Southern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority

Pia Bateman – Chief Executive Officer

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12th August 2025

Dear Member,

MEETING OF THE TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE – 21st August 2025

The Meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) will be held in the meeting room at Unit 3 on **Thursday 21st August 2025 at 14:00** to discuss the business on the under mentioned Agenda. Parking is limited, please consider other forms of transport, or share lifts.

Parking is available at the Premier Inn, Holes Bay Hotel. In order to pay for the parking, you are now required to download the Horizon Parking App, once on the App it will select Premier Inn Poole, then follow the instructions for parking. 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,

Sarah Birchenough
Deputy Chief Officer

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 – 8th May 2025
To confirm the Minutes of the Technical Advisory Committee meeting held on 8th May 2025 (Marked A) and consideration of the following matters outstanding:

a. **Recommendation 45:** that the Catch Zone Map for the PHDP fishery be updated for the 2025 fishing season to reflect the boundary of EA dredge fishing management at the entrance to the Rivers Frome and Piddle.

PROGRESS REPORTS

5. To consider the following:

a) **Emergent Updates** – to receive an update on any matters of relevance which have emerged since the publication of this agenda, led by the CEO.

b) **BTFG Byelaw 2023:**
   i. **Byelaw Implementation** – to receive an update from PDCO Dell on the operational delivery of the BTFG Byelaw 2023 since its ratification.
   ii. **Southern IFCA BTFG Position Statement** – to receive an updated version from DCO Birchenough following ratification of the BTFG 2023 Byelaw (Marked B)

c) **Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Fishery 2025 season catch data** – to receive an update from IFCO Mullen (Marked C)

d) **Live Wrasse Fishery 2025 season** – to receive an update from Senior Officer Condie

ITEMS FOR DECISION

6. Black Seabream Co-Developed Principles Consultation Outcome

To consider a report from Senior Officer Condie (Marked D). Members are invited to note the Member Discussion Areas.

7. Solent King Scallop Research Programme

To consider a report from IFCO Churchouse (Marked E)

GUEST SPEAKER

The Inshore and Small Scale Fisheries Consortium – presented by Mr Simon Pengelly, Senior Technical Officer at the AIFCA.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

8. REM & AI Project Interim Report - To receive a presentation from IFCO Payton and IFCO Bedwell on the REM & AI Project Interim Report.

9. Poole Harbour Bivalve Survey Report 2025 – to receive a report from IFCO Mullen (Marked F)

10. Fisheries Management Plans – to receive an update report from PO Wright (Marked G)

11. New Southern IFCA Byelaw Book – to receive an update on the newly formatted Southern IFCA Byelaw Book from Senior Officer Condie

12. Date of Next Meeting

To confirm the date of the next meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee on the 6th November 2025 at Southern IFCA, Unit 3 Holes Bay Park, Sterte Avenue West, Poole Dorset BH15 2AA.

MARKED A

SOUTHERN INSHORE FISHERIES & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE – 8th May 2025

Minutes of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), held in the meeting room at the Southern IFCA office in Poole at **14:00 on 8th May 2025.**

Present

Dr Antony Jensen	Chairman, MMO Appointee
Mr Richard Stride	Vice Chairman, MMO Appointee
Ms Elisabeth Bussey-Jones	MMO Appointee
Mr Neil Hornby	MMO Appointee
Dr Simon Cripps	MMO Appointee
Dr Heidi Guille	MMO Appointee
Mr Stuart Kingston-Turner	Environment Agency
Dr Richard Morgan	Natural England
Ms Pia Bateman	Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

Principal Deputy Chief Officer (PDCO) Sam Dell, Deputy Chief Officer (DCO) Dr Sarah Birchenough, Senior Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officer (SIFCO) Ms Emily Condie, IFCO's Ms Hester Churchouse and Mr Dominic Parry, Project Officers Ms Imogen Wright, Mr William Meredith-Davies and Ms Chelsea Perrins were also present. Cllr Paul Fuller, Chairman of the Authority also attended.

Dr Peter Davies (Angling for Sustainability, a Fisheries Industry Science Partnership Project) attended in person.

Apologies

36. Apologies for absence were received from Mr James Morgan (MMO), Mr Gary Wordsworth (MMO Appointee) and Mr Colin Francis (MMO Appointee).

Declarations of interest

37. The following non-pecuniary interests were declared: Mr R Morgan (Agenda Item 6 & 7), Mr N Hornby (Agenda Item 7). Mr R Stride declared a pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 5c.

Minutes

38. Members considered the Minutes of the meeting held on the 6th February 2025 (Marked A) and consideration of the following matters outstanding.

a. **Resolved: Recommendation 26:** that Officers review wording under the Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Fishery Monitoring and Control Plan, SPA Monitoring Programme, Monitoring Variables 4 & 5 to:

    a. Change the word 'significant' to a different suitable word which does not relate to a quantitative change.
    b. To add text to outline Southern IFCA's role in monitoring for updated or new best available evidence.

The minutes were approved by mutual consent.

PROGRESS REPORTS

39.Emergent Updates

The CEO focussed her update on MPAs at a strategic level, noting that there have been some

delays on national MPA work in anticipation of the outcomes of the UK/EU sandeel arbitration, which has now reached its conclusion. The CEO provided a brief overview of this matter, reminding Members that the UK Government had put in place a total ban on sandeel fishing in 2024 in UK waters due to the adverse impact on birds. The EU subsequently took this to court on 3 grounds 1) that the closure was not based on best scientific evidence, 2) that the closure was not proportionate 3) that the closure was discriminatory, linked to social and economic impacts on communities. The CEO discussed that The UK Government has now received the sandeel Arbitration Tribunal's final ruling, with the court finding that the UK had successfully demonstrated that the measures taken to close English and Scottish waters were based on the best available science and had sufficient regard to the principle of non-discrimination. Both these matters have therefore been dismissed. The Court however, ruled that during the decision making process which led to the closure, the UK did not have sufficient regard to the principle of proportionality, specifically in relation to EU Rights during the adjustment period, a requirement under the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement.

The CEO discussed the two key areas of ongoing MPA Policy work being undertaken at a National Level. She provided an overview of the MPA Compensatory Work, reminding Members that this is a specific project, being led by Defra, which is looking to offset the impact of windfarm developments in existing and new MPAs with the aim to facilitate expansion of offshore wind generation. The CEO discussed that compensatory MPAs were likely to be consulted on in 2026.

The CEO touched on the MPA Network Review, an ongoing project looking at the current network of MPAs. She described the origins of this sat with a 'think piece' from JNCC & NE undertaken in 2022 which was submitted to Defra, with the aim of optimising the MPA network. Following Ministerial approval in November 2024 for English waters, a review is now underway. The first report is timetabled to be released in December 2025.

The CEO described how these two Policy areas exist in a wider climate of increased calls for MPA management and discussed how The Office for Environmental Protection (OEP) and the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee (EFRA) have opened investigations into management in MPAs. She discussed a recent OEP report, which highlights specific gaps in MPA management, monitoring, and reporting, matters which were identified as priorities to address, as well as key considerations for the future of the MPA network. She also touched on a film being realised by Sir David Attenborough called Ocean, which will likely renew calls for 30x30 MPA management and the impact of industrial fishing, which will of course add to the wider debates.

The CEO invited Members to consider contributing to the Defra's ongoing consultation focused on the design of the Marine Recovery Fund (MRF); which aims to speed up the consenting of Offshore Wind projects while protecting the marine environment. She described that the MRF will be a voluntary mechanism that organisations undertaking relevant offshore wind activities (such as developers or plan promoters) will be able to pay into to secure appropriate and strategic compensatory measures to compensate for the adverse environmental impacts of their projects on protected sites. This Defra run consultation provides an opportunity for stakeholders to influence how the MRF will function. Defra will use responses to finalise the design of the MRF, including how it will operate and be managed, and to inform relevant secondary legislation.

The CEO summarised the MPA work as a busy Policy space and discussed with Members how it is likely to remain as we move into 2026 where the renewal of the Trade and Co-operation Agreement will be on the table in Government.

On Member matters, and for Members to note, the CEO confirmed that on the 7th May the MMO had accepted Mr Charlie Brock's resignation as a General Member. The CEO informed Members hat she would be discussing this further at the forthcoming Authority Meeting, alongside other relevant matters.

The CEO invited the General Members to the next Community Forum in Swanage on Wednesday 14th between 16:00-19:30.

Dr S Cripps provided further information in regard to the Ocean film, the main messages it puts forward relating to industrial fishing, MPAs and overfishing and how these relate to wider international campaigns. Members discussed that there are strong political points being made on both sides and how this interacts with the IFCA remit and duties, and legislation related to management of MPAs. Members discussed that recent reports on MPAs had not captured all the nuances of the application of MPA management at different levels.

40. Byelaw Update

DCO Birchenough updated Members on the progress of two MPA byelaws through the MMO and Defra QA process. The BTFG Byelaw 2023 submission package has been through Defra scrutiny and has been passed to the officer of the Minister for final consideration and potential ratification. The timeline for this is dependent on the availability of the Minister's office.

DCO Birchenough informed Members that the Shore Gathering Byelaw, made by the Authority in December 2024 and subsequently submitted to the MMO and Defra for consideration by the Secretary of State, had been through round one of quality assurance with the MMO. DCO Birchenough outlined that the comments received were being reviewed and actioned.

41. Black Seabream

Senior IFCO Condie outlined that a consultation on proposed Shared Principles for black seabream management, to complement existing spatial management and support black seabream during the breeding season in 3 MCZs in Dorset, has now started and will run until 22nd June 2025. Senior IFCO Condie outlined the proposed measures being consulted on, stating that the proposal is the Shared Principles would be voluntary, apply within the 3 Dorset MCZs only and during the period 1st April to 31st July only. Senior IFCO Condie informed Members that in addition, views are being sought through the consultation on the development of a voluntary data collection scheme, proposed to run year-round, with the aim of improving the evidence base for black seabream populations and fisheries to ensure that management continues to be based on best available evidence.

Senior IFCO Condie outlined that a questionnaire is available for stakeholders to complete and that port visits, an online meeting, a second Industry Workshop, the Swanage Community Drop-In and targeted patrols would all be used during the consultation to aim to maximise engagement and participation.

42. Solent Dredge Fisheries 24/25 Catch Returns

IFCO Churchouse presented Members with an overview of the 2024/25 Solent Dredge Permit fishing season, providing detail on catch rates and participation levels by permitted fishers for the King Scallop fishery and the Manila clam fishery. IFCO Churchouse provided detail from the Executive Summary on geographic scope of fishing activity and Catch Per Unit Effort (CPUE), outlining that for each month the CPUE for King Scallop was below values seen for the 2023/24 season but similar to values for the 2021/22 and 2022/23 seasons, and that the quantity of catch and number of participating vessels was increased for Manila clam compared to previous seasons.

Members discussed the decreased catch for King Scallop compared to the previous season. IFCO Churchouse stated that the price paid for King Scallop had been reduced compared to the previous year along with some natural fluctuations in population levels, 2024/25 having been an exceptional year for the King Scallop population in the Solent. Members discussed King Scallop landings coming from the continent which had impacted the market at a national level despite management remaining consistent for international fleets.

43. REM/AI

PDCO Dell discussed how exciting this area of work is for this Authority and provided a brief overview of where the REM/AI work sits under the provisions outlined in the Joint Fisheries Statement, specifically with reference to exploration of the use of technologies such as remote electronic monitoring for scientific purposes to aid the sustainable management and control of fisheries.

PDCO Dell discussed the ongoing collaboration and engagement with Defra, to include attendance at the REM Quarterly meeting in April, run by the Defra policy team and involving all ALBs working on REM including Cefas, MMO and Natural England. PDCO Dell discussed his presentation of the Southern IFCA project plan, and the IFCAs unique selling point, being low-cost REM solutions that work. PDCO Dell discussed his future plans to continue to work with other IFCAs and across Government to continue to explore the use of REM in UK fisheries with a recent focus on “interoperability”, looking at opportunities for inshore solutions to integrate with offshore/national systems.

PDCO Dell discussed the ongoing development of a National IFCA Strategy, which further strengthens the IFCA response to “interoperability” around the inshore zone. This strategy considers three other IFCAs, in addition to Southern who are currently exploring the use of REM and AI.

PDCO Dell discussed some common issues faced nationally in the use of reliable gear sensors on the towed gear fleet, discussing this particular issue in the context of gear sensors installed on one of the Southern IFCA under 12m trawlers in Lyme Bay and subsequent work with Northumberland IFCA and the suppliers to remedy via a re-installation in West Bay.

PDCO Dell looked forward to the next priority fishery, as identified in the Southern IFCA project plan, namely Potting and Netting on under 12m vessels. He described ongoing work with engineers in Lyme Bay which aims to capture videos of both whelk pots and bycatch to inform the work intended in relation to AI in these fisheries.

PDCO Dell discussed the challenges of the REM project, with regard to relying on industry volunteers and discussed how fortunate Southern IFCA are in having fishers who are forward thinking who want to volunteer as part of this project to aid in improving scientific understanding of species and quota allocation, to improve how fishers are able to demonstrate that they are fishing responsibly within MPAs, as well as other benefits such as security and safety on-board. PDCO Dell thanked all the fishers in the District who had been involved in the project to date, for the benefit of all.

Members discussed the separation of this project from the iVMS roll out, PDCO Dell confirmed that the licence condition for iVMS comes into effect on Monday 12th May 2025.

SOUTHERN INSHORE FISHERIES & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE – 8th May 2025

ITEMS FOR DECISION

44. Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Fishery Monitoring and Control Plan

IFCO Parry provided Members with the outputs of the On-Site Monitoring Programme under the Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Fishery Monitoring and Control Plan (M&CP) in relation to Threshold Trigger Levels (TTL) for the Poole Harbour Bivalve Survey Data 2025 and fishery landings data for the 2024 season.

IFCO Parry outlined how data had been collected and analysed, with average values across both data variables used to indicate whether a TTL had been reached, the TLLs having been agreed by the Members of the TAC at the meeting in February when the M&CP for the fishery was formally introduced.

IFCO Parry outlined that the LPUE TTL for the landings data Monitoring Variable had been reached, with an average value of 72.41 kg/day for the 2024/25 fishing season, which is below the LPUE TTL of 78.25kg/day. IFCO Parry further outlined that the CPUE TTL for the Poole Harbour Bivalve Survey Monitoring Variable had not been reached, with an average CPUE value of 43.48kg/m of dredge/hr for the 2025 survey which is above the CPUE TTL of 34.60kg/m of dredge/hr.

IFCO Parry outlined that, as the LPUE TTL had been reached, the control mechanism had been activated, namely for the TAC to determine whether any additional management intervention would be required to support a sustainable fishery for the 2025 fishing season. IFCO Parry stated that although the LPUE TTL had been reached, results from monthly monitoring indicated that catch rates, although lower than the period 2020-2023, were consistent with catch rates from the 2016-2019 period and that anecdotal information from the Permit Holders suggested stocks can exhibit a fluctuating pattern, with a mild winter and increased freshwater inputs potentially contributing to the lower catch rates. On the basis of analysis for the LPUE TTL and CPUE TTL, IFCO Parry outlined that the recommendation was that no additional management was required to support a sustainable fishery for the 2025 season.

IFCO Parry outlined that it is recognised that the CPUE data from the 2025 survey is lower than the previous four years and that the M&CP allows the Authority to take a proactive approach to in-season monitoring as well as annual monitoring, providing for a monthly understanding of variation in catch rates as well as the introduction of a new mid-season CPUE monitoring programme, to be piloted for the 2025 season, providing further understanding of any stock changes.

