formerly known as MLS” (Bass FMP, page 13). Southern IFCA would recommend that, for clarity and understanding as well as ensuring maximum protection through the supply chain, the consistent use of MCRS throughout and between all frontrunner FMPs.
- The IFCA is not opposed to harmonisation of MCRS for crawfish and lobster, however any change to the MCRS for lobster would have a socio-economic impact on the fishers targeting this species within the District given a 3mm increase from 87mm to 90mm MCRS. It is suggested that vessels which fish beyond the 6nm line would be more affected than those fishing in the near-inshore area.
- An increase in MCRS for lobster would require an amendment to the Southern IFCA MCRS Byelaw.
- Southern IFCA developed a species profile for lobster which is available on the Southern IFCA website⁵. This profile (also produced for other commercially important species in the District) outlined available evidence on life history, Size of Maturity (SOM), fishing activity in the District, landings and fishery value and current management across different regulatory bodies. The conclusion of this profile in relation to SOM was that the L50 for the District population is currently unknown. It is suggested that the potential for data collection at a finer spatial scale be explored as harmonisation based on an agreed value for one geographic area may not reflect the scientific evidence for a population in a different geographic area. This would

⁴ secure.toolkitfiles.co.uk/clients/25364/sitedata/Redesign/Byelaws/SIFCA-MCRS-Byelaw.pdf

⁵ [Key Species : Southern IFCA \(southern-ifca.gov.uk\)](https://www.southern-ifca.gov.uk)

- potentially tie in with the short-term proposal of finer scale LFUs and potentially help define what the scope of a finer scale LFU should consider. Southern IFCA recognise the benefits that an increase in lobster MCRS would have for stock protection and recruitment, however this needs to be considered alongside potential socio-economic impacts.
- The MCRS for crawfish currently listed as 110mm under the Southern IFCA MCRS Byelaw, therefore the introduction of an MCRS for crawfish of 110mm would not have an impact on the fishing fleet or current management within the District.
 - The MCRS for lobster is currently listed at 87mm in the Southern IFCA MCRS Byelaw and therefore, the increase to 90mm would have an impact on our management and require an update to the MCRS Byelaw.
 - Related to MCRS, a maximum size for lobster was suggested as potentially being beneficial to stock sustainability by protecting the most fecund females, a measure which has been explored in Scottish fisheries research and found to be beneficial. It is suggested that this may be considered as a long-term measure to support other measures working towards sustainability of stocks. The indication is that a maximum size based on spatially appropriate scientific data would be supported by a large proportion of the commercial industry in this District.
- 2. Prohibition of landing soft brown crab for bait.**
- It is understood that soft brown crab is available for recreational bait but is unlikely to come from the District but would be imported from outside. Soft crab taken for bait by recreational anglers tends to be soft shore crab rather than brown crab.
 - It is queried whether this measure could extend to a prohibition on the import of soft brown crab as well as landing as it is understood that current measures regulating this practice do not apply in all areas. The benefit of this would be improvements to stock sustainability and spawning stock biomass. It is however recognised that there would be potential implications of such a ban including socio-economic impacts to the industry where this practice does take place and associated socio-economic impacts in fisheries utilising the bait who may have to source alternative species at an increased cost.
 - The inclusion of the prohibition of landing soft brown crab would require a more precise definition of 'soft' to allow effective implementation and compliance. This could include information such as the duration after an individual has moulted that defines a crab as soft the colour of the individual or the texture of the shell during the soft shell period.



- This measure also relates to the whelk fishery which uses soft brown crab for bait in pots. Therefore, it is queried whether there is the potential to explore this measure in the Whelk FMP as well, the Crab and Lobster FMP covering the removal of soft brown crab and the Whelk FMP focusing on managing its use. This would provide harmonisation of management intentions across both affected fisheries.

3. *Pilot Finer Scale Management of CFUs and LFUs.*

- Piloting finer scale management would seem appropriate in line with managing based on the biology/ecology of the species and would have additional benefits if these boundaries could be aligned with data collection requirements that would support appropriate management for the inshore fleet as well as larger fleets working in the offshore area (see reference to alignment between data on MCRS and finer scale spatial management in section 1).
- It is noted however that should the definition of CFUs and LFUs cross administrative boundaries, i.e., IFCA Districts, inside/outside 6nm, then there will need to be management either at a national scale or in cooperation between different regulatory bodies should it be determined, that measures should be harmonised across the full extent of a CFU or LFU.
- There is a need to consider the nuances of the inshore fleets in different areas when determining appropriate spatial scales for management, recognising that fleet composition, fishing effort and fishing practice may all vary over relatively small spatial scales. The inshore fleet in the District is dependent on the ability to diversify in target species and fishing gear, there therefore needs to be consideration of how management units for crab and lobster would work with management units for other fisheries such as whelk fisheries and net fisheries so that this ability to diversify is maintained.
- Southern IFCA lies within the western English Channel CFU and southeast south coast LFU. Within the District, this measure has the potential to impact management across the boundary between the western and eastern English Channel CFUs which overlap both the Southern and Sussex IFCA Districts.
- If this approach is taken, national measures would be required to ease the implementation process between authoritative boundaries.

4. *Implement measures to improve recreational database.*

- Southern IFCA support the improvement of the recreational database in order to better understand stocks and recreational pressure. This management measure is in line with management listed under the proposed Southern IFCA Pot Fishing Byelaw, which



is currently with the MMO for QA, under which recreational fishers would require a permit to use pots and, under permit conditions, be limited in number of pots, quantities of species which can be removed from the fishery and be required to submit annual catch data.

Long term Measures

1. *Managing recreational effort.*

- Measures to manage recreational pot fishing are included in the proposed Southern IFCA Pot Fishing Byelaw as outlined under Section 4 of this response.

2. *Seasonal Closures.*

- Seasonal closures for the pot fishery are currently not a management measure within Southern IFCA and are not proposed under the Southern IFCA Pot Fishing Byelaw. Therefore, introduction of seasonal measures would have further impact for the pot fishing fleet in the District and would potentially require updates to District specific management should the Pot Fishing Byelaw be ratified or the development of additional management either at a local or national scale.
- It is noted by the pot fishers in the District that there is a general decline in activity for crab and lobster during the winter period due to increased periods of adverse weather conditions and the resulting risk to pot fishing equipment. The increase in price for lobster in particular around the Christmas period appears to not be realised to the same degree as was the case historically which has limited an increase in effort around this period.
- The use of other measures to protect spawning stock such as a ban on berried lobsters and the fact that berried crabs tend not to be caught due to the behaviour of the species during this phase are beneficial, and the need for seasonal closures should be explored in consideration of the other measures that aim to achieve the same outcome. It is suggested that further regulation on berried lobsters to ensure that this is applied consistently at national level would be beneficial when considering the protection of spawning stock.

3. *Assess the impact of fishing effort within the fleet.*

- The introduction of measures to assess the impact of fishing effort within the fleet would require a consideration of the differences in fishing fleets, fishing practice, the level at which the target species is targeted throughout the year and diversification of inshore fleets throughout the year.



- The roll out of IVMS could be helpful in achieving this measure but should only be used once data is available for all vessel sizes so as to get a more robust account of effort across different fleets. If IVMS were used at this stage, the output fishing effort would not be accurate within the District, which is predominantly under 10m vessels with no >12m vessels.
 - The ability to assess the impact of fishing effort would need to be analysed in line with proposals for CFUs and LFUs so that data can be usefully employed to inform management measures at the same spatial scale.
- 4. *Pot Limits, Catch Limits and Effort Limits.***
- The proposed Southern IFCA Pot Fishing Byelaw does not include any measures to limit pot numbers for the crab and lobster fishery. Should management through pot limitation be required, there would need to be a change to local management, and it is likely there would be an impact on the District's pot fishing fleet.
 - Southern IFCA have no specific points to raise on catch limits and effort limits beyond those discussed under other management proposals in this response.

General Points

- It is recognised and accepted that measures are required to support the sustainability of crab and lobster stocks. These are important fisheries for many fishers in our District and the species play a vital role in the wider ecosystem. The Southern IFCA welcomes the opportunity to provide reports on survey work or research (as outlined in this response) to help inform the evidence base for these species.
- The FMP needs to recognise the mixed nature of inshore fisheries and that where diversification is common, as is the case in the District, fishers will potentially be impacted by measures across more than one frontrunner FMP. On this basis, opportunities for alignment between FMPs and a consideration of how management of one species may impact this ability for diversification, on which many fishers and local communities rely, should be a high priority.
- The involvement of industry representatives in the development process and proposed in the ongoing use of the SAIG is welcomed, however concerns exist that the inshore sector may not be as well represented through this forum. The inclusion of representatives covering a range of inshore fisheries, and thus accounting for fleet variation as much as possible, would be a positive step in taking this FMP forward.