IFCO Parry informed Members that Permit Holders would be notified of the TAC decision and Permits would be issued to successful applicants ahead of the start of the 2025 season on 25th May.

Members discussed the use of fisher-dependent data and fisher-independent data to inform the M&CP and how both data sources are used to help inform understanding of the sustainability of the fishery. Members also discussed how CPUE values were calculated using weight of catch obtained in the survey above and below minimum conservation reference size, IFCO Parry outlined that size frequency data is also collected as part of the survey and the full survey results will be compiled into a report for the August TAC meeting.

Mr S Kingston-Turner raised that on the Catch Zone Map provided to Permit Holders as part of the annual PHDP permit pack, the current boundary for Zone 11, which overlaps the entrance to the rivers Frome and Piddle could be misleading in identifying where dredge management for the rivers by the Environment Agency takes over from IFCA management.

Mr S Kingston-Turner queried whether the Zone 11 boundary could be re-drawn to account for the EA management boundary.

Recommendation
45. That the Catch Zone Map for the PHDP fishery be updated for the 2025 fishing season to reflect the boundary of EA dredge fishing management at the entrance to the Rivers Frome and Piddle.

The recommendation in the paper was proposed by Ms E Bussey-Jones and seconded by Dr S Cripps. All Members voted in favour.

Resolved
46. That Members agree that no additional management interventions are necessary under the Poole Harbour Dredge Permit for 2025/26.

47. The Poole Harbour Fishery Order 2015: Tranche 3

PO Meredith-Davies presented to Members on the process for delivering the Tranche 3 issuing of leases for the period 2025-2030 under The Poole Harbour Fishery Order 2015 ("The Order"). PO Meredith-Davies provided information on how aquaculture is managed by Southern IFCA in Poole Harbour under The Order and the duties which Southern IFCA must operate under when considering aquaculture management.

PO Meredith-Davies outlined that, under the terms of the Lease of Right of Several Fishery of Shellfish Laying in Poole Harbour, Leases undergo renewal in a series of 5-year Tranches, the current Tranche coming to an end on 30th June 2025. PO Meredith-Davies detailed the process for Tranche 3 carried out to date and the required review of supporting documentation for the issuing of Leases which included the Poole Harbour Several Order 2015 Management Plan, the Poole Harbour Fishery Order 2015 Biosecurity Measures Plan and an Appropriate Assessment for the Issue of Leases under the Poole Fishery Order 2015, the latter having been submitted to Natural England for Formal Advice.

PO Meredith-Davies provided a summary of the Business Plans for 2025-2030 which had been received from applicants for Tranche 3 Leases, detailing that the Business Plans must provide an overview of proposed activity during the Lease period. PO Meredith-Davies informed Members that there were no significant changes to species or activity proposed in the Business Plans for Tranche 3 compared to activity carried out under Tranche 2.

PO Meredith-Davies also outlined the key updates to each of the supporting documents stating that specific management for all Lease Beds would be included as a prohibition on any activity between 18:00-06:00 for November to March to ensure site integrity of the Poole Harbour SPA, SSSI and Ramsar Site. PO Meredith-Davies also outlined that specific management in relation to compatibility between aquaculture and water user interactions would also be maintained under Tranche 3.

PO Meredith-Davies informed Members that new elements had been added to the supporting document package including detail of how The Order supports delivery of national legislation and policy, an overview of research on monitoring of wild populations of Pacific oysters in Poole Harbour and Southampton Water, and a literature review on the ecosystem services provided by aquaculture with relevance to specific services provided by aquaculture in Poole Harbour.

PO Meredith-Davies outlined that, if Members resolved the recommendations in this report, then a period of Formal Consultation on the Management Plan would be undertaken with the

outcomes reviewed by the Executive Sub-Committee prior to final acceptance of the Management Plan and issuing of Leases for Tranche 3.

The CEO and Members expressed thanks to PO Meredith-Davies for his conscientious efforts on this workstream and the quality of the outputs.

Dr R Morgan provided a verbal update on Natural England's Formal Advice, outlining that NE are in agreement with the conclusion of the Appropriate Assessment drafted for Tranche 3.

Members discussed that the management of aquaculture in Poole Harbour represented a good example of how appropriate management can allow activities to take place within an MPA without an adverse risk to designated features. Members discussed the potential for publishing information from the ecosystem services literature review more widely.

The recommendations were proposed by Mr R Stride and were seconded by Mr S Kingston-Turner. All Members voted in favour, with the exception of Mr N Hornby who abstained.

Resolved

48. a. That Members approve:

i. the Poole Harbour Several Order 2015 Management Plan: 2025 Revision

ii. a period of public consultation to enable the Management Plan: 2025 Revision to be scrutinised by any interested parties, in line with Section (4) of The Poole Harbour Fishery Order 2015.

iii. the Poole Harbour Fishery Order 2015 Biosecurity Measures Plan (2025 Version).

v. the Appropriate Assessment for the Issue of Leases under the Poole Harbour Fishery Order 2015 for 2025-2030.

b. That Members delegate to Officers the ability to make inconsequential updates to the Appropriate Assessment following the receipt of any Formal Advice from Natural England.

c. That Members note the summary of proposed activity under Tranche 3 from the submitted leaseholder Business Plans, noting that there are no proposed changes in activity from T2.

GUEST SPEAKER:

49. Angling for Sustainability, a Fisheries Industry Science Partnership Project

Members received a presentation from Dr Peter Davies, Post Doctoral Researcher in Marine Ecology and the University of Plymouth, followed by a Q&A. Dr Davies presented on the Angling for Sustainability Project, run collaboratively between scientists, fishers, conservation advisors and fisheries managers funded by the Defra Fisheries Industry Science Partnership (FISP) scheme. The project aims to support sustainable fisheries management by filling key knowledge gaps by tracking shark, ray and black seabream movements.

Dr Davies presented on data from the project related to black seabream following the conclusion of the project looking at homing behaviour, fine-scale behaviours, post-release behaviours and the overall conclusions and next steps from the project. Through the Q&A Members discussed survivability of tagged fish, fish tagged in different years, seasonality of black seabream in Dorset and observations of potential nesting behaviours. Members expressed thanks to Dr Davies for providing an update on the outcomes of the project and

that the resulting data is useful in helping to inform understandings of black seabream which can be considered as part of management discussions.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

50. Exploration of the Pump Scoop Dredge as a fishing method in the Solent

Project Officer Perrins provided an overview of the matters captured in the Executive Summary. Dr R Morgan asked for further clarification on the intentions of this work and whether, if evidence gaps were able to be filled to complete relevant conservation assessments, then this activity could be allowed to take place in the Solent. DCO Birchenough outlined that being able to complete the relevant conservation assessments is one part of this work, at the first stage the IFCA needs to be confident that legal duties for relevant MPA management can be met, however once this is understood there are other elements to take into consideration including stock management, combined influences of multiple fishing gears operating in the same fishery and a balance between different stakeholders.

Members discussed whether pump-scoop dredges are a lower impact dredge gear type, discussing that to date evidence is inconclusive with regard to benthic impacts and sediment parameters from that gear type and that there has not yet been a direct comparison between this and the box dredge. Members also discussed whether pump-scoop dredging in the Solent would replace existing dredge types or operate in addition to them, DCO Birchenough outlined that this formed one of the points related to this workstream which would require careful consideration.

51.Fisheries Management Plans Updates

Project Officer Wright provided an overview of the matters captured in the Executive Summary. There we no subsequent questions from Members.

52. Date of Next Meeting

To confirm the date of the next meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee on the 21st August 2025 at Southern IFCA, Unit 3 Holes Bay Park, Sterte Avenue West, Poole Dorset BH15 2AA.

This section of the meeting concluded at 16:18.

Chairman: **Date:**

All Members of the Public (in person and virtual) were invited by the Chairman to leave the meeting, due to the subsequent item involving the consideration of information which is exempt by virtue of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 and therefore the public are required to be excluded during consideration of this item.

CONFIDENTIAL ITEM

53. The Poole Harbour Fishery Order 2015: Business Plan Request – Tranche 3 Applications

Following an overview by DCO Birchenough, regarding a dispensation for an ancillary vessel over 16.5m to operate under Tranche 3 of the Poole Harbour Fishery Order 2015, Members considered the recommendations.

The recommendation was proposed by Dr S Cripps and were seconded by Dr H Guille. All members voted in favour.

Resolved
54. That Members approved the issuing of a dispensation for a vessel over 16.5m to operate under Tranche 3 of the Poole Harbour Fishery Order 2015 for the period 1st July 2025 to 30th June 2026 only.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 16:35.

Chairman: **Date:**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Marked B

Southern IFCA Bottom Towed Fishing Gear Position Statement

Report by DCO Birchenough

A. Purpose

To provide Members with an updated version of the Southern IFCA Bottom Towed Fishing Gear (BTFG) position statement titled "Providing some local context on the Bottom Towed Fishing Gear debate" which was originally published on 17th June 2025.

1.0 Introduction

- At a national level, and subsequently a local level, there has been an increase in attention placed on BTFG activity and associated management, particularly within Marine Protected Areas (MPAs).
- In August 2024 Members were made aware of a Private Members Bill to regulate and limit bottom trawling through whole-site prohibitions in MPAs[1]. Following a 2nd reading in the House of Lords in September 2024, the Bill was withdrawn.
- In November 2024 Members were further informed that a second draft of a Private Members Bill titled the 'Marine Protected Areas (Bottom Trawling) (England) Bill' had undergone a 1st reading in the House of Commons and was timetabled for a second reading in June 2025. The 2nd reading of this Bill has subsequently been re-timetabled for May 2026.
- On 8th May 2025, the film 'Ocean' with David Attenborough was released highlighting, as one topic covered, the debate on bottom trawling and dredging within MPAs. Additional information regarding the BTFG debate has also appeared online including the Blue Marine Foundation #TheBottomLine Campaign and a contextual article from Seafish seeking to provide a science-based response to how fishing and marine conservation can work together in response to the topics covered in the 'Ocean' film.
- On 9th June 2025, the MMO launched a consultation on proposed fisheries management measures and a call for any additional evidence for Stage 3 of the process to assess and manage the impacts of fishing in offshore English MPAs. The proposed measures include prohibitions for fishing using BTFG in specified areas of 31 MPAs and minor changes to existing BTFG prohibitions in 5 MPAs to reflect the most up to date approach, habitat location and depth information. The consultation is open until 29th September 2025.

2.0 Southern IFCA Position Statement

- In response to the conversation on BTFG and associated management, the Authority were consulted on the development and publication of a Southern IFCA position statement to provide local context on BTFG management in the Southern IFCA District, the role of fishers as key custodians of sustainable marine environments and how well managed fisheries can continue to co-exist alongside the attainment of conservation objectives in the inshore waters, harbours and estuaries across the District, in turn supporting local coastal communities.
- Southern IFCA published the position statement **'Providing some local context on the Bottom Towed Fishing Gear debate'** on the Southern IFCA website and social media platforms on 17th June 2025, the statement was then further updated to reflect the ratification of the Bottom Towed Fishing Gear Byelaw 2023. A copy is provided as part of this report.

3.0 Next Steps

- That Members note the report.

[1] Including Marine Conservation Zones [MCZs], Nature Conservation MPAs, Highly Protected Marine Areas [HPMAs], Special Areas of Conservation [SACs], Special Protection Areas [SPAs], Sites of Special Scientific Interest [SSSIs], Areas of Special Scientific Interest in a marine environment and marine Ramsar sites.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Marked B

Providing some local context on the Bottom Towed Fishing Gear debate.

Southern Inshore Fisheries & Conservation Authority

Fishers are key custodians of sustainable marine environments and continue to work with Southern IFCA to ensure a viable fishing industry for current and future generations. Well managed fisheries continue to co-exist alongside attainment of conservation objectives in the inshore waters, harbours and estuaries of Dorset, Poole, Bournemouth, Christchurch, Hampshire, Southampton, Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight, which in turn, support the local coastal communities.

The following are examples of features within the district's 21 Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), which, based on best available evidence[+], are sensitive to Bottom Towed Fishing Gear activity and are therefore protected via spatial prohibitions:

- 100%* of confirmed rock habitats (reef features)
- 99.1%* of seagrass beds
- 100% of maerl beds*
- 100% of black seabream nesting habitats*

Bottom Towed Fishing Gear closures are in place across 51.4% of the districts' 21 MPAs, which equates to 27.2% of the entire Southern IFCA district.

Where non-compliance by a minority of fishers is identified, enforcement actions are taken. In the year 2024-2025, eight investigations relevant to Bottom Towed Fishing Gear incursions were undertaken by Southern IFCA, one of which was a joint investigation with Devon & Severn IFCA. Two of these investigations were settled via Fixed Administrative Penalties and three remain ongoing in accordance with the Southern IFCA Compliance & Enforcement Framework.

For further information on the work of Southern IFCA, please visit our website.

+best available evidence as provided by Natural England, the Government's statutory nature conservation advisors.
**% of feature protected under the Southern IFCA 2023 BTFG Byelaw when compared to current best available evidence [released 2023].*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Marked C

Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Fishery 2025/2026
Paper For Information

Report by IFCO Mullen

A. Purpose

To provide Members with an update on the monthly analysis of Manila clam Landings Per Unit Effort (LPUE) data as Monitoring Variable 1 under the Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Fishery Monitoring and Control Plan In-Season Monitoring Programme for the 2025/26 season.

1.0 Introduction

- In February 2025, Members of the TAC resolved to introduce the Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Fishery (PHDPF) Monitoring and Control Plan (M&CP) which included an On-Site Monitoring Programme, an In-Season Monitoring Programme and an SPA Monitoring Programme.
- At the meeting of the TAC in May 2025, Members considered the outcome of the On-Site Monitoring Programme ahead of the 2025/26 fishing season under the Poole Harbour Dredge Permit (PHDP) Byelaw and resolved that no additional management was required to support a sustainable fishery for Manila clam.
- The **In-Season Monitoring Programme** outlines monitoring variables which will be tracked during each fishing season to assess the status of the fishery. While these variables are not linked to control mechanisms, they provide information to support ongoing monitoring and information to inform any Authority decisions in the event a control mechanism is activated under either the On-Site Monitoring Programme or the SPA Monitoring Programme.
- The In-Season Monitoring Programme is currently running for the 2025/26 season which commenced on 25th May 2025

2.0 Monitoring Variable 1: Monthly Analysis of LPUE Data

- Monitoring Variable 1 under the In-Season Monitoring Programme is the monthly analysis of landings data supplied through monthly catch return submission by Permit Holders of the PHDPF. Data is analysed to provide average LPUE (kg/day) for each month, identify trends in data and comparisons to previous fishing seasons.

Manila Clam LPUE

For May 2025, the average total LPUE was 110.44kg/day

- This is an increase of 6.0% compared to May 2024 (May 2024 =104.17kg/day)
- Compared to 2016-2019, the LPUE for May 2025 is between a 60.1% increase (68.99 kg/day 2016) and 33.7% increase (82.58 kg/day in 2018).
- The LPUE for May 2025 was a 28.0% decrease when compared to the highest recorded value (May 2021).
- Values showed consistency between 2016-2019 followed by an increase in 2020. LPUE fluctuated between 2020 and 2023 with various increases and decrease in LPUE between years. There is then a decrease in LPUE in 2024, followed by a rise again in 2025.
- Data shown in Figure 1.

For June 2025, the average total LPUE was 97.27kg/day

- This is an increase of 16.7% compared to June 2024 (June 2024 =83.37kg/day)
- Compared to 2016-2019, the LPUE for June 2025 is between a 26.1% increase (77.16 kg/day in 2016) and a 3.3% increase (94.20 kg/day in 2019).

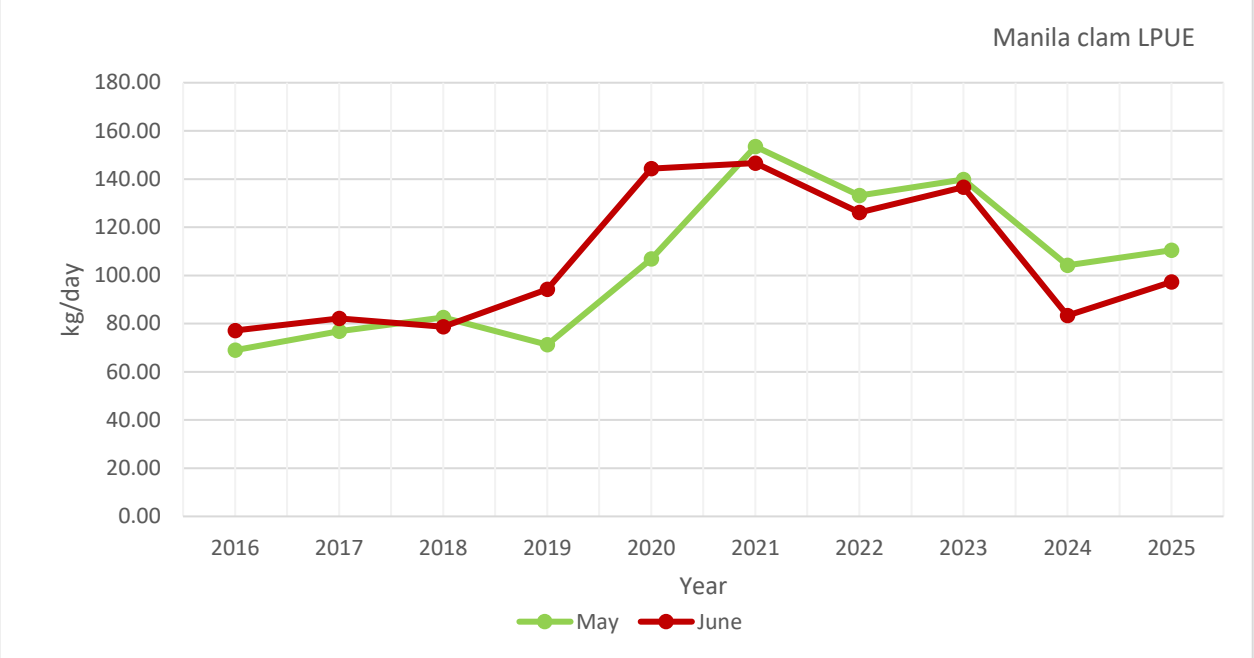


Figure 1: LPUE of Manila clam (kg per day) for the months of May and June, 2016-2025 based on data supplied by permit holders in the PHDP fishery through monthly catch return submissions.

- The LPUE for June 2025 was a 33.7% decrease when compared to the highest recorded value (June 2021).
- Values showed a similar pattern to that of May. There consistency between 2016-2019 followed by an increase in 2020. LPUE fluctuated between 2020 and 2023 with various increases and decrease in LPUE between years. There is then a decrease in LPUE in 2024, followed by a rise again in 2025.
- Data shown in Figure 1.

- In addition to the Manila clam analysis under the M&CP it is noted that there have been reports indicating high catches of cockle at the beginning of the 2025/26 season. Catch data from Permit Holders shows a notable rise in LPUE during May and June compared to previous seasons. The start of the 2025/26 season recorded the highest landed weight of common cockle for May at 3.10t and an average LPUE of 32.05kg/day. Furthermore, June 2025 displayed the second highest landed weight and average LPUE in comparison to June of other years (at 10.83t and 19.17kg/day), behind June 2024 (12.6t and 22.86kg/day).

3.0 Next Steps

- Southern IFCA will continue to monitor the trends of harvested stocks throughout the 2025/26 fishing season and monitor against the PHDPF M&CP.
- Under Monitoring Variable 2 of the M&CP, Southern IFCA aim to undertake a Pilot Mid-Season Stock Observer Programme in August 2025. With the support of Permit Holders, the programme will collect CPUE data from active fishing vessels at the mid-season point. The weight of Manila clam above and below Minimum Conservation Reference Size (MCRS) will be collected and data outputs compared to annual stock survey data obtained pre-fishing season through the Poole Harbour Bivalve Survey.

Marked D

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Black Seabream Co-Developed Principles Consultation Outcomes Decision Paper

A. Purpose

To provide Members with a summary of outcomes following the conclusion of a Black Seabream (BSB) Consultation which proposed a number of Co-Developed Principles which collectively seek to provide additional protections for BSB during the recognised breeding season across three Dorset Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs), in addition to supporting increased understandings of the Black Seabream fishery.

B. Recommendations

- That the Co-Developed Principles are finalised to take forward as one of the management tools to be implemented in the BSB fishery.
- That Officers prepare a BSB Management Intervention Package in accordance with Section 5.0.

C. Supporting Documentation

Annex 1 - Southern IFCA Black Seabream Co-Developed Principles Consultation: Summary of Responses Document

1.0 Introduction, Methodology & Consultation Focus

During a Member Working Group in February 2025, Members approved a draft of Co-Developed (CoD) Principles. These were prepared via a staged approach to co-development, which included a Member Working Group (Aug 2024), where draft principles were explored, a subsequent Stakeholder Workshop (Oct 2024) which considered and further informed the draft principles and a final Member Working Group (Feb 2025) which drew together all co-developed components, considering these in parallel with an Officer feasibility exercise.

The following draft CoD Principles were taken forward for public consultation 6th May to 22nd June 2025:

Application of CoD Principles:	
Voluntary, applying **within the 3 Dorset MCZs** only and in force during the period **1st April to 31st July.**	
Proposed CoD Principles:	
Minimum Conservation Reference Size	28cm
Maximum Conservation Reference Size	38cm
Recreational bag limit	6 fish per person per day
Guidance	Good practice fishing & handling
Data Collection	Year-round, all sectors

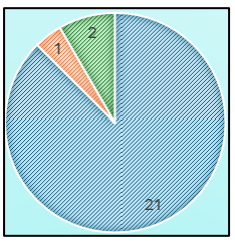
Both in-person and online engagement options were available to stakeholders throughout the duration of the consultation, to include, coastal drop-in sessions, a targeted industry workshop, coastal engagement, community forums, stakeholder group meetings, an online meeting and an online questionnaire.

2.0 Responses

This consultation received **124 responses**, the highest number ever received by Southern IFCA during an informal consultation. Responses were received from charter vessels (33), recreational anglers (65), commercial fishers (23) and 3 x others. The overriding message here is that the **BSB community are engaged and are supportive of the CoD approach and want to continue to work with Southern IFCA to ensure the future health of the BSB population.**

3.0 Summary of Black Seabream Consultation Outcomes

MCRS of 28cm during the breeding season		
Agree (21)	Agree with increase, but not to 28cm (1)	Disagree (2)



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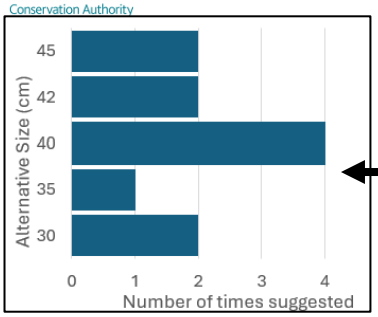
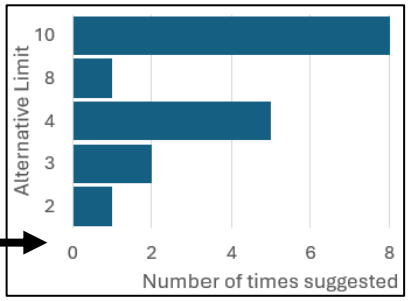
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Maximum CRS of 38cm during the breeding season		
Agree (14)	Agree, but offering different suggestion (6)	Disagree (4)

Recreational Bag Limit of 6 fisher per person per day		
Agree (35)	Agree, but not 6 (17)	Disagree (6)



Introduction of BSB Handling Guidance		
Agree:(21)	Partially Agree: (3)	Disagree: (0)

Introduction of a data collection scheme		
Agree:(33)	Partially Agree: (17)	Disagree: (11)

4.0 Member Discussion Areas

Matters arising following consultation	Contextual Information & mitigations
Compliance with a **Max.CRS** could be problematic for commercial netters.	Three relevant fishers (low risk due to low number of fishers) are keen to provide data to help inform understandings & compliance solutions.
Compliance with a **Max.CRS** could lead to an increase in fish removed from the fishery: a large fish is worth more at market, and more smaller fish would be required to make up the shortfall	• The Max.CRS is proposed specifically to protect the breeding males not proposed for effort management. • BSB Handling Guidance to clearly document appearance of breeding males.
Compliance with a **Max.CRS** could be problematic for charter and RSA, as they prefer to retain single, larger fish as part of the 'angling experience'.	• Education to accompany CoD Principles to improve understandings of relevance of each CoD Principle to the sustainability of BSB populations.
Increase in **bag limit** from 6 to avoid grading	• Max.CRS will mitigate risks to breeding males if high grading occurs. • BSB Handling Guidance to consider grading • Compliance patrol outcomes to monitor for inclusion in M&C Plan
27% responded 'maybe' and 18% 'no' in response to the introduction of a **data collection scheme.**'(Maybe': depending on type & frequency/ 'No' – as required to provide same information on other platforms)	To proceed with data collection scheme ensuring deconfliction with other data collection platforms (e.g. iVMS, Catch App) to ensure data collection requirements are bespoke to needs of BSB fishery with full rationale underpinning why the data is needed.

5.0 Next Steps

Based on the outcomes of the consultation and consideration of feedback received as part of the consultation process, **it is proposed that the draft CoD principles are taken forward with no amendments,** to form one of the management tools to be implemented in the BSB fishery. It is proposed that a **BSB Management Intervention Package** will be prepared for consideration of the TAC in November 2025, which will include:

- **Management Intentions Document**: providing legislative context, clarity on the decision making process and future management intentions related to the BSB fishery (e.g. review cycles).
- **Monitoring and Control Plan**.
- **Impact Assessment**
- **Literature Review**
- **MCZ Assessments** which will consider both statutory (existing management interventions) and non-statutory measures (CoD principles) in combination
- **Formal Advice received from Natural England** on the MCZ Assessments.

Marked D – Annex 1

Southern IFCA
Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority

Consultation

Black Seabream Co-Developed Principles

Summary of Responses

August 2025

Author: E Condie

About this document: This document has been developed to summarise the consultation undertaken by Southern IFCA between 6th May and 22nd June 2025 on Co-Developed Principles for the management of black seabream (*Spondyliosoma cantharus*), which collectively seek to provide additional protections for black seabream during the recognised breeding season across three Dorset Marine Conservation Zones, in addition to supporting increased understandings of the black seabream fishery.

Further Copies:

This document is available in electronic format from the Southern IFCA by contacting enquiries@southern-ifca.gov.uk.

Contents

Section 1: Background

1.1 Overview

Under section 154 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 ("MaCAA")[1], Southern IFCA have a duty to seek to ensure that the conservation objectives of any MCZ in the district are furthered.

Black seabream (*Spondyliosoma cantharus*) are a designated feature of three Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs) within the Southern IFCA District (**Figure 1**):

- Purbeck Coast
- Poole Rocks
- Southbourne Rough

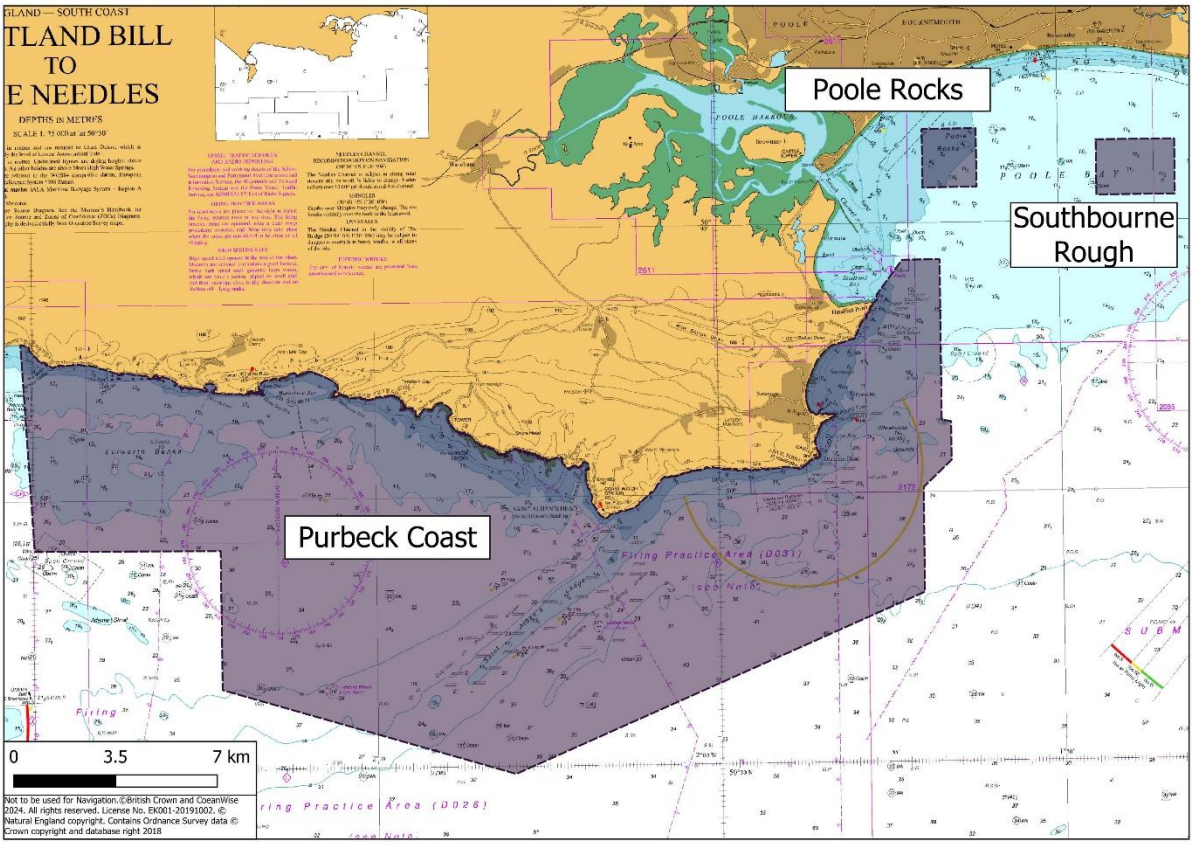


Figure 1 The three Dorset Marine Conservation Zones for which Black Seabream is a designated feature

1.2 Developing Co-Developed Principles to take to Public Consultation

The CoD Principles were prepared via a staged approach to co-development which included a Member Working Group (August 2024), where draft principles were explored, a subsequent Stakeholder Workshop (October 2024) which considered and further informed the draft principles, and a final Member Working Group (February 2025) which drew together all co-developed components, considering these in parallel with an Officer feasibility exercise.