Southern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority's
consultation response to the proposed Whelk Fisheries Management Plan

Southern IFCA District Application

- Pot fishing for the purpose of landing shellfish is an integral part of the commercial fishing sector throughout Hampshire, Dorset, and the Isle of Wight. There are currently 178 fishermen in under 10m vessels registered to fish using pots in the Southern IFCA District ('the District') and 14 fishermen registered for pot fishing with over 10m vessels. The size of the vessel in the District is limited to 12m under the Southern IFCA 'Vessels Used in Fishing Byelaw 2012'¹ (with certain exceptions applying to historic use and charter vessels). There is also a small recreational pot fishery within the Southern IFCA District, however the effort in this fishery cannot be quantified as recreational pot fishers are currently not required to register with Southern IFCA.
- The whelk fishery is one of the predominant fisheries in the District, with main fishing areas in Poole Bay, Weymouth Bay, Lyme Bay and the Solent. Although not quantified, there has been an increase in fishers engaging in the whelk fishery in the District over the last 10 years. These areas are covered by the following ICES rectangles with corresponding MMO landings data², in 2021, 2,105 tonnes of sea fisheries resources were landed using pots in ICES areas 29E7, 30E8 and 30E7 at a value of £3.9 million. 1,778 tonnes of this were whelk, at a value of £1,919,334, making whelks the greatest species by weight caught in the Southern IFCA District that year.
- This justifies the importance of the whelk fishing industry to the inshore fleet within the Southern IFCA District and results in the proposed FMP having potential impacts for a large proportion of our stakeholders, therefore we wish to raise specific points on the proposed measures through this response.
- Southern IFCA have developed a Pot Fishing Byelaw, which applies District-wide and is currently with the Marine Management Organisation to undergo the quality assurance process. The byelaw was developed in order to achieve the following policy objectives:
 - o To ensure that pot fishing in the District is carried out in a sustainable way.
 - o To deliver social and economic benefits associated with sustainable pot fisheries; and
 - o To protect the marine environment from the effects of over-exploited pot fisheriesThis byelaw contains proposals relevant to whelk fishing within the District, including a proposed permit system, gear marking and recreational management. Under the permit, technical measures are proposed as permit conditions including pot limitation and pot

¹[Vessel-Used-In-Fishing-Byelaw.pdf \(toolkitfiles.co.uk\)](#)

² [2022 UK and foreign vessels landings by UK port and UK vessel landings abroad: provisional data - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)



tagging for whelk pots. In this response we have outlined where proposed measures under this byelaw are relevant to proposed measures under the FMP.

Southern IFCA Research

- To develop understanding of sea fisheries resources, Southern IFCA undertake and/or participate in surveys and research projects within the District.
- Specific to whelk fisheries:
 - Southern IFCA have recently introduced a whelk stock survey research programme. First carried out in 2023, the aim is to assess the population of the common whelk across the District sampling the four main areas for whelk fishing (Lyme Bay, Weymouth Bay, Poole Bay and the Solent). The survey works with local commercial fishers from each area to obtain samples and collects data on size (length and width) and weight to provide a Catch Per Unit Effort (CPUE) value. The survey forms part of the Southern IFCA Whelk Monitoring Programme, developed through the review of pot fishing management which resulted in the proposed Pot Fishing Byelaw, and outcomes from the survey will provide data which can be used as a baseline to monitor future changes and trends, and how these relate to current and proposed management measures for the District's whelk fisheries. In addition, the data collected will contribute to Southern IFCA's review of MCRS which includes whelks. Undertaking this survey work for the District is important due to the sedentary nature of the species, leading to a high potential for the existence of subpopulations spanning from the East to the West of the District with variations in Size at Maturity and other parameters over small spatial scales.
 - Southern IFCA have also worked with the University of Southampton to carry out District specific work on Size at Maturity. Samples of whelks were collected from across the District (aligning with the four main areas covered in the whelk survey) and analysis undertaken for Size at Maturity. As with the whelk survey, the likelihood of differences in SOM over small spatial scales and potential for sub-populations requires data to be gathered over the same spatial scale to help inform how management needs may vary within the scope of a single IFCA District.
 - Southern IFCA have developed a species profile for whelk, which collates information from research, scientific literature and other organisations on SOM, ecology and biology of the species, landings and catch data and current management measures. The species profile is available on the Southern IFCA webpage³ and may be useful to Defra when finalising management measures for the Whelk FMP. Southern IFCA are happy to contribute to the collation of research and scientific evidence through the FMP and work with Defra to provide this information.

³ [Key Species : Southern IFCA \(southern-ifca.gov.uk\)](https://www.southern-ifca.gov.uk)



Short Term Measures

1. Permit scheme/ licence entitlement with conditions.

- Southern IFCA recognise the benefits of a permit scheme in introducing adaptive and flexible management which can be reactive to changes. Experience of using permit byelaws in other District fisheries (Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Byelaw, Solent Dredge Permit Byelaw) has shown how this adaptive management can be used for the benefit of protection of the marine environment, protection of stocks and ensuring a proportionate approach that balances those needs with those of the fishing industry. An adaptive management process through a permit scheme also allows for a greater level of involvement of the industry in the decision-making process, moving towards more of a co-management approach.
- It is agreed that a permit scheme provides a good way of obtaining data on a fishery, consideration would need to be given to the collection of data being at an appropriate spatial scale to match the fisheries, accounting for differences over relatively small spatial scales. In addition, data collection through a permit scheme would need to not conflict with other data collection mechanisms that operate at a national level and take account of any data collection already occurring at a local level.
- Southern IFCA wish to highlight that a permit scheme is currently proposed within the Southern IFCA Pot Fishing Byelaw, with the proposal that any commercial fisher operating pots within the District would require a commercial permit with conditions under that permit setting a pot limitation (600 or 900 based on track record) and tagging requirements for whelk pots. In addition, recreational pot fishers would be required to hold a recreational permit with conditions limiting pot numbers (no more than 5), requiring pots to be tagged and limiting catch to thirty whelks in a calendar day.
- It has been raised to Southern IFCA that there are pros and cons of using a permit system versus using a licence entitlement system. It needs to be considered how each method would facilitate equal access to the fishery accounting for both larger offshore and smaller inshore fleets. The method of regulation also needs to consider that the whelk fishery to date has been viewed as a good entry fishery for new fishers due to the relatively low setup costs required, it is important that this access and the ability for new entrants is maintained.
- Setting conditions under either method would require consideration of the spatial differences in whelk fisheries and the likely occurrence of sub-populations. Introducing a permit at a national scale would be beneficial to ensure that fishing inside and outside of IFCA Districts is aligned, however the degree of harmonisation of management would need to consider the specific data available for individual stocks and the ability to maintain local management where it is identified as being required.



- If a permit system were to be introduced with associated conditions, it is felt that research priorities should be linked to permit conditions so that a feedback loop can be created to indicate whether measures are successful or further management intervention is required.

2. Seasonal Closures.

- Seasonal closures for pot fishery are currently not a management measure used within the District and are not proposed under the Pot Fishing Byelaw. Therefore, the introduction of any seasonal closures would likely impact the District's whelk fishers and require additions/amendments to management.
- It is agreed that there is a biological benefit to protecting stocks during a spawning season, however it is noted that whelk fishing in the inshore sector tends to operate seasonally already without being driven by management. Fishing pressure trends commonly decrease in winter months, aligning with a spawning period. It is identified that there may be a risk with the addition of a seasonal closure that effort may increase either side of the timeframe, putting pressure on stocks during the open season.
- The inshore fleet in the District is dependent on the ability to diversify in target species and fishing gear, therefore consideration of seasonal closures would need to consider management proposed for other fisheries and what may be available for fishers to diversify to during a closed season when determining the potential socio-economic impact.

3. Improving evidence base

- See reference to collaboration with the University of Southampton on size of maturity and whelk analysis time series data in the section, Southern IFCA Research.
- IFCAs have the ability to provide research which would be useful in understanding regional biological variation, particularly in relation to SOM and MCRS. Data collected on these fisheries including CPUE and fishing effort data would also be helpful in understanding the nuances of the inshore fleet and the spatial scale over which fishing activity/practice changes. It would be useful to understand how data collected at the IFCA level can be incorporated into the evidence base for this FMP and what data standards would be required for that data to be used in informing management through the FMP.

Long term Measures

1. Pot Limits, harmonisation of pot design, gear marking regulations.

- Pot limits considerations are in line with proposed measures under the Southern IFCA Pot Fishing Byelaw. The proposal is to limit commercial fishers to 600 whelk pots with the ability to apply to fish 900 pots based on track record criteria being met. In addition,

recreational fishers are proposed to be limited to 5 pots. The implementation of pot limits would therefore potentially have less impact on fishers in the District beyond that identified through the Impact Assessment for the implementation of pot limits under the proposed Southern IFCA byelaw, however if pot limit requirements were to be set at a national level and did not align with that proposed in the Pot Fishing Byelaw then there may be additional impact on the industry and a need to consider revision of management for the District.

- Harmonisation of pot design could have impacts to the District by affecting equitable access to whelk fishing. This is due to additional costs required to alter gear and an additional resource outlay by fishers to make changes to existing pots which can number over 1000 per vessel in some cases. Pot design tends to vary between fishers and is partly based on the environmental conditions where the pot is located to ensure that pots are not lost in inclement weather and suit the substrate on which they are placed. Differences in regional whelk fishers are also likely to be reflected to a certain degree in pot design therefore, harmonisation may affect one section of the industry or fishers within a certain geographic area to a greater extent than other areas. It was established through the development of the Southern IFCA whelk survey that the use of individual fisher pots from each area was required to ensure that environmental conditions did not impact the results found. It is recognised that the use of different pot types introduces its own caveats for data collected but it was determined that in order to understand how each area fished using the method employed by industry it was important to understand how individual fishers pot requirements integrated into that process.
- The use of gear marking regulations has been included in the proposed Southern IFCA Pot Fishing Byelaw. It is proposed that any pot within the District must be marked by a marker buoy or that a string of pots must be marked at each end. Provisions also include use of contrasting colours, placing above the water line to ensure information is clear and visible (PLN, Permit No. etc).
- If gear marking is introduced for multiple fisheries, it could be considered how pots/strings could be marked additionally to indicate what type of fishery i.e., whelk, crab and lobster, net fishing, to aid compliance and enforcement of regulations.