The Stakeholder Workshop was held on 31st October 2024 and was attended by representatives from the commercial sector (12) and the recreational/charter sector (10), covering all relevant gear types. In total 35 industry representatives had fed into the process to date at this point through both the workshop and direct engagement across the relevant ports in the District. Through the workshop, attendees were provided a contextual

[1] Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009

underpinning for the staged approach to co-development and were invited to comment on draft principles explored by Members and put forward any additional industry informed management options.

In February 2025, Members of the Southern IFCA approved a draft of Co-Developed (CoD) Principles which collectively seek to provide additional protections for black seabream (BSB) during the recognised breeding season across the three Dorset MCZs, in addition to supporting increased understandings of the BSB fishery.

These draft CoD Principles, as per table below were taken forward to public consultation between **6th May to 22nd June 2025**:

Proposed CoD Principles	
Minimum Conservation Reference Size	28cm
Maximum Conservation Reference Size	38cm
Recreational Bag Limit	6 fish per person per day
Guidance	Good practice fishing & handling
Data Collection	Year-round, all sectors

The following is the intended application of the proposed CoD Principles:

How	Voluntary Measures
Where	MCZs Only
When	1st April to the 31st July only, during the black seabream breeding season

Section 2: Consultation Process

2.1 Engagement

During the consultation, to ensure inclusive and comprehensive stakeholder participation, multiple engagement platforms and methods were employed. These varied formats were designed to cater to as diverse a range of stakeholder groups and interests as possible, enhance accessibility and encourage widespread participation.

Engagement events:

- Community Drop-In Session in Swanage
- Port Visits to Poole and Weymouth
- Industry Workshop
- Attendance at recreational sea angling fishing events
- Engagement meetings with sector representatives
- Online meeting

Stakeholders could also respond to the consultation:

- In-person
- Through direct engagement with Southern IFCA
- By completing an online questionnaire hosted on the Southern IFCA website

Southern IFCA worked with the Angling Trust to help promote the consultation and provided consultation details to relevant sector groups within the District, including the Southern IFCA Recreational Angling Sector Group and Dorset, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight Marine Conservation Group, and the South Coast Fishermen's Council. Southern IFCA also engaged with academics at the University of Plymouth who are leading on the Fisheries Industry Science Partnership (FISP) Project 'Angling for Sustainability' (of which Southern IFCA are a

project partner), a component of which is to collect data on BSB within the Southern IFCA District using acoustic telemetry.

2.2 Responses

Where participation figures for the consultation are able to be calculated, a detailed breakdown of sector engagement during the consultation is provided in **Figure 2**. **Table 1** outlines engagement events where exact attendance numbers were not recorded but where stakeholders participated verbally in the consultation and contributed to the broader stakeholder dialogue.

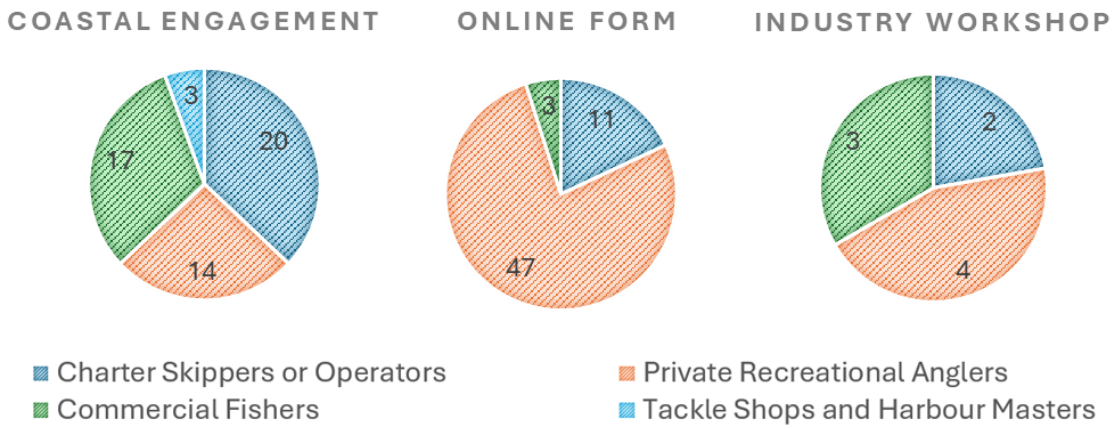


Figure 2 *A breakdown of the reach of engagement methods to stakeholders across the consultation period shown as number of stakeholders participating in each method by sector; charter skippers or operators (dark blue), commercial fishers (green), private recreational anglers (orange), tackle*

Table 1 *Engagement events held during the consultation period where exact numbers of attendees where not recorded but verbal input to the consultation took place and stakeholders contributed to broader stakeholder involvement.*

Engagement Events
Southern IFCA Community Drop-In Surgery - Swanage
Weymouth Port Visit
Poole Port Visit
Engagement meetings with sector representatives
Meeting with Angling Trust Representatives
Meeting with Angling for Sustainability Representatives

The consultation received engagement from 124 stakeholders, including 61 responses to the online questionnaire form. Engagement was cross-sector, from charter vessel skippers or operators (33), private recreational anglers (65), commercial fishers (23) and tackle shops & harbour masters (3).

For coastal engagement, the greatest proportion of engagement came from the charter skippers or operators (37%), for the online questionnaire form the highest number of responses came from private recreational anglers (77%) and attendance at the industry workshop was also highest from the same sector (44%), although attendance was well balanced between this and the other two attending sectors, commercial fishers (33%) and charter skippers or operators (22%).

Section 3: Summary of Consultation Outcomes

This section provides a summary of the feedback, perspectives and information provided by stakeholders through the consultation process. The outcomes are presented for each component of the CoD Principles:

- Minimum Conservation Reference Size
- Maximum Conservation Reference Size
- Recreational Bag Limit
- Introduction of BSB Handling Guidance
- Introduction of a data collection scheme

For each component, a breakdown of responses is provided indicating support or disagreement with proposed measures. Where respondents provided any additional feedback or suggested alternative proposals, this information is also provided under each component.

3.1 Minimum Conservation Reference Size

Proposed CoD Principle:	
MCRS	28cm

The proposed CoD Principle is an increase from the current statutory MCRS of 23cm[2].

Figure 3 shows responses to this CoD Principle, **the majority of respondents (88%) supported the proposed MCRS of 28cm,** with comments made that the role of MCRS in supporting stocks is recognised and an increased MCRS provides greater opportunity for BSB to breed before being removed from the fishery.

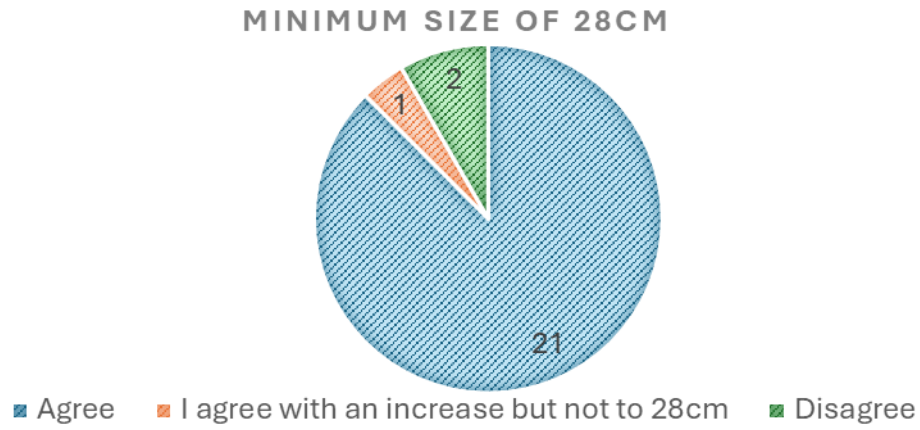


Figure 3 *Levels of stakeholder agreement with the proposed CoD Principle for a Minimum Conservation Reference Size (MCRS) of 28cm. Stakeholders had three options to choose from, 'agree' (blue), 'I agree with an increase but not to 28cm' (orange) or 'disagree' (green).*

Where responses provided additional comment, feedback included:

- that 28cm may be insufficient from the perspective of the sustainability of the stock
- support for the MCRS increase being a statutory measure rather than a voluntary measure

[2] Southern IFCA Minimum Conservation Reference Size Byelaw, available online at: SIFCA-MCRS-Byelaw.pdf

- that an MCRS increase could work as a standalone measure, reducing the need for additional restrictions such as bag limits

There were four proposals put forward for alternative MCRS (**Figure 4**), ranging from 30cm (two responses) to 32cm and 40cm (one response for each).

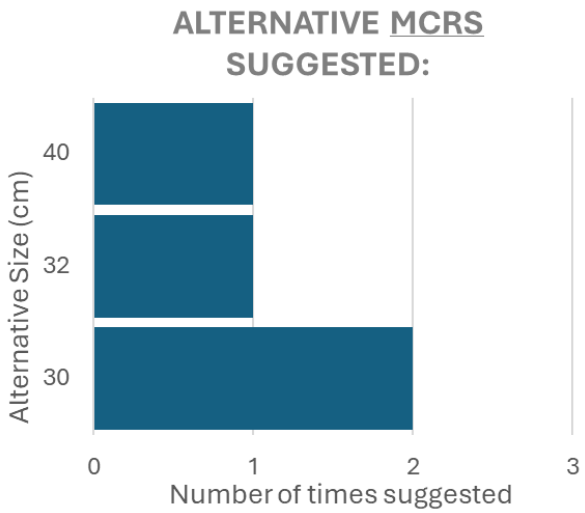


Figure 4 *Alternative MCRS (cm) suggested in responses to the consultation by a total of 4 respondents.*

3.2 Maximum Conservation Reference Size

Proposed CoD Principle:	
MaxCRS	38cm

Figure 5 shows responses to this CoD Principle, the majority of respondents (58%) supported the proposed MaxCRS of 38cm, with comments made recognising the contribution of this Principle to stock conservation by protecting larger, breeding individuals.

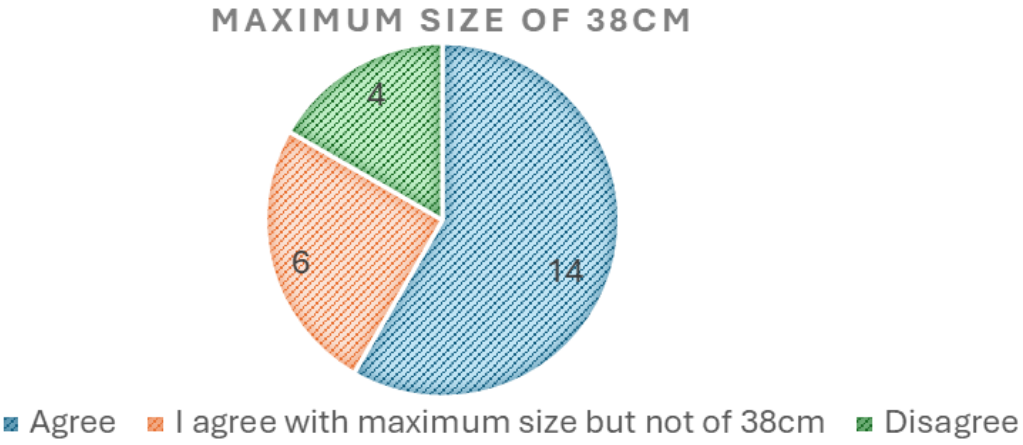


Figure 5 *Levels of stakeholder agreement with the proposed CoD Principle for a Maximum Conservation Reference Size (MaxCRS) of 38cm. Stakeholders had three options to choose from, 'agree' (blue), 'I agree with maximum size but not to 38cm' (orange) or 'disagree' (green).*

Where respondents provided additional comment, feedback included:

- implementing a MaxCRS could present economic challenges for the commercial fishing industry. Larger fish are more valuable on the market, and fishers would need to catch a significantly greater number of smaller fish to match the value of a large individual.
- from both the charter and private recreational angling sectors, it was commented that anglers prefer to retain a single, larger fish rather than several smaller ones, particularly given the culinary and perceived 'trophy' value of a larger individual, therefore having a MaxCRS may detract from the angling experience.
- the common belief that all large BSB are male is incorrect, it is also important to protect larger breeding females.

There were eleven proposals put forward for alternative MaxCRS (**Figure 6**), ranging from 30cm (two responses) to 45cm (2 respondents). The most common alternative MaxCRS suggested was 40cm (4 respondents).

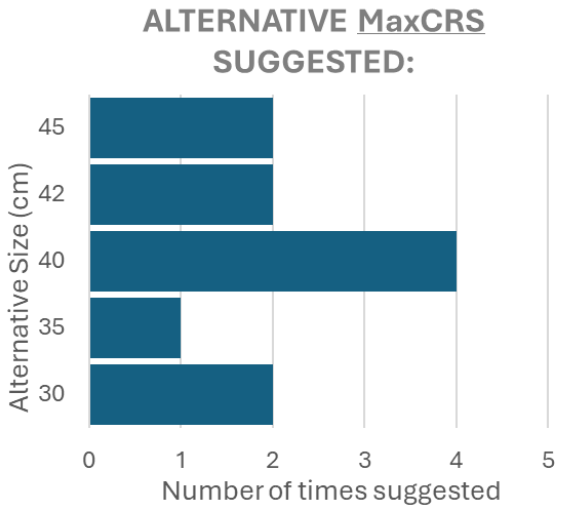


Figure 6 *Alternative MaxCRS (cm) suggested in responses to the consultation by a total of 11 respondents.*

3.3 Recreational Bag Limit

Proposed CoD Principle:	
Recreational bag limit	6 fish per person per day

Figure 7 shows responses to this CoD Principle, the majority of respondents (60%) supported the proposed recreational bag limit of 6 fish per person per day. Where provided, rationale for this was that the proposed limit of 6 fish per person per day is reasonable, especially when considering the financial cost of participating in recreational sea angling. Visting anglers, particularly those using charter vessels may spend over £100 per day on travel, bait and fees, a limit of 6 fish in this context was viewed by some respondents as a fair return and a necessary incentive to maintain interest in the sport.

It was noted that the size and abundance of black seabream has appeared to increase in recent years in certain areas (e.g. off Portland), and therefore a 6 fish limit would not place excessive pressure on stocks. Respondents commented that whilst 6 fish may seem excessive in some contexts, the actual impact is likely minimal as many anglers typically retain very few fish or practice catch and release only.

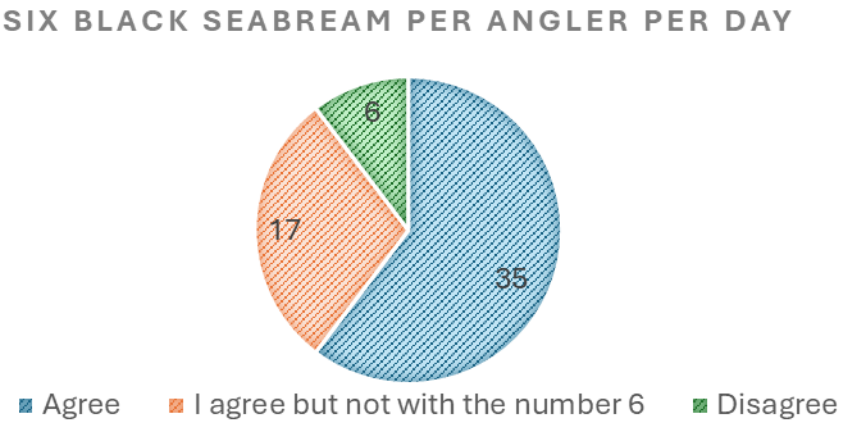


Figure 7 *Levels of stakeholder agreement with the proposed CoD Principle for a recreational bag limit of 6 fish per person per day. Stakeholders had three options to choose from, 'agree' (blue), 'I agree but not with the number 6' (orange) or 'disagree' (green).*

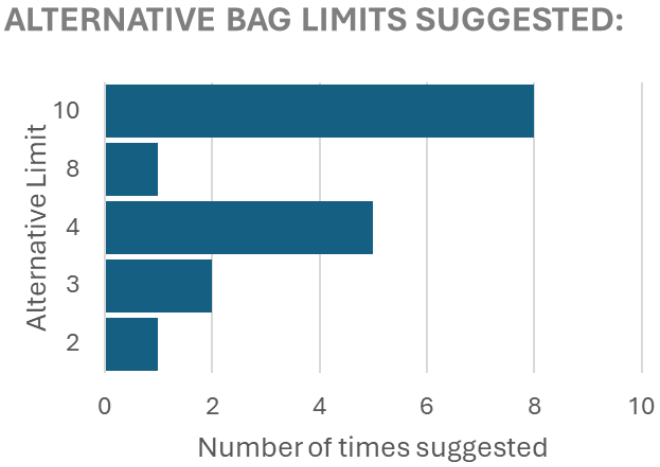


Figure 8 *Alternative recreational bag limits suggested in responses to the consultation by a total of 17 respondents.*

29% of respondents to this Principle stated that they agreed with a recreational bag limit but not with it being 6 fish per person per day with support for both a smaller bag limit, ranging from 2 to 4 fish per person per day (8 respondents overall) or a larger bag limit, ranging from 8 to 10 fish per person per day (9 respondents overall), the breakdown of the number of responses for each alternative proposal is shown in **Figure 8**. 10% of respondents disagreed with a recreational bag limit as a proposal.

General points raised in feedback on this Principle were:

- concerns that the implementation of a recreational bag limit could lead to grading practices amongst anglers, where smaller fish retained earlier in the day are discarded dead in favour of retaining larger individuals caught after the 6 fish limit has been reached
- a recreational bag limit should apply throughout the year rather than on a seasonal basis
- flexibility may be warranted in the number of fish based on location and fishing method (i.e., boat versus shore fishing)

3.3.1 Feedback supporting a smaller number for a recreational bag limit

Where respondents felt that the proposed recreational bag limit of 6 fish per person per day was too high, concern centred on the potential cumulative impact when multiple anglers fish from the same vessel, highlighting that a charter vessel carrying 10 anglers could retain up to 60 BSB in a single trip. This was viewed as being particularly concerning during the spawning season.

Anglers also explained views that the taste of BSB is impaired by freezing and that most anglers that are members of a club mostly practice catch and release.

Five respondents suggested that a limit of four fish per person per day would be more appropriate and proportionate, reasons for this included:

- the localised, seasonal availability of the species
- conservation concerns, particularly during spawning aggregations
- the perception that recreational angling has a limited environmental impact compared to commercial fishing
- that four fish is sufficient to provide for personal consumption, particularly for anglers who fish infrequently or face long intervals between trips due to poor weather

3.3.2 Feedback supporting a larger number for a recreational bag limit

Where respondents felt that the proposed recreational bag limit of 6 fish per person per day was too low, points raised were:

- that the species keeps well in the fridge and so can be stored
- recreational angling is a low impact fishery
- many anglers fish infrequently and should be allowed to take more fish, those that fish regularly would only take a couple
- a higher limit would make trips more cost effective. A lower limit would have a knock-on effect on charter vessels

3.3.3 Feedback where respondents disagreed with a recreational bag limit

A minority of respondents expressed opposition to any form of recreational bag limit. These respondents felt that restrictions on recreational fishing were disproportionate when compared to the impact from commercial fishing. Feedback included:

- management efforts should prioritise commercial restrictions, particularly during spawning periods or in key breeding areas
- a slot size limit (protecting both juvenile and large, breeding fish) would be a more effective conservation tool than daily bag limits
- recreational fishing is already self-limiting for many due to cost, weather and opportunity
- BSB are very abundant

Respondents emphasised the social and economic importance of recreational fishing and expressed concern that overly restrictive measures could discourage participation, especially when there are existing limits on other species (e.g., sea bass).

3.3 Introduction of Guidance on Fish Handling and Release Practices

Proposed CoD Principle:	
Guidance	Good practice fishing & handling

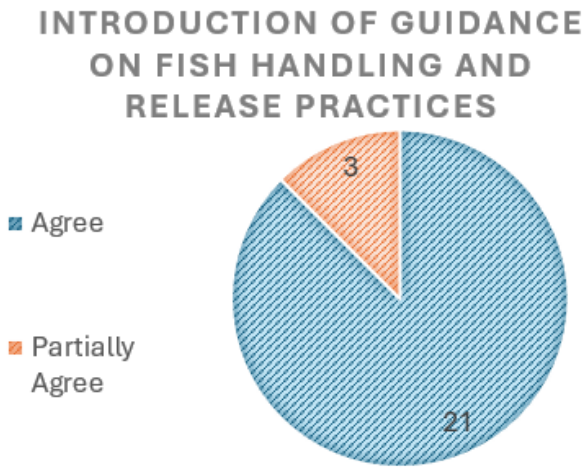


Figure 9 *Levels of stakeholder agreement with the proposed CoD Principle for the introduction of guidance on fish handling and release practices. Stakeholders had three options to choose from, 'agree' (blue), 'partially agree' (orange) or 'disagree' (no respondents to this question selected disagree).*

Figure 9 shows responses to this CoD Principle, the majority of respondents (88%) supported the proposed Principle to introduced guidance on fishing handling and release practices. For the 12% of respondents who disagreed, it was primarily indicated that good handling practices are already adhered to or that such guidance is only necessary for commercial fishers.

Respondents provided a variety of suggestions for the guidance, including recommendations on:

- the use of appropriate fishing equipment
- correct fish handling techniques to minimise stress and injury
- ethical considerations in fish care and release

3.3.1 Suggested Handling and Release Practices

Respondents provided a range of practical suggestions aimed at promoting best practice in fish handling and release to support the health and sustainability of BSB populations.

Stakeholders provided a range of practical suggestions aimed at promoting best practices in fish handling and release to support the health and sustainability of black seabream populations. A consistent theme across responses was the emphasis on minimizing stress and physical damage to fish during capture and release.

Many respondents recommended the use of landing nets, ideally with soft or knotless mesh, to safely secure fish and reduce injury. The importance of handling fish with wet hands or wet towels was frequently mentioned, as this helps to protect the fish's mucus coating and reduce stress. To further minimize harm, stakeholders stressed that fish should be returned to the water immediately after unhooking, and air exposure should be kept to a minimum.

Several contributors highlighted the need to bring fish to the surface slowly, especially when fishing at depth, to prevent physiological stresses.

In terms of unhooking, the use of appropriate tools such as T-bars or degorgers was advised to enable quick and safe removal of hooks.

Stakeholders emphasized the importance of gentle handling throughout the process, warning against dropping or throwing fish back into the water. Wherever possible, it was recommended that fish be unhooked directly over the side of the boat or in the water to minimize contact and potential injury. When weighing fish, the use of slings was advised to avoid undue pressure or damage.

Additional suggestions included allowing fish sufficient recovery time after a vigorous fight before release, and the use of buckets filled with fresh seawater to hold fish temporarily if immediate release is not possible. Several stakeholders also stressed the importance of educating anglers about the breeding behaviour of black seabream, recommending that pregnant females be returned promptly and male fish guarding nests be handled with care and released quickly to minimise effects on spawning success.

Overall, respondents expressed the need to encourage catch and release practices among anglers and suggested that self-regulation, combined with clear guidance on fish handling, would play a crucial role in supporting sustainable recreational fisheries for black seabream.

3.3.2 Hook Type

Respondents were asked specifically to comment on the inclusion of points related to the use of different hook types in the guidance including the use of circle or J hooks and whether hooks should be barbless.

Barbless Hooks

Stakeholders expressed a wide range of opinions concerning the introduction of guidance related to the use of barbless hooks in BSB recreational fisheries. 36% of respondents indicated that they agreed on guidance that hooks should be barbless, but 32% of respondents only partially agreed and the same percentage disagreed (**Figure 10**).

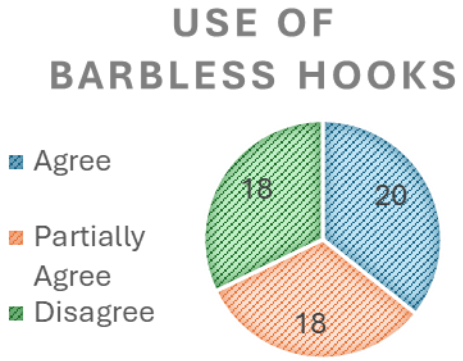


Figure 10 *Levels of stakeholder agreement with the proposal to include the use of barbless hooks in guidance. Stakeholders had three options to choose from, 'agree' (blue), 'partially agree' (orange) or 'disagree' (green).*

Several respondents indicated limited familiarity with barbless hooks, requesting further information on their cost, availability, effectiveness, and potential impact on fishing success. It was also noted that barbless hooks may cause practical challenges such as difficulties in retaining bait, particularly given the aggressive feeding behaviour of BSB.

Opinions on the impact of barbs on fish welfare were mixed. Some respondents believed that small barbs caused minimal damage and that barbed hooks, particularly barbed circle hooks, help ensure fish are mouth hooked rather than gut hooked, an important factor in reducing mortality. Other respondents mentioned research (however no specific references were provided), particularly from freshwater fisheries, suggesting that barbed hooks may cause less damage as they remain more securely positioned, reducing hook movement inside the fish.

A number of respondents reported that they rarely gut hook BSB due to fishing techniques used, and that bards are important for keeping bait securely on the hook, reducing the chance of losing the fish. Some respondents expressed concern that barbless hooks might lead to increased fish escapes and frustration, potentially reducing fishing enjoyment.

There were also respondents who expressed some support for a barbless hook requirement for recreational fishing, with points raised that barbless hooks reduce injury and improve fish welfare. Some respondents stated they use barbless hooks regularly and noted that they do reduce damage but acknowledged potential trade-offs in terms of losing more fish.

Other points raised included:

- a suggestion to crush barbs on existing hooks as a compromise
- the practical difficulty of imposing a universal rule given the variety of fishing methods and gear used
- concerns about the availability of barbless hooks, especially for competition anglers
- the need for any such regulation to apply equally to recreational and commercial fishers to ensure fairness

Overall, while there was recognition of the potential benefits of using barbless hooks for fish welfare, respondent feedback highlighted the need for more education and evidence on their effectiveness and practicality, as well as consideration of the diverse fishing contexts in which BSB are caught.

Hook Shape

Respondents were asked for information on the use of different hook types, particularly the use of circle hooks versus J-hooks in relation to catch and release fishing for BSB. The majority of responses demonstrated a clear preference for circle hooks, with 80% indicating that circle hooks are the least damaging of the two hook types (**Figure 11**), based on both practical experience and fish welfare considerations.

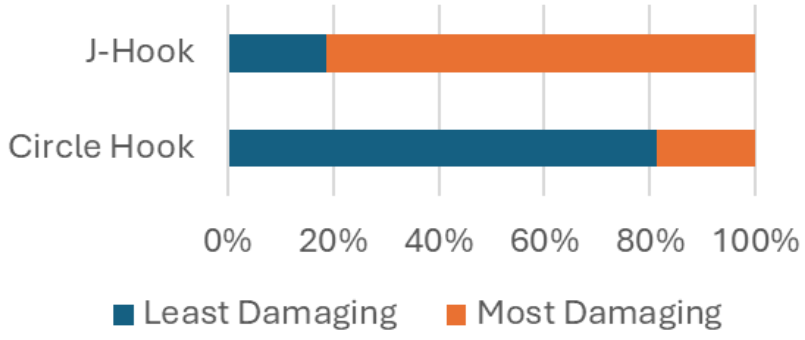


Figure 11 *Responses to a question on whether stakeholders felt circle or J-hooks were least damaging (blue) or most damaging (orange) in the practice of catch and release fishing for BSB.*

Respondents stated that circle hooks are less likely to result in deep hooking, as their design typically causes the fish to be hooked in the corner of the mouth. This location makes hooks easier to remove and significantly reduces the risk of internal injury to the fish. Respondents with extensive angling experience reported that circle hooks "almost always" result in mouth hooking, contributing to higher post-release survival rates. This was supported by respondents who observed that J-hooks are more prone to being swallowed which can lead to gut or gill hooking, causing serious, often fatal, damage to the fish. Respondents also noted that even barbless J-hooks, while potentially easier to remove, do not prevent deep hooking. It was acknowledged by some respondents that the continued use of J-hooks is due to familiarity or confidence in their ability to unhook fish, not because it is considered a better option for fish welfare.

Despite majority support for the use of circle hooks, a few respondents noted practical drawbacks. Some respondents noted that circle hooks are more difficult to remove, occasionally causing mouth damage during extraction. Other respondents mentioned limited experience with circle hooks or that the differences between hook types were not clearly evidence in their own fishing practices. It was also noted that J-hooks are not a problem if the fisher knows how to unhook a deep hooked fish. A small number of respondents indicated that they had no preference or required further information to form a stronger view.

Overall, the preference for circle hooks was clear, particularly where catch and release is encouraged. Circle hooks were noted as an effective tool for reducing post-release mortality, although guidance on correct use and education for the relevant sectors will be important to maximise the benefits of having hook type recommended within guidance.

Additional Suggestions on Hook Use

Respondents provided some additional suggestions on guidance points for hook use, these included:

- the introduction of a minimum size hook
- the use of half-circle hooks

3.3 Introduction of a Data Collection Scheme

Proposed CoD Principle:	
Data Collection	Year-round, all sectors

Respondents were asked whether they would be willing to participate in a data collection scheme for BSB on the basis of data collection taking place year-round and applying to all sectors. 54% of respondents completing the online questionnaire form indicated that they would be willing to participate (**Figure 12**).