2. Catch Limits.

- Other than recreational catch limits (thirty whelks per day), no other catch limits are currently proposed under the Southern IFCA Pot Fishing Byelaw and therefore introduction of a catch limit would have potential impacts on industry within the District.
- It is noted that biological limits are likely to differ over relatively small spatial scales as identified already in this response. If biological limits were used to inform catch limits, the data would need to be collected at an appropriate spatial scale to account for this variation.



We agree that data should be collected over a time series to improve confidence and identify trends and patterns.

- The Southern IFCA whelk analysis data alongside the species profile available on the Southern IFCA website, could be useful in assisting in the variation in size of sexual maturity across the district. This could help determine the biological limits for fishing. See the Southern IFCA Research section of this document.

3. Gear requirements e.g mandatory escape gaps.

- Mandatory escape gaps have not been covered within the pot fishing byelaw under the whelk fishery and therefore will impact the southern IFCA District management.
- Whilst escape gap research is well known for crab and lobster fisheries, the use of escape gaps in whelk fisheries is less well studied and is a less common management measure. The proposed Southern IFCA Pot Fishing Byelaw proposes the use of escape gaps for crab and lobster as a regulatory measure under permit conditions but does not propose regulation of escape gaps for whelk pots. The occurrence of whelks in whelk pots is in part related to the provision of bait with whelks of all sizes having the ability to enter or exit a pot during the fishing period. It is suggested that the use of escape gaps in the whelk fishery should be researched in terms of the effectiveness, outcomes and benefits of such an approach to whelk populations prior to implementation of measures, this proposal could therefore be linked to the research plan as there is currently no proposal for whelk escape gap research in the FMP.
- There are other measures which would potentially have more benefit to the protection of whelk stocks where the benefits have a greater evidential underpinning. One example could be the exploration of complementary methods for aiding in MCRS management such as sorting riddle size/construction.
- It has been noticed that there are some similarities in proposals under the FMPs between whelk management and crab and lobster management, however, the difference in the species biology, nature and fishing practice suggests that management should be tailored to each species and management measures which are demonstrably beneficial for one species may not be as applicable to other species where other management measures may be more effective in achieving sustainable fisheries.

4. Minimum landing size variations.

- Regarding the Minimum Landing Size proposed measure, Southern IFCA would recommend altering the terminology used to include Minimum Conservation Reference Size (MCRS) to define the minimum size in which to land species. This would be to adapt to the new terminology used throughout the industry. This is commonly referred to as MLS

throughout the Crab and Lobster, and Whelk FMPs, however, the use of MCRS in comparison to MLS is interchanged throughout all FMPs. For example, under the Channel Demersal Non-Quota Species FMP, the term MCRS is used but also the document also references that it is “also known as MLS” (NQS FMP, page 3). Whereas the Bass FMP uses MCRS, describing it as “formerly known as MLS” (Bass FMP, page 13). Therefore, for clarity and understanding we would recommend the consistent use of MCRS throughout and between documents.

- We agree that MCRS would need to be considered at a local level. Southern IFCA are currently undertaking a review of MCRS for harvested sea fisheries resources including whelk. As outlined in the section on Southern IFCA research, data from a species profile, the Southern IFCA whelk survey and a research project on SOM with the University of Southampton, data indicates variation in SOM, and thus appropriate MCRS, across the District. The aim is to utilise data specific to this District’s fisheries to inform any potential suggestions for a change to whelk MCRS and provides data to support that MCRS will need to be considered over small spatial scales but recognise that this needs to be viewed alongside the ability to enforce regulations and potential difficulties with displacement if MCRS were to vary within a single regulatory area.

General Points

- It is recognised and accepted that measures are required to support the sustainability of whelk stocks. This is an important fishery for many fishers in our District and the species play a vital role in the wider ecosystem. The Southern IFCA welcomes the opportunity to provide reports on survey work or research (as outlined in this response) to help inform the evidence base for this species.
- The FMP needs to recognise the mixed nature of inshore fisheries and that where diversification is common, as is the case in the District, fishers will potentially be impacted by measures across more than one frontrunner FMP. On this basis, opportunities for alignment between FMPs and a consideration of how management of one species may impact this ability for diversification, on which many fishers and local communities rely, should be a high priority.
- The involvement of industry representatives in the development process and proposed in the ongoing use of the SAIG is welcomed, however concerns exist that the inshore sector may not be as well represented through this forum. The inclusion of representatives covering a range of inshore fisheries, and thus accounting for fleet variation as much as possible, would be a positive step in taking this FMP forward.



Southern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority's consultation response to the proposed King Scallop Fisheries Management Plan

Southern IFCA District Application

- The King Scallop fishery is an important commercial and recreational fishery within the Southern IFCA District ('the District'). Dredging, for the purpose of landing king scallop, is an integral part of the commercial fishing sector throughout Hampshire, Dorset and the Isle of Wight. There are currently 99 fishermen registered to fish with dredges in under 10m vessels within the District and 16 fishers are registered in over 10m vessels. The size of vessel in the District is limited to 12m under the Southern IFCA 'Vessels Used in Fishing Byelaw 2012'¹ (with certain exceptions applying to historic use and charter vessels).
- Of particular note are two fisheries which operate in Lyme Bay (dredging and diving) and the Solent (dredging). Please see the specific section below in relation to the Solent scallop fishery.
- Under the current permitted fishing season in the Solent, there are 29 fishermen registered as permit holders with under 10m vessels, and 3 fishermen in over 10m vessels. There are also nominated representatives associated with permit holders who have the ability to fish using the same vessel in accordance with the overarching byelaw (see section on Solent scallop fishery).
- There are also approximately 2 additional scallop dredgers outside of the Solent within the Southern IFCA District.
- Corresponding to the relevant ICES rectangles covered by the District and MMO landings data², Scallop were the 4th most landed species within the ICES areas 29E7, 30E8 and 30E7 in 2021, at 291 tonnes and a value of £587,346.
- There is also recreational fishing effort for scallops through hand diving activity, this is predominantly in the west of the District.
- The importance of king scallop fishery results in the proposed FMP having potential impacts for a large proportion of our stakeholders, therefore we wish to raise specific points on proposed management through this response.

Southern IFCA Research

- To develop understanding of sea fisheries resources, Southern IFCA undertake and/ or participate in surveys and research projects within the District.

¹ [Vessel-Used-In-Fishing-Byelaw.pdf \(toolkitfiles.co.uk\)](#)

² [2022 UK and foreign vessels landings by UK port and UK vessel landings abroad: provisional data - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)



- Specific to the king scallop fishery within the Solent:
 - o Southern IFCA undertake a biannual stock survey collecting data on abundance of king scallop, expressed as Catch Per Unit Effort (CPUE) as kg of scallop per meter of dredge per hour, and length frequency data. Data has been collected since 2021 using local fishing vessels and the survey has run in its current format of April (representing post-fishing season) and September (representing pre-fishing season) since 2022. Copies of the two survey reports available can be found on the Southern IFCA website³. The survey aims to build a timeseries dataset for the scallop fishery in the Solent and the data has been used in a review of management for the scallop fishery (conducted September 2023) as one source of available evidence to inform decisions on management intervention. Southern IFCA welcomes the opportunity to improve the evidence base underpinning the King Scallop FMP through the provision of data from this survey to ensure that all scallop beds are appropriately represented within the proposed region.
- The Southern IFCA has worked with the University of Southampton to collect data on the spawning season for King Scallop in the Solent. Samples were collected from local fishers and analysed using two methods for determining spawning state to help inform seasonal management of the fishery under the Solent Dredge Permit Byelaw (SDPB).

1. Solent Dredge Fishery

- The main point which the Southern IFCA wish to raise for the King Scallop FMP is the absence of the Solent as a fishery or as a location for scallop beds. Information on this fishery, its location, effort levels and the offer to provide stock data to inform the location of beds subject to fishing activity have been made on more than one occasion during the development of this FMP however this data has not been sought and the Solent fishery remains absent from the FMP.
- We wish to make specific reference to the following:
 - Figure 1, Annex 1: Evidence Statement for King Scallops, the figure currently shows an absence of recorded distribution for king scallop populations in the area which covers the Solent fishery, Southern IFCA have data to show that a population exists within this area.
 - Figure 7, Annex 1, the Solent scallop fishery is not referenced on this map. The issue arises in that the data used to inform the main scallop beds has been taken from VMS activity data for vessels >12m in length. The Southern IFCA Vessels Used in Fishing Byelaw 2012 states that vessels operating in the Southern IFCA District must be <12m in length therefore data on any fishing activity for scallops within the District will have been missed from this figure. It is noted that scallop dredging activity for the Southern IFCA part of Lyme Bay is also absent from this map for the same reasons. Southern IFCA have

³ [Solent Dredge Permit : Southern IFCA \(southern-ifca.gov.uk\)](https://www.southern-ifca.gov.uk)



offered to provide data held on this activity to supplement this figure during the development process, however this offer has not been taken up. It is of great concern that the important fisheries for scallops in the District are not being represented due to the data source used to inform these figures.

- Figure 9, Annex 1, the king scallop bed in the Solent is not represented on this figure. This is a function of the Cefas survey data having been used to inform this figure. Whilst the Solent falls within one of the stock unit assessment areas (as outlined in Figure 8), the area of the Solent is not surveyed by Cefas therefore has not been represented as a main scallop bed. Southern IFCA have offered to provide data from surveys (see SIFCA Research section) during the development of the FMP however this offer has not been taken up. As above with regard to activity data, the absence of the main Solent scallop beds in the Evidence statement is of great concern to Southern IFCA as not all fisheries are being represented.
- The scallop fishery within the Solent has expanded each year since it emerged as a commercial fishery in 2013. The fishery is focused around the north-east side of the Isle Wight and the area around the forts of the eastern Solent and Osbourne Bay.
- The fishery is currently managed under the Southern IFCA Solent Dredge Permit Byelaw⁴ with a Category A permit issued for the fishing for bivalves (except native oysters). Under the Category A permit, conditions are introduced regulating season, fishing gear and the requirement to submit catch returns. The Byelaw also defines Bivalve Management Areas (BMAs) for the purposes of spatial management should this be deemed to be required.
- At present, there is a closed season for scallop fishing between 1st April and 30th September each year and a limit on the number of scallop dredges to 2. The Southern IFCA is currently reviewing scallop management within the Solent therefore additional measures may be in place for the 2023-2024 permit season which commences on 1st November 2023.
- One of the requirements under the SDPB Category A Permit conditions is for permit holders to submit catch data detailing weight of species caught, hours fished, BMA from which the catch was taken and the company(ies) to whom all parts of the catch was sold. For the 2021-2022 fishing season, 297.8 tonne of king scallop was caught in the Solent permit fishery and for 2022-2023 (to date, October 2023 data not yet available) 153.3 tonne was caught. The estimated value of these landings (based on an average of MMO values for scallop landings for 2018-2020) is £457,722 and £235,626 respectively, thereby providing a significant economic value to the local fleet and associated local communities.

⁴ [Solent-Dredge-Permit-Byelaw-Final-APPROVED.pdf \(toolkitfiles.co.uk\)](#)



- Based on the above information, it is imperative that other data sources be interrogated prior to the publication of the King Scallop FMP. At present, small-scale fisheries comprising vessels <12m are not represented in the evidence gathered to inform the FMP and this needs to be rectified to ensure that the evidence underpinning management decisions for this species is robust and accounts for all sectors of the industry. The absence of information for the small-scale inshore fleet places that sector at risk of inappropriate management which is based on evidence from larger fleets.
- Southern IFCA welcome the opportunity to help in this regard and can provide data for its fisheries to ensure that these are correctly represented.

2. Dive fishery.

- The king scallop dive fishery was identified within Annex 1: Evidence Statement for King Scallops, however there is no further mention of the dive fishery within either the research plan or proposed measures. Within the District, commercial scallop diving vessels operate out of Weymouth and other ports in the West and recreational divers collect a wide range of species include scallops whilst diving for recreational purposes within the District. The dive fishery is an ecologically viable fishery and we recognise that the Evidence Statement refers to evidence gaps for this activity, however it would be beneficial if more clarity could be provided as to the types of evidence which would help inform management of this activity and how this is proposed to be gathered. There is a risk that the King Scallop FMP will focus too heavily on dredge fisheries and opportunities to gather data on potentially more ecologically viable methods will be of low priority. It is recommended that the FMP would benefit from the inclusion of research to understand the socio-economic and environmental benefits of king scallop dive fisheries within Annex 2: King Scallop FMP Research Plan.

3. Review and improve current measures.

- Whilst the Southern IFCA recognises the need to review and potentially improve on current management measures, it is important that deficiencies in the data on existing fisheries be addressed before such a review can take place.

4. Address gear and other inefficiencies within king scallop fisheries in order to reduce environmental impact and seek opportunities to align gear requirements.

- Southern IFCA would support a review to aim to address gear inefficiencies and a reduction in environmental impact. There are innovations on this taking place already within the fleet, for example, the introduction of lighter gear has been established by some of the fishers within the Solent inshore fleet to reduce environmental impact to seabed



integrity and improve efficiency of equipment. For example, the N-Viro dredge⁵ is becoming increasingly common amongst fishers to limit seabed damage while improving catch levels. In addressing inefficiencies and in seeking opportunities to align gear requirements, it is important that all sectors of the industry are fully understood, for example both the small inshore fleet and larger offshore fleet so that one part of the industry is not disproportionately affected by any change in management.

5. Development of scientific evidence base to develop harvest strategies and harvest control rules for individual stocks.

- Southern IFCA supports the development of an evidence base to help underpin management decisions. However, as per previous points, this needs to be inclusive of all fisheries and ensure that evidence is gathered from multiple sources so that small scale fishing activity and data collection for these fisheries can form part of the evidence base. Currently, as outlined in section 1 of this response, there is data missing from the Evidence Statement for this FMP on inshore fisheries due to the data sources used, this needs to be rectified as a first step in developing an evidence base to inform harvest strategies. This is also linked to the longer-term proposed measure of *Implementation as evidence base improves*.
- Specifically relating to harvest strategies, there are examples of where this is being implemented, for example through the Solent Dredge Permit Byelaw. Southern IFCA have found this an effective method of introducing adaptive management for the scallop fishery in the Solent with harvest control rules developed as permit conditions that are flexible and can react to changing circumstances within the fishery. The method also allows for continued stakeholder engagement, moving towards a co-management approach to fisheries management. The Southern IFCA would be happy to provide more detail on this management scheme to help inform how harvest strategies can be developed within small-scale fisheries and applied more widely.

6. Explore the impacts of changes in marine spatial use.

- Southern IFCA reiterates that this proposal would need to take account of small-scale inshore fisheries as well as larger UK scallop vessels.

7. Explore and develop science-based input and output controls.

- As outlined under section 5 in this response there is experience within the IFCAs of implementing management with both input and output controls, the example provided in this response being the Solent Dredge Permit Byelaw. These examples of adaptive management with a strong stakeholder input focus provide good examples of

⁵ [Home - N-Viro Dredge](#)



management which takes account of scientific data at a spatial scale appropriate to the fishery being managed and how that combination can be transferred into using input and output controls in a flexible way. It is suggested that existing management be reviewed, and best practice points taken to help inform management under the FMP.

General

- It is recognised and accepted that measures are required to support the sustainability of king scallop stocks. This is an important fishery for many fishers in the District and the species play a vital role in the wider ecosystem. The Southern IFCA welcomes the opportunity to provide reports on survey works or research (as outlined in this response) to help inform the evidence base for the species.
- The FMP needs to recognise the mixed nature of inshore fisheries and that where diversification is common, as in the case in the District, fishers will potentially be impacted by measures across more than one frontrunner FMP. On this basis, opportunities for alignment between FMPs and a consideration of how management of one species may impact this ability for diversification, on which many fishers and local communities rely, should be a high priority.
- On engagement across all 6 frontrunner FMPs, it is noted that opportunities varied along with the engagement tools used. In considering the future tranches of FMPs, it would be beneficial for the views of the fishing industry to be sought on the type and timing of engagement events which would be most useful to them. Many fishers work irregular shifts; therefore, a mixture of both daytime and evening events would maximise opportunities for attendance and provide opportunities for all industry sectors i.e., recreational and commercial as well as other organisations and interested parties. In addition, greater use of online events which are interactive may help promote increased attendance and input as although in-person events are beneficial, the scope across an area, necessitated by available resource, does make it more likely that an event will be held at location/timing combination that does not suit all sectors who wish to engage in the process.



Southern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority's
consultation response to the proposed Channel Demersal Non-Quota Species Fisheries
Management Plan

Southern IFCA Application

- The nineteen species listed within the Channel Demersal Non-Quota Species FMP are targeted by both the recreational and commercial fishing sectors in the Southern IFCA District ('the District'), which covers Hampshire, Dorset and the Isle of Wight.
- Fishing methods are predominantly rod and line, netting and charter angling vessels, the latter operating primarily from Poole Harbour and Weymouth although there are additional charter vessels which operate out of Solent ports. The exception to this is the fishery for cuttlefish which is primarily a potting fishery for the inshore sector.
- There are currently 244 fishermen in under 10m vessels registered to use nets in the District and 17 fishermen in over 10m vessels. There are 183 fishers registered for lining in under 10m vessels and 10 fishers registered in over 10m vessels. 178 fishers in under 10m vessels are registered to fish using pots and there are 14 fishermen registered for pot fishing with over 10m vessels, however it must be noted that not all potting vessels will engage in the cuttlefish fishery. The size of vessel in the District is limited to 12m under the Southern IFCA 'Vessels Used in Fishing Byelaw 2012'¹ (with certain exceptions applying to historic use and charter vessels).
- In addition, there is some trawling activity within the District where cuttlefish are caught as a bycatch but, as per the above byelaw, all vessels are <12m.
- Recreational stakeholders take particular interest in flatfish species and popular areas can be found along Chesil Beach, Sandbanks, Bournemouth and Boscombe piers, Southsea, Eastney and the Isle of Wight.
- The cuttlefish fishery is important in the District for a large section of the commercial fishing industry. Potting for cuttlefish can occur across the District. It is a short-season fishery with the activity primarily occurring across the span of a few months from spring to summer.
- The District is covered by the following ICES rectangles with corresponding MMO landings data², 260 tonnes of fish were landed from ICES 29E7, 30E7 and 30E8 using nets in 2021, with cuttlefish being within the top 5 species landed. Within the same ICES rectangles for the stated year, Cuttlefish were the 10th highest species landed in terms of weight across fishing methods, with a weight of 55 tonnes and a value of £155,895.