Respondents who answered "maybe" to participation (28%), highlighted that their willingness to participate would depend on specific details of the scheme, particularly:

- the type of information they would be asked to provide
- the format in which data would need to be submitted
- the frequency of reporting required

Respondents who answered "no" to participation (18%) raised several points:

- data is already being contributed through existing platforms such as the Sea Angling Diary, CatchApp or iVMS, with respondents expressing a reluctance to duplicate effort

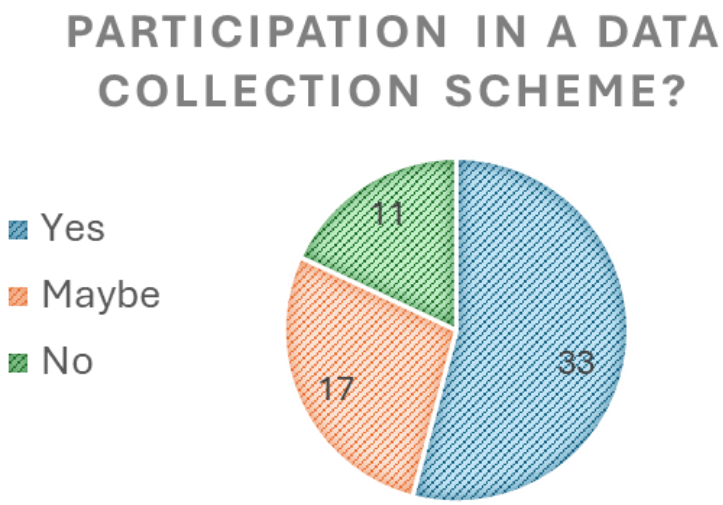


Figure 12 *Levels of willingness to participate in a data collection scheme by stakeholders. Stakeholders had three options to choose from, 'yes' (blue), 'maybe' (orange) or 'no' (green).*

- concerns about how the data might be used, including that it could be used to restrict recreational fishing or introduce future regulation
- that recreational fishing should remain free from administrative burden, with respondents unwilling to engage in what was viewed as unnecessary paperwork or formal reporting

Other general points raised in relation to the data collection scheme were:

- requesting a smaller selection of data is likely to result in higher submission rates
- a recommendation from the charter vessel sector that measuring the biggest fish of the day could be a practical approach to provide data on fish size
- a concern from the charter vessel sector is that high volumes of catches on full charter trips would make detailed data collection challenging and that there would be difficulty in recording the number of oversized and undersized fish

Respondents were also asked what type of data they felt they would be able to provide through a data collection scheme with 12 options provided and an option for 'other'. From the responses, the greatest proportion indicated they could provide data on the 'location of BSB caught' (50 responses), the next three most popular options being 'number of BSB retained' (45 responses), 'duration of trip' (42 responses) and the 'number of BSB under MCRS returned' (40 responses). It is noted that some of the options related only to commercial fishers, therefore the number of responses on options such as 'total length of net' are related to the lower number of commercial fishers who responded to the online questionnaire form. The full list of options and corresponding numbers of responses for each are shown in **Figure 13**.

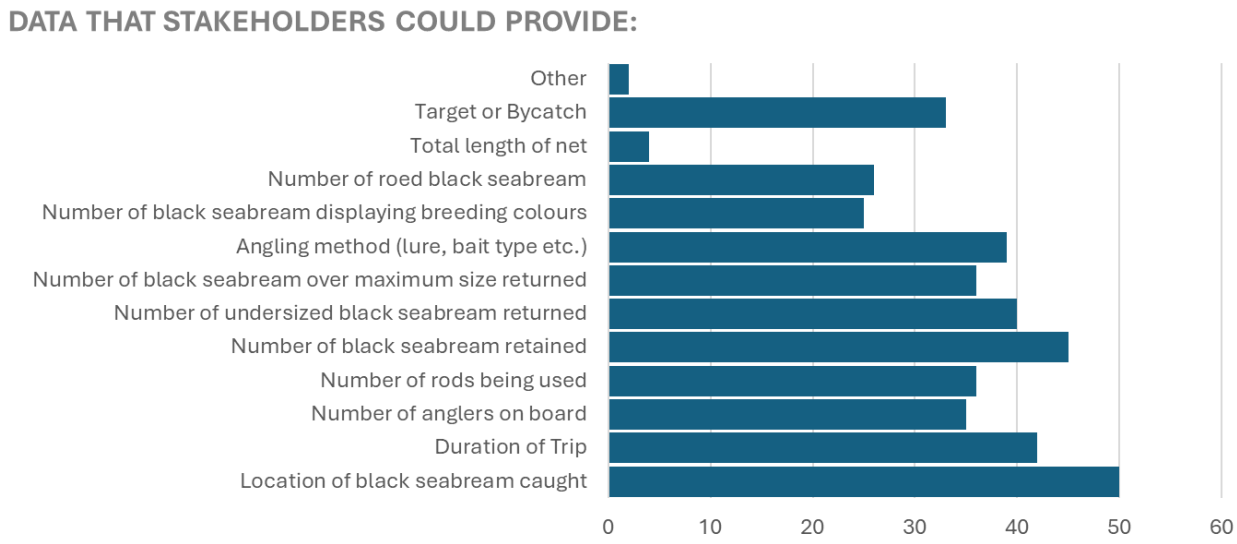


Figure 13 *Options provided to stakeholders for the types of data that could be provided through the data collection scheme, and the number of respondents who indicated they could provide that data.*

The feedback indicated that there is general support for a data collection scheme with levels of data collected and participation dependent on ensuring clarity and transparency in the intent of the scheme and how data will be used, simplicity and, where possible, alignment with existing tools and practices already used by stakeholders.

Section 4: Next Steps

This Summary of Responses document will be shared with the Authority (TAC Meeting 21st August 2025) to support consideration of finalising the draft Co-Developed Principles as one of the management tools to be implemented in the BSB fishery.

The Summary of Responses document will be made available to respondents to the consultation and on the Southern IFCA website following Authority review.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Southern IFCA Solent Scallop Research Programme Decision Paper

Report by IFCO Churchouse

A. Purpose

To provide Members with an overview of current research carried out within the Solent Scallop Fishery, and a proposal to create the wider Solent Scallop Research Programme, aiming to further the understandings of the fishery by collectively providing data to inform local management and contribute at a national level to the King Scallop FMP and UK King Scallop Fishery Improvement Project.

B. Recommendation(s)

- That Members recommend the establishment of a Solent Scallop Research Programme incorporating the research projects detailed in Annex 1.

C. Supporting Documentation for Further Information

- Annex 1 – Solent Scallop Research Programme

1.0 Introduction

- The Solent Scallop Fishery emerged in 2013 as a small-scale fishery for King Scallop (*Pecten maximus*) to the east of the Isle of Wight and in/around Sandown Bay. In the years following, a small King scallop (SCE) fishery also emerged to the north-east of the Isle of Wight and then expanded to cover the eastern Solent, with harvesting moved from being during the winter months to year-round.
- Management for the fishery developed from a Code of Conduct through to inclusion under the Solent Dredge Permit Byelaw (SDPB) with fishing for SCE regulated under a Category A Permit and associated Permit conditions. Additional management is also given in the Southern IFCA Scallop Fishing Byelaw 2019 and The Scallop Fishing (England) Order 2012.
- To accompany the fishery and associated management, the Solent Scallop Survey was trialled in 2021 and implemented as a twice-per-year survey (April [post-season] and September [pre-season]) from 2022. The survey uses local fishers to collect data on Catch Per Unit Effort (CPUE) and length frequency for SCE across beds in the Solent. In 2024 an additional survey was added in February [mid-season] to support additional understandings of stock levels as the fishing season progressed, and, in 2025 the methodology was updated to more closely align with national SCE surveys and thus contribute to outputs of the King Scallop FMP, and to ensure the survey coverage was aligned with primary fishing grounds. Permit Holders within the fishery were invited to input their expertise to the development of this new methodology.
- Data on the fishery is also obtained from monthly submissions of catch data, a requirement for Permit Holders under the SDPB Cat A Permit Conditions. Catch data allows for the calculation of Landings Per Unit Effort (LPUE) data for each month of the season, which can be compared between seasons and against the survey data.

2.0 External Data Collection

- In early 2025, the Environmental Assessment of Scallop Innovation Gear (EASIG) Fisheries Industry Science Partnership (FISP) Project published results from a study to compare the performance of traditional Newhaven SCE dredges with that of N-Viro dredges, as part of research aimed at identifying ways of reducing the impact of SCE gear on the seabed[1].
- In June 2025, discussions, supported by local industry representatives, were held with the EASIG

[1] Research spotlight: Environmental assessment of scallop innovation gear - EASIG | Heriot-Watt University

project leads at Heriot Watt University to explore the potential for including the Solent SCE Fishery in the proposed next iteration of the project. It was proposed that the unique aspects of the Solent fishery in terms of size, gear use and local importance would provide an opportunity to conduct such trials for small-scale fisheries. Despite initial positive discussions, it was ultimately determined by the University that due to the size of vessels operating within the Solent and the method of dredge use (bottom opening) necessitated by this, the Solent vessels would not be comparable with data collected from other fisheries and therefore their inclusion in the next project funding application would not be possible.

3.0 Solent Scallop Research Programme

- Based on existing research and recent discussions with external projects, consideration has been given to the potential for wider research within the Solent SCE Fishery, which could be carried out by Southern IFCA.
- The establishment of a **Solent Scallop Research Programme** (Annex 1) is proposed which brings together **current research** and **three proposed new research projects** to deliver a holistic programme that aims to answer key questions and facilitate improved understandings of the fishery. The aim of this programme would be to inform sustainable management at a local level and feed into discussions on SCE management at a national level by complementing research such as that carried out by the EASIG project and supporting the implementation and addressing of evidence gaps for the King Scallop FMP [English & Welsh Waters] and the UK King Scallop Fishery Improvement Project (FIP).
- The delivery of the Programme would span the 2024/25 and 2025/26 financial years:

Solent Scallop Research Programme	
Research Project	**Proposed Delivery Timeline**
Solent Scallop Survey	• 3x surveys per year
Solent Scallop Catch Data	• Monthly analysis November – March annually
Additions to current Solent Scallop Survey	• First delivery during Feb 2026 mid-season survey • 3x per year from 25/26 year onwards
Identification of key fishing areas in the Solent	• Initial development during 24/25 year followed by periodic updates as required
Gear Trial Research	• During 25/26 year, one-off research project

- In the Research & Policy Team Plan for 25-26, under Supporting Defra Delivery of Fisheries Act Objectives, it was detailed that, as part of developments to the Solent Scallop Stock Survey to support the outcomes of the King Scallop FMP (as outlined in Section 1), a feasibility study would be explored related to the use of drop down cameras to determine whether the methodology is suitable in the Solent for obtaining additional data on King SCE stocks. The ability to undertake this study has been extensively explored with different potential partners and it has been concluded that the study will no longer be progressed due to an inability to resolve logistical and health & safety elements of undertaking such work. It is proposed that the use of cameras is included in the Gear Trial Research project to maintain the ability to explore the feasibility of such technology in data collection for the Solent SCE fishery.

4.0 Next Steps

- If Members resolved to recommend the establishment of a Solent Scallop Research Programme, the budgetary considerations associated with proposed new research projects will be fully detailed and provided to the Executive Sub-Committee for a recommendation to the Authority at the appropriate meetings.

Marked E – Annex 1

Annex 1: Solent Scallop Research Programme

The following table provides detail on the current and proposed research for the Solent Scallop Fishery which cumulatively would constitute the **Solent Scallop Research Programme**, the data collected, how it is or would be used and the relevance to both local management and the King Scallop Fisheries Management Plan (FMP). Research projects will also contribute at a national level to the Action Plan being developed for the King Scallop Fishery Improvement Project (FIP), the publication of this Action Plan is pending.

Status of Research	Research Project	Frequency	Data Collected	Data Use	Links to Management	National Relevance King SCE FMP
Current	Solent Scallop Survey	• September (pre-fishing season) • February (mid-fishing season) • April (post-fishing season)	• CPUE data (kg scallop/m of dredge/hour) • Length frequency	• To monitor Solent SCE population. • Contribute to a time-series dataset. • Identify populations trends and changes over time.	• Inform management of SCE fishery under the Solent Dredge Permit Byelaw on an annual basis. • Build a dataset to inform empirical stock reference points under a M&CP.	• **Evidence gap:** benefits and tradeoffs of different management interventions – Effectiveness of stock, season and spatial closures on stock abundance – Opportunities to understand industry views • **Evidence gap:** investigate how biomass target reference points could be used to support output controls • **Evidence gap:** evaluate methods of managing fishing by improving technical measures and using input controls • **Evidence gap:** development of stock assessment methodologies – Reference points – Stock boundaries • **Evidence gap:** evaluate management scenarios • **Evidence gap:** monitor changes in species
Current	Solent Scallop Catch Data Analysis	• Monthly submission of catch data by Permit Holders. • Monthly analysis of data to provide in-season monitoring of catch levels and annual reporting in line with Solent Scallop Survey Report.	• For each day of the month: ▪ Hours fished ▪ Quantity of species (kg) ▪ Number of tows ▪ Area fished ▪ Buyer(s)	• Landings per Unit Effort (LPUE) determined for each month of the season. • LPUE data compared between years.		

Status of Research	Research Project	Frequency	Data Collected	Data Use	Links to Management	National Relevance King SCE FMP
						abundance and distribution as a result of climate change • **Evidence gap:** develop long term trends for fleet structure and landings • **Evidence gap:** feasibility of real-time management approaches – Adaptive management from best available evidence
Proposed	**Additions to current Solent Scallop Survey:** • Weight and number of empty SCE shells. • Quantification of bycatch and assessment of condition. • Condition of target species.	*From January 2026:* • February (mid-fishing season) • April (post-fishing season) • September (pre-fishing season)	• Weight and number of empty SCE shells. • Number and condition of defined list of bycatch species. • Condition scoring of King SCE based on defined methodologies.	• Additional understanding of impacts of the SCE fishery and gear on SCE condition and levels of bycatch within the fishery. • Monitoring trends in SCE which could indicate environmental or other influencing factors (i.e., presence of disease).	• Ability to quantify additional elements of SCE fishery which could inform future adaptive management approaches. • Provision of data specific to SIFCA District to understand potential implications of management options proposed at a national level.	• **Evidence gap:** understand effective and practical bycatch mitigation for sensitive species in FMP fisheries • **Evidence gap:** quantify bycatch risk of FMP fisheries to elasmobranch, seabird and marine mammal species • **Evidence gap:** improve knowledge base on the impacts of FMP gear types on benthic habitats – Review, quantify and map the impacts of FMP gear types on benthic habitats (including ETP species) • **Evidence gap:** develop new stock indicators and reference points.
Proposed	**Identification of key fishing areas in the Solent:** • Desk-based study to map fishing effort	• Ongoing, initial development study followed by periodic data updates.	• Explore the feasibility of mapping fishing activity using data such as: – SCE catch return data.	• Identifying areas of overlap between the Solent SCE fishery and other fisheries, for example pot	• Potential to inform marine spatial planning in future reviews of South Marine Plan.	• **Evidence gap:** review available evidence on interactions between scallop fisheries and other fisheries to identify hotpots where conflict occurs and inform future

Status of Research	Research Project	Frequency	Data Collected	Data Use	Links to Management	National Relevance King SCE FMP
	for SCE fishery and other Solent fisheries.		– Catch return data from other Solent dredge fisheries. – Officer sightings/inspection reports. – iVMS data. – MMO Catch App data.	& trap fisheries to help identify hot spots of fishing activity.	• Relevance to RPT 25/26 Horizon Goal: Bottom Towed Fishing Gear Phase II.	management measures across relevant fisheries. • **Evidence gap:** Identify important fishing areas. – Analyse commercial and recreational landings data to assess where the most productive shellfish fishing grounds are located.
Proposed	**Gear Trial Research**	*To take place in 25/26 financial year*: • One-off project	• Gear comparison trial for Newhaven dredges and N-Viro dredges in the Solent fishery. • Exploring data collection over different ground types and water depths. • Potential for data collection on CPUE of SCE over and under MCRS, SCE condition, bycatch and collection of detritus. • Potential for camera capture of dredge operation. • Methodology based on those used by EASIG project to allow for similar data collection specific to the Solent SCE fishery.	• Inform understandings of differences between Newhaven dredges and N-Viro dredges to complement national research. • Providing an indication as to differences in gear type for a small-scale, inshore SCE fishery.	• Potential to inform national discussions on management for SCE gear sustainability. • Complement research being carried out/proposed for larger SCE fisheries by providing a perspective on small-scale fisheries. • Support use of N-Viro dredges within the Solent. • Potential to provide information to support any future review of The Scallop Fishing (England) Order 2012.	• **Evidence gap:** Explore the relationship(s)/trade-offs(s) between gear efficiency, environmental impact, and carbon footprint. • **Evidence gap:** understand barriers and enablers to increased use of gear types or fishing methods that reduce impacts on blue carbon. • **Evidence gap:** Review, develop, and trial sustainable and affordable alternative gear to support sustainable fisheries. – Develop options for optimal gear for fishing king scallops, in terms of ecological sustainability and economic viability.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Poole Harbour Bivalve Survey Report 2025
Paper For Information

Report by IFCO Mullen

A. Purpose

To provide Members with the survey report from the Poole Harbour Bivalve Survey 2025.