¹[Vessel-Used-In-Fishing-Byelaw.pdf \(toolkitfiles.co.uk\)](#)

² [2022 UK and foreign vessels landings by UK port and UK vessel landings abroad: provisional data - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

- The importance of the non-quota species listed in the FMP across both the recreational and commercial fleets and the spread of fisheries across the District results in the proposed FMP having potential impacts for a large proportion of our stakeholders, therefore we wish to raise specific points on proposed management throughout this response.

1. Cuttlefish Proposed Measures

- Southern IFCA currently have management related to the cuttlefish fishery through the voluntary Cuttlefish Code of Practice³. No additional measures specific to fishing for cuttlefish are proposed in the Southern IFCA Pot Fishing Byelaw (which is currently with the MMO for QA). Therefore, an introduction of measures would have an impact on the cuttlefish fishing fleet in the District and would potentially require updates to District specific management, or the development of additional management either at a local or national scale.
- Due to the knowledge gap surrounding cuttlefish, it is felt that a short-term goal of gathering evidence is essential to support the proposed cuttlefish management measures in effectively sustaining stocks within the first iteration of the FMP. It is noted that this is proposed for octopus but not cuttlefish currently as a short-term goal. The importance of cuttlefish research has been referenced within Annex 1 Channel NQS FMP Evidence Statement however, this is not then applied under A5.4 Future Research Considerations. Therefore, due to the nature of the species and the acknowledgment that cuttlefish will need to be potentially managed differently to other proposed finfish in the FMP, Southern IFCA query whether to increase the priority of Evidence Gap ID28 "*Cuttlefish Survivability Study, Seasonality, Breeding/Spawning ground identification, Egg laying Study, Underwater Structure Research*" to "*must*" to initiate evidence gathering within the short-term. This can also be extended onto evidence gaps ID 61 "*Common Cuttlefish (Sepia officinalis) Understand life history, recruitment and impacts of environmental/ climate drivers*", ID62 "*Develop specific assessment methodology specific to cuttlefish and other cephalopods*" and ID73 "*Biological information for understanding stock assessment and ecosystem impacts*". It is felt that prioritising these research gaps will provide a sound underpinning to proposed measures and also allow the effectiveness of different measures to be explored.

1.1 Considerations of temporary seasonal closures for trawlers.

- It is recognised that trawl fisheries for cuttlefish exist both within the inshore area and the offshore area, however it is our understanding that, for the Southern IFCA District, the trawl fisheries are primarily outside the 6nm with relatively lower levels within our inshore

³ [Cuttlefish-Code-of-Practice.pdf \(toolkitfiles.co.uk\)](https://www.toolkitfiles.co.uk/Cuttlefish-Code-of-Practice.pdf)



area. Stakeholders within the District have raised that there is a potential impact from the offshore trawl fishery to inshore cuttlefish stock populations, with a large section of the population being removed prior to reaching the inshore area resulting in decreased stock availability for local inshore fisheries.

- It is therefore felt that the inshore fisheries may benefit from considerations of temporary seasonal closures for trawlers, however it would need to be understood how trawl fisheries vary within the inshore and offshore sector so as not to disproportionately disadvantage one sector over the other.
- As a general point, management has the potential to benefit both adult and juvenile cuttlefish stocks that have not had an opportunity to spawn, therefore Southern IFCA raise the suggestion to alter the phrase "*Protection for pre-spawn juvenile population and habitat within the English Channel*" to remove the terminology "juvenile". This would therefore reference all pre-spawn individuals within the cuttlefish population.
- It has been considered that a spatial element to this type of management may also be required alongside any seasonal management in order for a benefit in increased stock to be realised. There is concern that cuttlefish removal would still occur as a bycatch during any seasonal closure, a risk which could be mitigated by the additional introduction of spatial measures providing an area within which cuttlefish could move into the inshore sector without interaction with fishing activity.

1.2 Cuttlefish MCRS

- Cuttlefish are currently not included within the Southern IFCA MCRS Byelaw⁴ and therefore the introduction of a 230mm MCRS would have an impact on the fishing fleet within the District and require an amendment to the Southern IFCA MCRS Byelaw.
- Due to the nature of cuttlefish only breeding once before mortality and concerns over the impact of discards on the potential success of an MCRS measure, it is queried whether the application of an MCRS would be the most effective management of the stock, and if mitigation using weight would be more beneficial if it is determined that this type of measure on landings is required. Referring to A5.4 Future Research Considerations under Annex 1 Channel NQS FMP Evidence Statement, Southern IFCA query if Evidence gap ID84 "*Cuttlefish- explore most appropriate minimum landing size by weight*" should be increased in priority from "*could*" to "*must*" to ensure the proposed management is the most effective option in mitigating the size of stock removal. In addition, it would be beneficial under this research aim to have an understanding of post-

⁴ [SIFCA-MCRS-Byelaw.pdf \(toolkitfiles.co.uk\)](https://www.toolkitfiles.co.uk/SIFCA-MCRS-Byelaw.pdf)

capture mortality to understand the potential impacts of discards should an MCRS be introduced.

The inclusion of the proposed 230mm MCRS would require a more precise definition to allow effective implementation and compliance. This could include information such as whether 230mm refers to the total length of the individual or covers only the mantle. In addition, it would be beneficial to understand the scientific evidence underpinning an MCRS of 230mm, for example if this is the size of sexual maturity (SOM) and the data from which this SOM has been determined.

1.3 Codes of practice on cuttlefish trap handling and investigations of underwater structures to benefit egg survival.

- Southern IFCA have a voluntary Cuttlefish Code of Practice which aims to protect cuttlefish eggs which have been laid on and attached to cuttlefish traps, therefore Southern IFCA agree that there is benefit in determining how underwater structures in general contribute to egg survival. The CoP recognises that potential damage caused to cuttlefish eggs through fishing practice can potentially be addressed through small changes in that practice and was developed as a first step in management in line with the industry. This has been a successful approach for Southern IFCA and one which could potentially be replicated.

2. Flyseining restrictions

- There is no current known flyseining activity within the Southern IFCA District and therefore any proposed flyseining measures would not have an impact to the fleet.

3. MCRS

- Regarding the Minimum Landing Size proposed measure, Southern IFCA would recommend altering the terminology used to Minimum Conservation Reference Size (MCRS). This would be to adapt to the terminology more commonly used for inshore fisheries management and align with that used in Southern IFCA (and other IFCA) specific management so as to refer to the size of marine organisms at any stage in the supply chain rather than just the point of landing thus providing protection to these stocks at all points and ensuring that non-compliance with regulations can be addressed through the supply chain. The Southern IFCA MCRS byelaw for example uses the term MCRS for all harvested species. It is noted that MLS is commonly used throughout both the Crab and Lobster, and Whelk FMPs, however, the use of MCRS in comparison to MLS is interchangeable across all 6 frontrunner FMPs. For example, under the Channel Demersal Non-Quota Species FMP, the term MCRS is used but the document also references that the term is "also known as MLS" (NQS FMP, page 3). Whereas the Bass FMP uses MCRS, describing it as "formerly known as MLS" (Bass FMP, page 13). Southern IFCA would recommend that, for clarity and understanding as well as ensuring



maximum protection through the supply chain, the consistent use of MCRS throughout and between all frontrunner FMPs.

- Southern IFCA have developed species profiles for turbot, brill and lemon sole as part of a review of MCRS for harvested species in the District. These profiles are available on the Southern IFCA website.⁵ As part of this review it has been identified that some of the current MCRS which are regulated by the IFCA may not be in line with L50 and therefore it is recommended that consideration be given in the longer term in the FMP as to what MCRS these species should be moving towards in order to ensure that the species is protected in line with SOM. Evidence such as that collated by Southern IFCA in the species profiles could provide a starting point to build an evidence base on which to inform future MCRS changes. The MCRS for turbot, brill and lemon sole are 300mm, 300mm and 250mm respectively under the Southern IFCA MCRS Byelaw and therefore the introduction of MCRS for these species would not have an impact on the fishing fleet or current management within the District.
- Southern IFCA queries the potentially contradiction between the NQS FMP and the Southern North Sea and Eastern Channel Mixed Flatfish FMP, which include some of the same species of turbot, brill and lemon sole with regard to proposed MCRS management. Both FMPs include the same MCRS for the three species within the short term (1-3 years), however, the long-term approach under the Flatfish FMP proposes increasing MCRS to 400mm (turbot), 350mm (brill) and 250mm (lemon sole) within the first iteration of the FMP (6 years). The NQS FMP covers ICES areas 7d and 7e, which covers the entirety of the Southern IFCA District, whereas the Flatfish FMP covers only ICES area 7d, the eastern part of the District. Therefore, at some point within the first iteration of the frontrunner FMPs, ICES areas 7d and 7e will be subject to different MCRS regulations for turbot and brill, which could have socio-economic and displacement implications between each area and particularly within the Southern IFCA District. Consideration should be given to how these measures will align with each other to ensure that there is not confusion for the fishing industry who operate within a single administrative area and cross-ICES boundaries and to ensure that measures can be enforced appropriately.

4. Support recreational sector to introduce voluntary guidelines and education on how recreational fishers can fish more sustainably.

- Southern IFCA support the inclusion of voluntary guidelines and education to support sustainable fishing within the recreational fishing sector.

⁵ [Key Species : Southern IFCA \(southern-ifca.gov.uk\)](http://www.southern-ifca.gov.uk)



- Current codes of practice and voluntary guidance in place within the District include the Cuttlefish Code of Practice, Salmonid Code of Practice⁶, Netting Code of Practice⁷, Wrasse Fishery Guidance⁸ and Net Fishing Around Piers Codes of Practice⁹ and have proven to be effective in achieving good fishing practice within both the recreational and commercial sectors, having been developed with industry input.
- The development of voluntary guidelines would require the consideration of engagement aspects of deliverable measures, including accessibility of information to recreational fishers who may not be aware of measures in a specific area (e.g. fishers visiting areas or on holiday). This is applicable to any measures that apply within the recreational sector and Southern IFCA already aim to address this by use of the Southern IFCA website, social media, engagement with local clubs and providing information in a condensed format for inclusion on noticeboards. Officers also provide education through patrol work throughout the District. Therefore, it is suggested that a similar approach be applied on a national level when considering non-quota species fishing guidance to provide widely accessible resources to help national education.
- Referring to A5.4 Future Research Considerations under Annex 1 Channel NQS FMP Evidence Statement, Southern IFCA query if Evidence gap ID3 "*what voluntary measures are implemented by recreational and commercial fishers and how successful are they?*" should be prioritised as a "must" in order to effectively develop guidelines facilitated by underlying stakeholder engagement.

5. Monitor octopus catch, create a research plan and gather evidence.

- Southern IFCA would support the collation of evidence for octopus as any additional evidence gathering will be beneficial when determining if management intervention is required. However, we would draw your attention to comments made in relation to the cuttlefish fishery that consideration of available resources for undertaking research and evidence gathering should be in line with a prioritisation for species, for example with proposed measures for cuttlefish but a number of identified evidence gaps then it is felt it would be more beneficial to prioritise cuttlefish research in the short-term.

6. Gather evidence for potentially viable towed gear management measures in 7d and 7e, particularly 0-12nm.

See comments under section 1.1.

⁶ [Salmonid-Good-Handling-Code-of-Practice.pdf\(toolkitfiles.co.uk\)](#)

⁷ [Netting-Code-of-Practice.pdf \(toolkitfiles.co.uk\)](#)

⁸ [2021-Wrasse-Fishery-Guidance-Final.pdf \(toolkitfiles.co.uk\)](#)

⁹ [Net-Fishing-Around-Piers-CoP-v1.2.pdf \(toolkitfiles.co.uk\)](#)



General Points

- It is recognised and accepted that measures are required to support the sustainability of non-quota species stocks. Non-quota species are important for many fishers in the District across both recreational and commercial sectors, and the species play a vital role in the wider ecosystem. The Southern IFCA welcomes the opportunity to provide data (such as the species profiles under section 3) to help inform the evidence base for these species.
- The FMP needs to recognise the mixed nature of inshore fisheries and that where diversification is common, as in the case in the District, fishers will potentially be impacted by measures across more than one frontrunner FMP. On this basis, opportunities for alignment between FMPs and a consideration of how management of one species may impact this ability for diversification, on which many fishers and local communities rely, should be a high priority.
- On engagement across all 6 frontrunner FMPs, it is noted that opportunities varied along with the engagement tools used. In considering the future tranches of FMPs, it would be beneficial for the views of the fishing industry to be sought on the type and timing of engagement events which would be most useful to them. Many fishers work irregular shifts; therefore, a mixture of both daytime and evening events would maximise opportunities for attendance and provide opportunities for all industry sectors i.e., recreational and commercial as well as other organisations and interested parties. In addition, greater use of online events which are interactive may help promote increased attendance and input as although in-person events are beneficial, the scope across an area, necessitated by available resource, does make it more likely that an event will be held at location/timing combination that does not suit all sectors who wish to engage in the process.



Southern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority
Consultation response to the proposed Bass Fisheries Management Plan

Southern IFCA Application

- The bass fishery is strongly represented throughout the commercial and recreational fishing sectors within the Southern IFCA District ('the District'). Fishing methods predominantly include hook and line, as well as targeted netting and bycatch in netting and trawling fisheries. There are currently 244 commercial fishers registered as undertaking net fishing with under 10m vessels and 17 commercial fishers in over 10m vessels within the District. There are 183 fishers registered for lining in under 10m vessels and 10 fishers in over 10m vessels. The size of vessel in the District is limited to 12m under the Southern IFCA 'Vessels Used in Fishing Byelaw 2012'¹ (with certain exceptions applying to historic use and charter vessels).
- Commercial bass fishing takes place through the year however, there is a peak in effort in summer months (with recognition of where fishing is limited by national and District specific measures, for example net fishing within a Bass Nursery Area under the Southern IFCA Net Fishing Byelaw²).
- Key recreational sea angling areas include Chesil Beach, Sandbanks, Eastney, Isle of Wight and Bournemouth, Boscombe, Southsea and Yarmouth piers.
- The areas reference within the District are covered by ICES rectangles 29E7, 30E7 and 30E8. With corresponding MMO landings data³, the landed weight of bass in these rectangles was 91 tonnes in 2021 with a value of £971,473.
- The importance of bass fisheries and the spread across the District results in the proposed FMP having potential impacts for a large proportion of our stakeholders, therefore we wish to raise specific points on proposed management through this response.

1. Inclusive stakeholder engagement structure.

- Southern IFCA welcomes the formation of a bass management group to enable cross sector organisation input into management measures and the establishment of a co-management approach.

- For this to offer the most benefit in terms of stock sustainability and socio-economic benefits, there would need to be representation from different sectors (commercial/

¹ [Vessel-Used-In-Fishing-Byelaw.pdf \(toolkitfiles.co.uk\)](#)

² [Southern-IFCA-Net-Fishing-Byelaw.pdf \(toolkitfiles.co.uk\)](#)

³ [2022 UK and foreign vessels landings by UK port and UK vessel landings abroad: provisional data - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

recreational) and different fleets to account for different vessels sizes, fishing practices (i.e., gear types, netting/ rod and line), inshore and offshore fisheries.

2. *Adaptive management.*

- Southern IFCA supports the development of adaptive management as an effective approach to sustainable fisheries management. Adaptive management has been successfully used in other fisheries throughout the District and has provided the ability to react to changing circumstances within the fishery.
- For the approach to be effective, it would be useful to establish a set of drivers for an adaptive management approach, i.e., what management aims to achieve, the policy drivers and intended outcomes, for example sustainable harvesting, improving understanding and maintaining transparency in decisions, so that the intention of adaptive management is clear. This would link to the engagement structure established under the previous measure in section 1, with it being beneficial for said drivers to be developed by cross-sector and organisation representation under the bass management group.

3. *Review of current authorisation system.*

- Southern IFCA currently have no specific comment regarding the review of the current authorisation system, however a review of this system would likely be welcomed by industry.

4. *Improve evidence base.*

- Improvement of the evidence base for the bass fishery would be beneficial to ensure effective management and future sustainability of stocks.
- Southern IFCA would recommend consideration of evidence needs across sectors, gear types, different fleets, and consideration of spatial definition of evidence collection so that evidence can be directly informative to an adaptive management process.
- Southern IFCA carry out an ongoing bi-annual survey of juvenile fish species within harbour and estuarine areas in the District. This survey has been ongoing since 2016 and aims to provide data to improve understanding of the importance of estuaries and sheltered harbours for juvenile fish populations including bass. The data from this survey is available on the Southern IFCA website⁴. The Southern IFCA welcomes the opportunity to provide reports from survey work and research to help inform the evidence base for the bass fishery and facilitate adaptive management.

⁴ [Net Fisheries : Southern IFCA \(southern-ifca.gov.uk\)](http://www.southern-ifca.gov.uk)



5. Review of appropriate size limits for bass stocks (MCRS, MSL).

- Regarding the Minimum Landing Size proposed measure, Southern IFCA would recommend altering the terminology used to Minimum Conservation Reference Size (MCRS). This would be to adapt to the terminology more commonly used for inshore fisheries management and align with that used in Southern IFCA (and other IFCA) specific management so as to refer to the size of marine organisms at any stage in the supply chain rather than just the point of landing thus providing protection to these stocks at all points and ensuring that non-compliance with regulations can be addressed through the supply chain. The Southern IFCA MCRS byelaw⁵ for example uses the term MCRS for all harvested species. It is noted that MLS is commonly used throughout both the Crab and Lobster, and Whelk FMPs, however, the use of MCRS in comparison to MLS is interchangeable across all 6 frontrunner FMPs. For example, under the Channel Demersal Non-Quota Species FMP, the term MCRS is used but the document also references that the term is “also known as MLS” (NQS FMP, page 3). Whereas the Bass FMP uses MCRS, describing it as “formerly known as MLS” (Bass FMP, page 13). Southern IFCA would recommend that, for clarity and understanding as well as ensuring maximum protection through the supply chain, the consistent use of MCRS throughout and between all frontrunner FMPs.
- Southern IFCA currently follows national regulation of a 420mm MCRS for bass fishing in UK waters, and therefore any change to the MCRS for bass would have a potential socio-economic effect on the fishing fleet targeting this species within the District. A change in MCRS for bass would require an amendment to the Southern IFCA MCRS Byelaw, however the Southern IFCA supports a review of the MCRS for bass if determined to be required in line with best available evidence.
- Southern IFCA developed a species profile for bass which is available on our website⁶. This profile (also produced for other commercially important species in the District) outlined available evidence on life history, Size of Maturity (SOM), fishing activity in the District, landings and fishery value and current management across different regulatory bodies. This document is publicly available and thus available to Defra (along with those for other FMP stocks) to assist in improving the evidence base and developing effective management under the Bass FMP.