B. Annex

1. The Southern IFCA Poole Harbour Bivalve Survey Report 2025

1.0 Introduction

- The Poole Harbour Bivalve Survey is carried out annually in the spring, prior to the opening of the dredge fishery under the Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Byelaw. The 2025 survey was carried out two weeks later than in previous years in response to stakeholder concerns that surveys in previous years may not have captured any spring mortality events where one to occur.
- The survey collects data on the size (length in mm) and catch per unit effort (CPUE) for the two most commonly harvested species, the Manila clam (*Ruditapes philippinarum*) and the common cockle (*Cerastoderma edule*).
- The aim is to repeat the methodology each year to build a time series of data which can be used, in combination with other data sources such as catch data from the fishery, to assess the sustainability of the Manila clam and common cockle fisheries in Poole Harbour.
- Following the introduction of the Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Fishery Monitoring and Control Plan (M&CP)[1] ahead of the 2025/26 fishing season, data from the Poole Harbour Bivalve Survey 2025 also informed Monitoring Variable 1 under the **On-Site Monitoring Programme** of the M&CP for Manila clam stocks within the fishery.
- The Poole Harbour Clam & Cockle Fishery is certified under the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC), the certification having been in place since 2018. Part of the requirements under the principles of this certification is to demonstrate robust stocks and sustainable fishing practices. The data collected during this survey contributes to evidencing this for the Clam & Cockle Fishery.

2.0 Summary of Key Points

- The attached report (Annex 1) provides an overview of the dataset collected in the 2025 survey. The survey was carried out over the period of the 26th-27th April 2025.
- The report analyses length frequency data, Catch Per Unit Effort (CPUE) data (kg/m of dredge/hr) and catch data of Manila clam and common cockle (as landings data provided by permit holders), as the two main commercially harvested species, comparing data between catch reporting zones and years (2022-2024).
- While Catch Per Unit Effort (CPUE) data and landings showed some fluctuations for both common cockle and Manila clam, statistical analysis showed no significant differences in the total CPUE and total landings across Poole Harbour as a whole over the last three years, **indicating that stocks currently remain stable and the fishery continues to operate sustainably under current management.** Any variation, including that for individual catch zones may be due to natural fluctuations in the population, continued monitoring under the On-Site Monitoring Programme will enable any longer-term trends to be identified and analysis against Threshold Trigger Levels.

Manila Clams (*Ruditapes philippinarum*)

- **CPUE Trends:** A decrease in CPUE was observed compared to the previous two years. However,

[1] PHDP Monitoring & Control Plan

no statistically significant difference was found between the last three years of survey data when comparing CPUE over and under MCRS across the Harbour as a whole. There was also no significant difference found for catch zones between 2024 to 2025, and statistical differences between 2023 and 2025 were not consistent across all catch zones, therefore variation may be due to natural fluctuations in the population. The cause of the lower CPUE values observed for Manila clam in the 2025 survey is unknown but may be related to a suggested impact to the population in 2024 which could have resulted from environmental factors such as cooler temperatures and increased freshwater inputs.

- **Size Distribution:** The average size of Manila clams has stayed consistently above MCRS over the last three survey years. There has been a shift towards a smaller average size, however this is not consistent across all catch zones, and further monitoring is needed to identify any longer-term trends or possible related factors.
- **Landings Data:** Total landings showed a decrease within the 2024/25 PHDP fishing seasons, although statistical analysis showed no significant differences when compared to previous fishing seasons. Zones 1, 8 and 10 were favoured for Manila clam harvesting. While landings in Zones 1 and 10 were significantly lower in 2024 than the 2023 fishing season, 2024 zonal data results were comparable to, and in some instances exceed, landings from the 2022 season, suggesting 2023 was an exceptionally productive fishing season.

Cockles (*Cerastoderma edule*)

- **CPUE Trends:** The 2025 survey recorded the highest CPUE for cockles at 93.18 kg/m/hr compared to any previous survey, however results were not significantly different to the previous two survey years across the Harbour as a whole. CPUE trends for individual catch zones were mixed with some significant increases and some decreases noted but no consistent trend.
- **Size Distribution:** The average size of cockles has increased from 2023 to 2025. However, the shift in size is not consistent across all catch zones, and further monitoring is needed to identify any longer-term trends or possible related factors.
- **Landings Data:** Annual cockle landings rose by 166.2% over the last 3-year period, from 32.4t in 2023 to 91.0t in 2024. Zones 1, 3 and 8 were the most favoured for cockle harvesting areas in 2024, each recording their highest catches within the past three years.

Fishery Management:

- **Monitoring and Control:** The Southern IFCA monitored the sustainability of Manila clam stocks through the M&CP for the first time ahead of the 2025 season with analysis under the On-Site Monitoring Programme on landings data from the 2024 fishing season and data from the 2025 Poole Harbour Bivalve Survey. The M&CP will continue to be implemented for Manila clam within the fishery with both annual and in-season monitoring of stock levels.
- **Management Recommendations:** For the 2025 fishing season the Authority resolved that no additional management intervention was required to support a sustainable fishery.

3.0 Next Steps

- That Members note the survey report for 2025.
- The survey report will be published on the Authority's website.
- Southern IFCA will continue to monitor the commercial Manila clam stock under the M&CP through the In-Season Monitoring Programme and the On-Site Monitoring Programme. In-season monitoring for the 2025/26 season is underway through analysis of monthly catch data submissions and a Pilot Mid-Season Stock Observer Programme will be undertaken in August 2025 to aim to provide a mid-season comparison to data collected through the Poole Harbour Bivalve Survey 2025.

Poole Harbour Bivalve Survey

2025 Report

1 Introduction

The 2025 Poole Harbour Bivalve Survey is an annual assessment conducted by the Southern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (Southern IFCA) to monitor the health and sustainability of commercially viable shellfish beds within Poole Harbour, UK. Initiated in 2015, this survey provides data on key bivalve species, including the common cockle (*Cerastoderma edule*) and Manila clam (*Ruditapes philippinarum*), to inform fisheries management and conservation efforts.

The survey encompasses 27 shellfish beds across 11 catch zones within Poole Harbour. Utilising a pump-scoop dredge, the survey collects length frequency and Catch per Unit Effort (CPUE) data, with a focus on the primary commercially harvested species. While the dredge is inherently size-selective, the consistent methodology allows for year-on-year comparisons, aiding in the assessment of stock trends and sustainability.

The Poole Harbour clam and cockle fishery operates under the Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Byelaw, which permits the use of pump-scoop dredges (Figure 1) with specific design and operational restrictions to manage the fishery sustainably and to avoid an adverse effect on Marine Protected Areas within Poole Harbour. The fishing season runs from 25th May to 23rd December annually with 45 permits issued each year. The byelaw regulates a number of elements of the fishing operation including gear type/construction, spatial and temporal restrictions, catch restrictions and catch reporting. Fishers must submit a monthly catch return indicating, for each day fished, the hours fished, the quantities of species caught and the buyer(s). Fishers must also indicate which of 11 catch zones the catch has come from to allow for catch data to be related to the annual stock survey.

In 2018, the fishery achieved dual certification under the Marine Stewardship Council's Sustainability Standard and the Seafish Responsible Fishing Scheme, with re-certification under MSC in 2023, the survey data also contributes to an annual audit for this certification.

Monitoring and Control Plan

A Monitoring and Control Plan (M&CP)[1] has been developed as part of a 2024 Southern IFCA Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Review, to support management of the Poole Harbour dredge fishery for Manila clam under the Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Byelaw and associated permits. The M&CP aims to provide a comprehensive framework for monitoring and feedback within the fishery. Management of the permitted fishery for Manila clam was informed by the M&CP for the first time ahead of the 2025 season, this included data from the 2025 Poole Harbour Bivalve Survey and catch data from the 2024 fishing season, which informed whether any trigger levels had been reached under the On-Site Monitoring Programme.

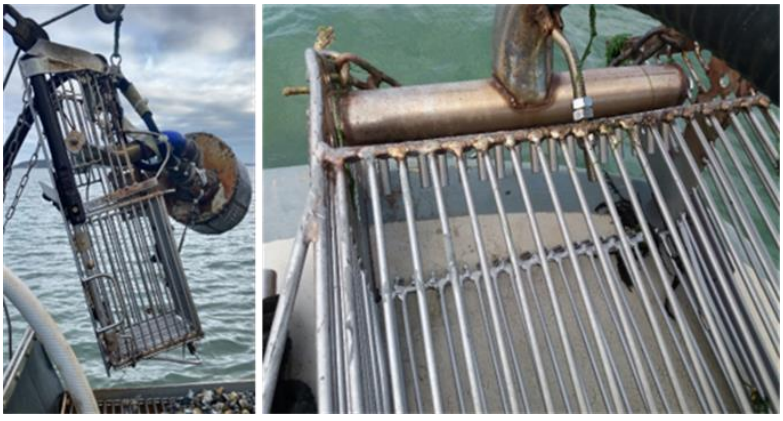

Figure 1: *An example of the pump-scoop dredge used within the Poole Harbour Dredge Permit fishery.*

1 Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Fishery Monitoring and Control Plan

Poole Harbour Bivalve Survey

2025 Report

2 Method

The 2025 survey took place between 26th to 27th April 2025, and used local fishing vessel, *"David's Dream"*. The survey was carried out two weeks later than previous years in response to stakeholder concerns that previous surveys may have missed potential spring mortalities.

A pump-scoop dredge was used in line with normal fishing practice and according to relevant management measures. For the 2025 survey sampling was not able to be carried out in Catch Zone 2 due to tidal constraints.

The pump-scoop dredge is inherently size selective as fishers want to reduce the amount of post-capture measuring required to ensure compliance with Minimum Conservation Reference Size (MCRS). It is recognised therefore that the survey methodology will not fully sample the population below MCRS, although every effort is made to capture all shellfish from the dredge. However, sampling is carried out the same way each year therefore whilst the samples are not fully representative of the below MCRS population, there is the ability to make comparisons between years for under MCRS CPUE and length frequency due to the consistency in methodology.

The following methodology was followed:

1. Three dredge tows were conducted within approximately 20m of a predetermined central point of each site. This central point is consistent across all survey years.
2. After 2 minutes the dredge was brought inboard, and all bivalves retained and labelled to the corresponding site number and dredge tow.
3. Each species was identified, and the first 50 individuals of each species were measured across their widest axis to the nearest millimetre.
4. Manila clams and common cockles were separated into above and below their relative MCRS (35mm and 23.8mm respectively) and weighed.
5. Following measurement, all samples were returned to shellfish production areas of the same classification.

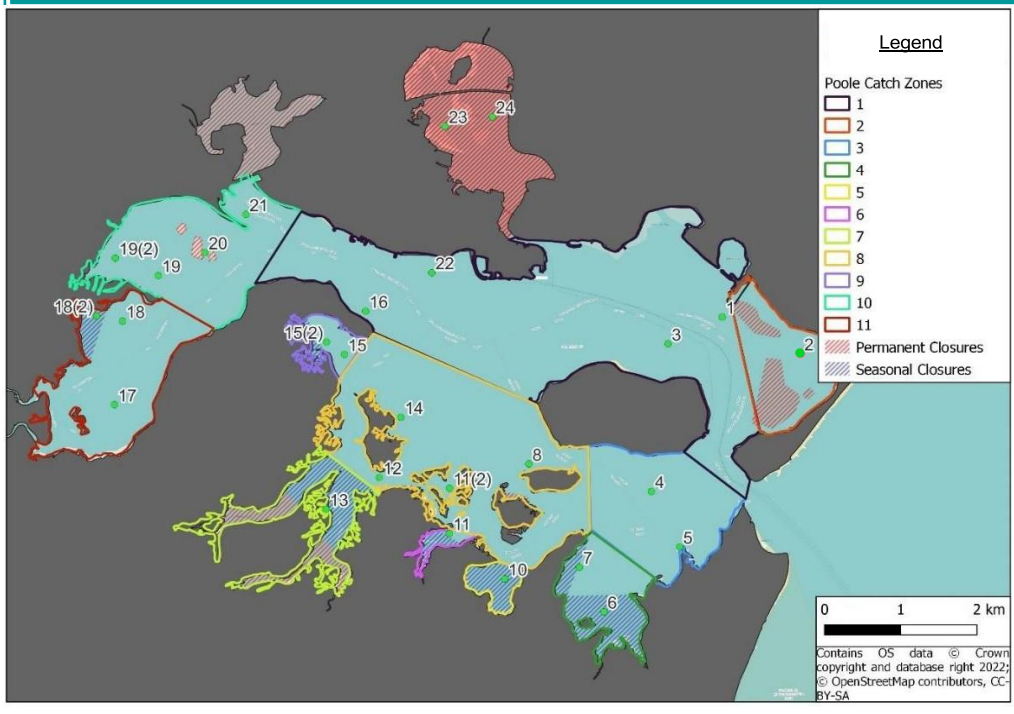

***Figure 2**: Map of dredge survey sites included in the Poole Harbour Bivalve Survey 2025, spanning 11 designated shellfish catch zones. Locations of individual dredge sites are marked, with areas subject to seasonal closures shaded in blue and permanent closures shaded in red, as defined under the Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Byelaw and Bottom Towed Fishing Gear Byelaw 2016. No sampling was conducted in Catch Zone 2 in 2025 due to tidal constraints.*

3 Results

Results focus on the predominant commercial species within the Harbour, Manila clam and common cockle. Other species found during the survey and harvested at a smaller scale include American Hard-Shelled clam *(Mercenaria mercenaria*), the Native clam *(Ruditapes decussatus*), the native oyster (*Ostrea edulis*), the Pacific oyster *(Magallana gigas*), the spiny cockle (*Acanthocardia aculeata)* and the blue mussel (*Mytilus edulis).*

Length frequency data was analysed by site, whereas Catch Per Unit Effort (CPUE) data was calculated as kilograms per meter dredge per hour (kg/m/hr) for each of the 11 shellfish catch reporting zones and Holes Bay under the Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Byelaw. Catch per unit effort is separated into: $CPUE_{total}$: total catch per unit effort, $CPUE_{over}$: catch per unit effort for individuals over MCRS and $CPUE_{under}$: catch per unit effort for individuals under MCRS

Data was analysed using a combination of Excel and Rstudio.

3.1 Length Frequency Distribution Data

Statistical analysis of length data within the 2025 dataset and comparisons of length data for the last three years showed statistical differences ($p<0.01$ for both Manila clam and cockle), however this was expected due to the range of sizes observed across the 81 dredges within the 27 sites of the Harbour in each survey.