6. Long-term measures related to net fishing.

- Southern IFCA have recently implemented measures for net fishing within harbours and estuaries in the District. The Southern IFCA Net Fishing Byelaw 2023 was developed in accordance with a series of policy objectives; a) to support the use of estuaries and harbours in the District as essential fish habitats, b) to provide protection to migratory

⁵ [SIFCA-MCRS-Byelaw.pdf \(toolkitfiles.co.uk\)](https://www.toolkitfiles.co.uk/SIFCA-MCRS-Byelaw.pdf)

⁶ [Bass-Species-Profile-1.3.pdf \(toolkitfiles.co.uk\)](https://www.toolkitfiles.co.uk/Bass-Species-Profile-1.3.pdf)

salmonids as they transit through the District's estuaries and harbours, c) to balance the social and economic benefits of net fisheries, d) to further the conservation objectives of Designated Sites.

- Under the Net Fishing Byelaw, there are specific measures for net use within Bass Nursery Areas (BNAs) during the period when BNA regulations are active. Net fishing is also managed through Net Prohibited Areas, Net Restriction Areas and Net Permit Areas with technical measures introduced under permit conditions.
- In developing the Net Fishing Byelaw, the Southern IFCA developed Synergetic Management Models which drew together risk components identified for areas Functionally Linked to Designated Sites, areas utilised by Migratory Salmonids and Essential Fish Habitats in order to inform, in-combination, the site-specific management outcomes. In addition, the models also capture the legislative drivers underpinning management intentions as well as those areas subject to existing governance.
- The 'Inshore Netting Review: Process, Tools & Intentions 2021' document which underpins the Net Fishing Byelaw is available on the Southern IFCA website⁷, outlining the approach taken in developing net fishing management. Other documentation pertaining to the Net Fishing Byelaw is also available on our website^{8,9,10}.

7. Developing handling guidance.

- Southern IFCA agree the benefits of developing handling best practice guidance. Current codes of practice and handling guidance in place within the District include the Salmonid Code of Practice¹¹, Netting Code of Practice¹² and Net Fishing Around Piers Code of Practice¹³ and have proven to be effective in achieving good fishing practice within the recreational and commercial sectors.
- The development of handling guidance would require the consideration of engagement on deliverable measures, including accessibility of information to recreational fishers who may not be aware of measures in a specific area (e.g., fishers visiting areas or on holiday). This is applicable to any measures that apply within the recreational sector. In order to promote information within the District, Southern IFCA utilises its website and social media as well as outreach and engagement with local clubs and providing information for angling/shoreline noticeboards. Officers also provide education through patrol work

⁷ [NFB-POLICY-Process-Tools-and-Intentions-2021.pdf \(toolkitfiles.co.uk\)](#)

⁸ [Net Fisheries : Southern IFCA \(southern-ifca.gov.uk\)](#)

⁹ [Net Fishing : Southern IFCA \(southern-ifca.gov.uk\)](#)

¹⁰ [Net Fishing Permit : Southern IFCA \(southern-ifca.gov.uk\)](#)

¹¹ [Salmonid-Good-Handling-Code-of-Practice.pdf \(toolkitfiles.co.uk\)](#)

¹² [Netting-Code-of-Practice.pdf \(toolkitfiles.co.uk\)](#)

¹³ [Net-Fishing-Around-Piers-CoP-v1.2.pdf \(toolkitfiles.co.uk\)](#)



Unit 3, Holes Bay Park, Sterte Avenue West,
Poole, Dorset, BH15 2AA.
Tel. 01202 721373
Email enquiries@southern-ifca.gov.uk
www.southern-ifca.gov.uk

throughout the District. It is suggested that a similar approach be applied on a national level when considering bass handling guidance, with a suite of tools utilised to maximise information dissemination, to provide widely accessible resources to help education and promote voluntary compliance.

General Points

- On engagement across all 6 frontrunner FMPs, it is noted that opportunities varied along with the engagement tools used. In considering the future tranches of FMPs, it would be beneficial for the views of the fishing industry to be sought on the type and timing of engagement events which would be most useful to them. Many fishers work irregular shifts; therefore, a mixture of both daytime and evening events would maximise opportunities for attendance and provide opportunities for all industry sectors i.e., recreational and commercial as well as other organisations and interested parties. In addition, greater use of online events which are interactive may help promote increased attendance and input as although in-person events are beneficial, the scope across an area, necessitated by available resource, does make it more likely that an event will be held at location/timing combination that does not suit all sectors who wish to engage in the process.
- It is recognised and accepted that measures are required to support the sustainability of bass stocks. The bass fishery is important for many fishers in our District and the species play a vital role in the wider ecosystem. The Southern IFCA welcomes the opportunity to provide reports on survey works, research or current management approaches (as outlined in this response) to help inform the evidence base for these species.
- The FMP needs to recognise the mixed nature of inshore fisheries and that where diversification is common, as is the case in the District, fishers will potentially be impacted by measures across more than one frontrunner FMP. On this basis, opportunities for alignment between FMPs and a consideration of how management of one species may impact this ability for diversification, on which many fishers and local communities rely, should be a high priority.



Southern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority's
consultation response to the proposed Southern North Sea and Eastern Channel Mixed Flatfish
Fisheries Management Plan

Southern IFCA Application

- The species listed within the Southern North Sea and Eastern Channel Mixed Flatfish FMP are subject to fishing activity throughout the year by both the recreational and commercial fishing fleets in the Southern IFCA District ('the District'), which covers Hampshire, Dorset and the Isle of Wight.
- Sole species, turbot, plaice, flounder, dab and brill are commercially important species, caught as targeted or bycatch species across the District in gill nets, entanglement nets, otter trawls and hook and line. Plaice can also be fished in pot fisheries, in areas such as Lyme Bay.
- There are currently 244 fishermen in under 10m vessels registered to use nets in the District and 17 fishermen in over 10m vessels. There are 183 fishers registered for lining in under 10m vessels and 10 fishers registered in over 10m vessels. 144 fishermen are registered to undertake trawling. The size of vessel in the District is limited to 12m under the Southern IFCA 'Vessels Used in Fishing Byelaw 2012'¹ (with certain exceptions applying to historic use and charter vessels).
- The District is also a significant area for the recreational sea angling of flatfish. Popular shore angling spots include Chesil Beach, Sandbanks, Eastney, the Isle of Wight, Bournemouth, Boscombe, Southsea and Yarmouth Piers.
- The importance of the flatfish species listed in the FMP across both the recreational and commercial fleets and the spread of fisheries across the District results in the proposed FMP having potential impacts for a large proportion of our stakeholders, therefore we wish to raise specific points on proposed management throughout this response.

1. Improve evidence base for Atlantic Halibut.

- The development of a stock assessment for Atlantic Halibut in the North sea would not be relevant to the Southern IFCA District, but the proposal to improve the evidence base and understanding to facilitate effective management would be welcomed.

¹[Vessel-Used-In-Fishing-Byelaw.pdf \(toolkitfiles.co.uk\)](http://www.toolkitfiles.co.uk/Vessel-Used-In-Fishing-Byelaw.pdf)



2. *Research and reconsider the opening of a survey for common sole in the Eastern channel.*

- Southern IFCA do not currently collect data for common sole in the District and therefore the re-opening of a survey for common sole in the Eastern Channel would be useful in understanding stock status.

3. *MCRS*

- Regarding the Minimum Landing Size proposed measure, Southern IFCA would recommend altering the terminology used to Minimum Conservation Reference Size (MCRS). This would be to adapt to the terminology more commonly used for inshore fisheries management and align with that used in Southern IFCA (and other IFCA) specific management so as to refer to the size of marine organisms at any stage in the supply chain rather than just the point of landing thus providing protection to these stocks at all points and ensuring that non-compliance with regulations can be addressed through the supply chain. The Southern IFCA MCRS byelaw for example uses the term MCRS for all harvested species. It is noted that MLS is commonly used throughout both the Crab and Lobster, and Whelk FMPs, however, the use of MCRS in comparison to MLS is interchangeable across all 6 frontrunner FMPs. For example, under the Channel Demersal Non-Quota Species FMP, the term MCRS is used but the document also references that the term is “also known as MLS” (NQS FMP, page 3). Whereas the Bass FMP uses MCRS, describing it as “formerly known as MLS” (Bass FMP, page 13). Southern IFCA would recommend that, for clarity and understanding as well as ensuring maximum protection through the supply chain, the consistent use of MCRS throughout and between all frontrunner FMPs.
- Southern IFCA welcome the proposed MCRS sizes for lemon sole, brill and turbot. A minimum size of 250mm for lemon sole would align with current Southern IFCA MCRS Byelaw management and therefore would not have an impact within the District. Proposed MCRS sizes for turbot (400mm) and brill (350mm) would require an increase in 100mm and 50mm respectively to current size regulations within the District. Therefore, an amendment to the MCRS Byelaw would be required and any change to the MCRS for turbot and brill would have a potential socio-economic impact on the fishing fleet targeting this species within the District. However, the general cross-sector feedback within the District recognises and welcomes an increase in size regulation for these species.
- Southern IFCA are currently reviewing the MCRS for harvested species and have developed species profiles for some of the flatfish stocks listed within the FMP, which are available on our website². These profiles (also produced for other commercially important species in the District) outlined available evidence on life history, Size of Maturity (SOM),

² [Key Species : Southern IFCA \(southern-ifca.gov.uk\)](http://www.southern-ifca.gov.uk)

fishing activity in the District, landings and fishery value and current management across different regulatory bodies.

- Southern IFCA queries the potentially contradiction between the NQS FMP and the Southern North Sea and Eastern Channel Mixed Flatfish FMP, which include some of the same species of turbot, brill and lemon sole with regard to proposed MCRS management. Both FMPs include the same MCRS for the three species within the short term (1-3 years), however, the long-term approach under the Flatfish FMP proposes increasing MCRS to 400mm (turbot), 350mm (brill) and 250mm (lemon sole) within the first iteration of the FMP (6 years). The NQS FMP covers ICES areas 7d and 7e, which covers the entirety of the Southern IFCA District, whereas the Flatfish FMP covers only ICES area 7d, the eastern part of the District. Therefore, at some point within the first iteration of the frontrunner FMPs, ICES areas 7d and 7e will be subject to different MCRS regulations for turbot and brill, which could have socio-economic and displacement implications between each area and particularly within the Southern IFCA District. Consideration should be given to how these measures will align with each other to ensure that there is not confusion for the fishing industry who operate within a single administrative area and cross-ICES boundaries and to ensure that measures can be enforced appropriately.

4. Review the Total Allowable Catch for lemon sole and witch, and turbot and brill.

- Southern IFCA would support the proposed separation of Total Allowable Catch for lemon sole and witch, and turbot and brill. This would allow for species specific management and associated evidence gathering that would promote sustainable management of the species.

5. Additional point.

- Southern IFCA would welcome national specific research on flounder. The concern has been raised by both commercial and recreational sectors that declines have been seen for a number of years without an easily identifiable cause. This has been communicated for both the District and also the wider channel area, and therefore, research to identify any potential causes would be useful in informing both local and national management measures to support a sustainable flounder population and would be supported widely across fishing sectors.

6. Research on socio-economic aspects alongside stock and environment base research.

- Southern IFCA agree that an understanding of socio-economic aspects alongside environment-based research is important. For management to be effective in sustaining stocks and supporting socio-economic requirements, the needs of different sectors must be balanced in developing management. This is important to both commercial and recreational sectors and across different gear types (netting, rod and line, trawling).



General

- It was noted that there was less engagement for the Flatfish FMP compared to other frontrunners. This could have been beneficial at early stages of the FMP development to invite input from the commercial and recreational sector, particularly to highlight issues related to flatfish species which have not yet been included in the FMP such as those related to flounder referenced in this response.
- It is recognised and accepted that measures are required to support the sustainability of flatfish stocks. Flatfish species are important to many fishers in our District and the species play a vital role in the wider ecosystem. The Southern IFCA welcomes the opportunity to provide reports on survey works or research to help inform the evidence base for these species. This includes the ongoing bi-annual monitoring of juvenile fish within harbours and estuaries in the District. Southern IFCA have carried out this survey since 2016 to understand of the importance of estuaries and sheltered harbours within the District to juvenile fish populations including flatfish species. Data is collected on abundance, diversity and length frequency. Reports on the data from this survey is available on the Southern IFCA website³.
- The FMP needs to recognise the mixed nature of inshore fisheries and that where diversification is common, as in the case in the District, fishers will potentially be impacted by measures across more than one frontrunner FMP. On this basis, opportunities for alignment between FMPs and a consideration of how management of one species may impact this ability for diversification, on which many fishers and local communities rely, should be a high priority.

³ [Net Fisheries : Southern IFCA \(southern-ifca.gov.uk\)](http://southern-ifca.gov.uk)

Fisheries Management Plans Updates Paper For Information

Report by IFCO Mullen

A. Purpose

For Members to receive updates on the development of Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs)

1.0 Introduction

- FMPs, developed under the Joint Fisheries Statement (JFS) aim to carry out the objectives of the Fisheries Act 2020 by ensuring the continued provision of a shared natural resource for future generations, through the management of fish stocks, geographic area and fishing methods.
- Each FMP is developed by a delivery partner which, to date, includes Defra, the MMO, Seafish, the AIFCA and industry bodies.
- The development process includes collaborative engagement between delivery partners and stakeholders and each FMP will be monitored, reviewed and adapted every 6 years.

2.0 Summary of Key Points

- **Frontrunner FMPs**
 - Public consultation concluded on 1st October 2023
 - During the public consultation, the following engagement was undertaken in the District, engagement events were discussion led and aimed to provide an opportunity for stakeholders to discuss each FMP with the Defra team.
 - In-person engagement events in Gosport, Weymouth and Poole (all August 2023) – all attended by an IFCA Officer
 - Two online engagement events – both attended by an IFCA Officer
 - The Defra FMP team gave a presentation to Southern IFCA TAC Members following the August meeting
 - An Authority Members' workshop was held with officers on 7th September 2023 to discuss each FMP and points for inclusion in the Southern IFCA consultation responses
 - The Chairman, the Chairman of the TAC and IFCO Mullen attended the AIFCA FMP Conference on 26th – 27th September 2023. The conference was attended by representatives from all IFCAs and other authorities/governing bodies including Defra and the MMO, research groups including Cefas and representatives from the fishing industry. The aim was to gather information on the Whelk and Crab & Lobster FMPs to help formulate an AIFCA consultation response that represented input from all IFCAs (in addition to responses submitted directly by individual IFCAs). The conference also provided an opportunity to discuss cohesive management across all authorities and potential co-working opportunities.
 - IFCO Mullen attended an FMP session run by the Scallop Fisheries Improvement Project (FIP) to raise that the Solent scallop fishery had not been referenced in the FMP, this point was included in Project UK's consultation response for the King Scallop FMP (in addition to the Southern IFCA response).

- **Tranche 3 FMPs**

- Tranche 3 FMPs and associated Delivery Partners are:
 - Cockles (AIFCA)
 - Queen Scallop (TBC)
 - North Sea and Channel Sprat (Cefas)
 - Southern North Sea and Channel Skates and Rays (MMO)
 - Southern North Sea Non-Quota Species Demersal (MMO)
- Based on District fisheries and geographic scope, Southern IFCA will be focusing on the Cockles, Queen Scallop and Skates and Rays FMPs. The FMP page on the Southern IFCA website will be updated accordingly.
- Southern IFCA are participating in the Working Group for the Skates and Rays FMP and are one of four IFCAs providing technical expertise to help inform the Cockle FMP
- The need for engagement events in the District for the Skates and Rays FMP has been raised with the MMO with an indication that there will be an in-person meeting in Lyme Regis on 15th November and a potential recreational sector focused meeting in Poole in December, this has yet to be confirmed

3.0 Next Steps

- That Members receive the report.
- Defra are aiming to publish the Crab & Lobster, King Scallop, Bass and Channel Demersal NQS FMPs in December 2023. The Southern North Sea and Eastern Channel Mixed Flatfish FMP is expected to be published in January 2024.

Marine Licencing Update Paper For Information

Report by IFCA D. Parry

A. **Purpose**

To provide a quarterly update on Southern IFCA's input into the marine licencing process between August to November 2023

1.0 **Introduction**

- Marine licencing is one of the principal responsibilities of the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) to facilitate the sustainable use of the UK marine environment whilst minimising negative environmental effects and avoiding interference with navigation.
- Southern IFCA is a consultee on Marine Licence Applications (MLAs). For MLAs relevant to the Southern IFCA District, the IFCA is given 21 days to review the application and determine if a response is required to aid the MMO in its decision making and to further inform the applicant of any relevant fisheries information or considerations.
- The South Marine Plan introduces a strategic approach to planning within the inshore and offshore waters between Folkestone in Kent and the River Dart in Devon. The aim is to provide a clear, evidence-based approach, to inform marine users and regulators on where activities might take place within the Marine Plan area, allowing for national policies to be applied in a local context.
- In responding to MLAs, the IFCA must consider any advice relevant to its remit as a fisheries regulator and with regard to the South Marine Plan, taking account of the objectives and policies listed which are related to that remit. The objectives and policies of the South Marine Plan can be viewed in the plan document online - [South Marine Plan 2018.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#).

2.0 **Summary of Key Points**

- A summary table is provided indicating the detail of any MLAs which required a response during the last quarter outlining the nature of the MLA and the points included in the Southern IFCA response.
- There was one MLA requiring a response between August to November 2023
- There were four additional MLAs received by Southern IFCA where it was determined that no comment was required.

3.0 **Next Steps**

- That Members receive the report.

Summary of MLA consultation requests submitted to Southern IFCA where a response was issued						
Project Name	Deadline	Application No.	Application Type	Applicant	Summary of MLA	Response Points
Maintenance Water Injection Dredging at Fawley Waterside (former Fawley Power Station intake channel)	Oct 2023	MLA/2023/00269	MLA	Fawley Waterside Limited	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Former intake channel/vessel access channel at Fawley Power Station requires maintenance as a navigation channel Previous licence has been issued for one-year Application for a 10-year licence to maintain the site Dredging to take place in a single event every 3 months Dredging over winter 5-7 weeks, Dec to Feb Water injection dredging to open a 10m wide 'flow channel', channel to be progressively widened to approx. 40m and 1.5m below Chart Datum Smoothing of channel sides 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overlap between proposed works and clam/cockle fishing area for Solent Dredge Permit Fishery highlighted Reference to other fisheries operating in Southampton Water Need to consider potential impacts under policy S-FISH-2 Emphasised it is key for engagement with the fishing industry to take place to understand any potential impacts Suggested that potential impacts had not yet been appropriately evaluated Outlined that same points were made in response to original licence application Offer to help facilitate engagement between applicant and industry representatives Suggestion that Pyridine is added to compounds tested for in removed sediment