3.1.1 Manilla Clam

- The average size of Manila clam in 2025 varied from 39.4mm at site 7 (n=84) to 35.7mm at site 5 and 6 (n= 72 and n=132) (**Figure 3**).
- All sites had an average length above the MCRS (35mm).

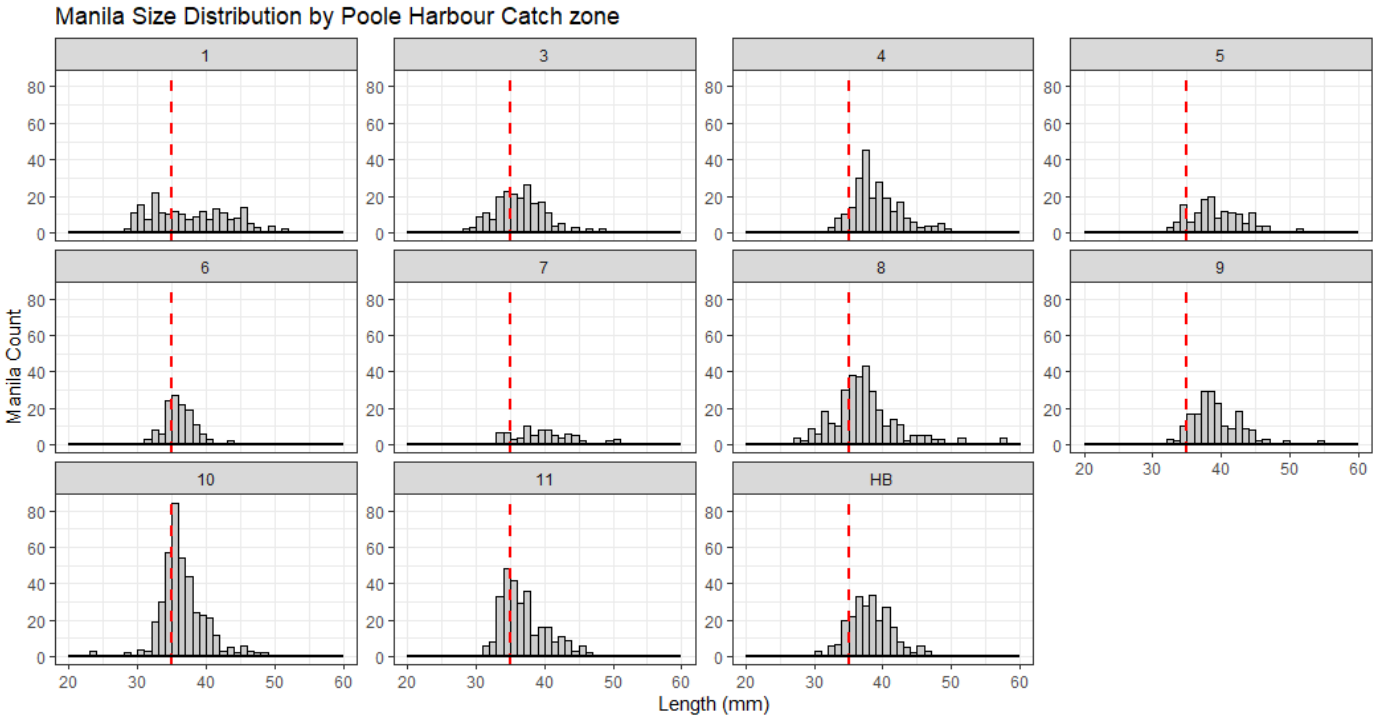

Figure 3: *Average length distribution of Manila clams across Catch Zones in the Poole Harbour Bivalve Survey 2025. Lengths are grouped into 1 mm bins. The Minimum Conservation Reference Size (MCRS) of 35 mm is indicated by a red line. No samples were taken from Catch Zone 2 in 2025.*

- The average size of Manila clam across the Harbour as a whole has stayed consistently above MCRS for the last 3 years of surveys at 37.27 mm (2025, n=2494) 37.34mm (2024; n=2436) and 38.17mm (2023; n=2601) (**Figure 4**).

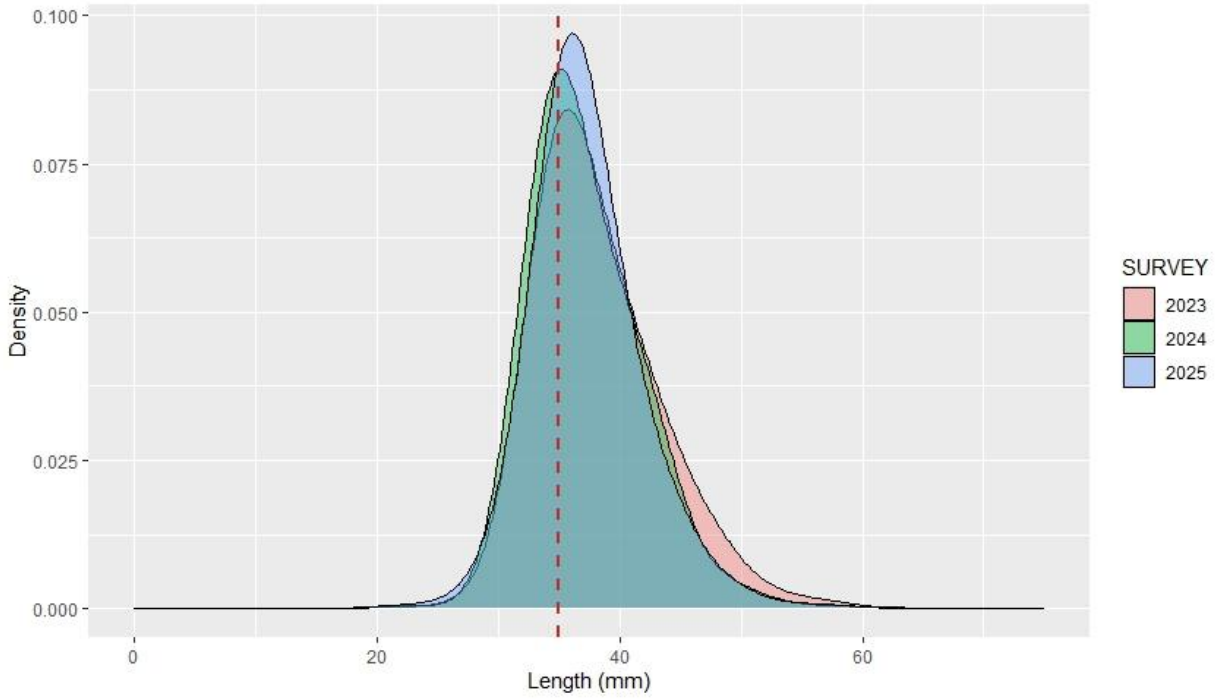

Figure 4: *The length distribution of the Manila clam sample populations from 2023 (peach), 2024 (green), and 2025 (blue) is shown for comparison. The Minimum Conservation Reference Size (MCRS) of 35 mm is indicated by a red dashed line.*

3.1.2 Common cockle

- In 2025, the average size of cockle varied from 32.4mm at zone 1 (n=395) to 25.5mm at zone 11 (n=51). The average size across the Harbour as a whole for the 2025 survey was 29.8mm (n=2128).
- All sites had an average length above the MCRS length (23.8mm) (**Figure 5**).
- The average size of common cockle across the Harbour as a whole has remained consistently above MCRS for the last three years of surveys at 29.8mm (2025), 29.8mm (2024) and 29.3mm (2023) (**Figure 6**).

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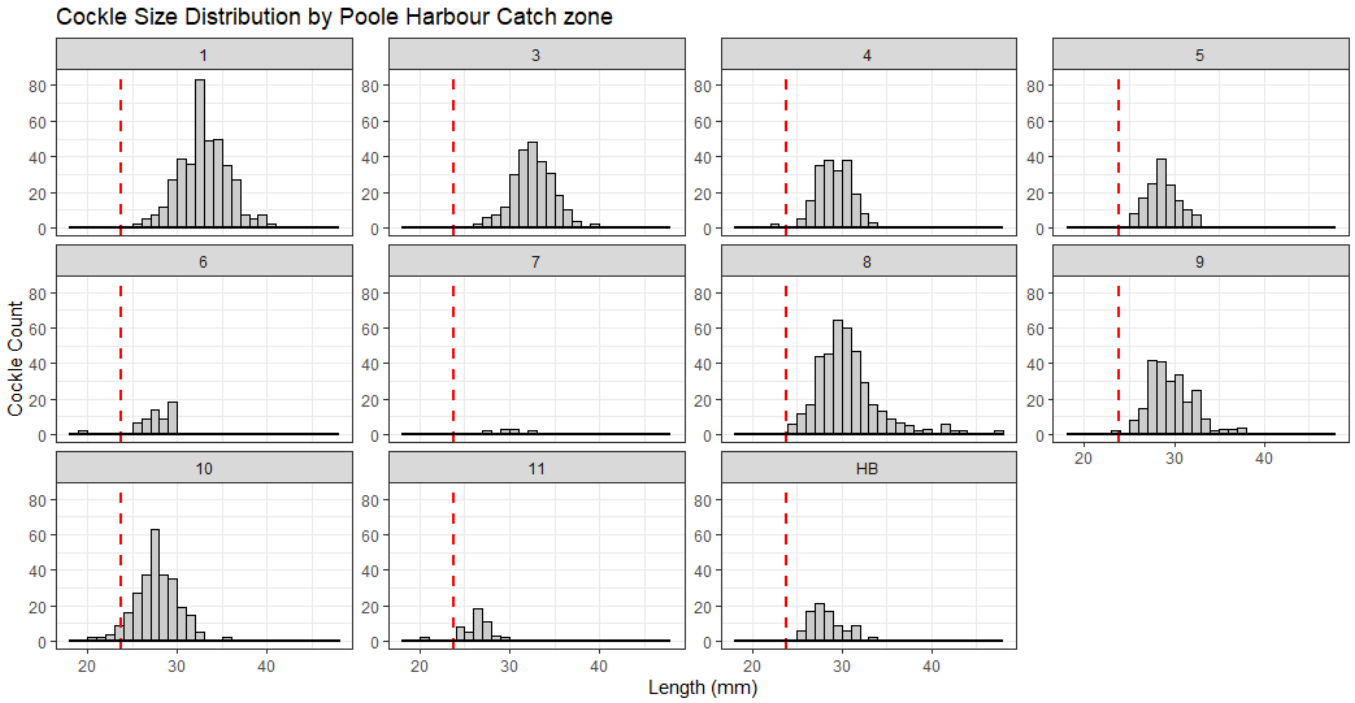

Figure 5: *Average length distribution of common cockle across catch zones in the Poole Harbour Bivalve Survey 2025. Lengths are grouped into 1 mm bins. The Minimum Conservation Reference Size (MCRS) of 23.8 mm is indicated by a red line. No samples were taken from Catch Zone 2 in 2025.*

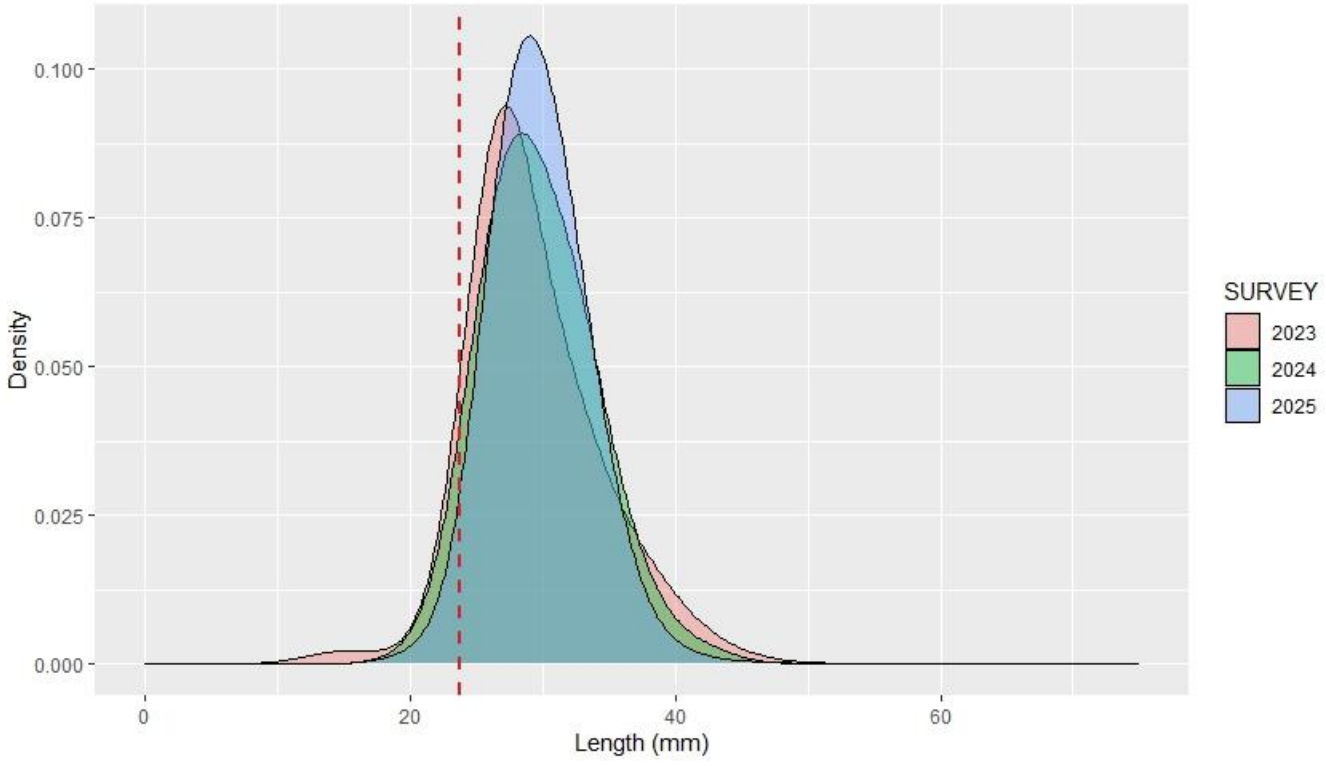

Figure 6: *The length distribution of the common cockle sample population from 2023 (peach), 2024 (green) and 2025 (blue). The Minimum Conservation References Size (MCRS) of 23.8mm is indicated by a red dashed line.*

3.2 Catch Per Unit Effort (CPUE)

The 2025 dataset has been analysed for any statistical differences between sites, and with the previous two survey years, 2023 and 2024. Statistical analyses were performed using a non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis test with subsequent Dunn's test.

3.2.1 Manila Clam

- For the survey as a whole, the average $CPUE_{over}$ was 38.92 kg/m/hr, the average $CPUE_{under}$ was 7.68 kg/m/hr and the average $CPUE_{total}$ was 46.82 kg/m/hr.
- Catch Zones 5 and Holes Bay showed the highest average $CPUE_{total}$ in the 2025 survey (96kg/m/hr and 86.7kg/m/hr, respectively) (**Figure 7**).
- Likewise, Zone 5 and Holes Bay showed the highest $CPUE_{over}$ Manila clam (86kg/m/hr and 79kg/m/hr). All zones showed a greater $CPUE_{over}$ Manila clam in comparison to $CPUE_{under}$. Zone 6 showed the greatest $CPUE_{under}$ of 16.8kg/m/hr, followed closely by zones 10 and 11 of 13.8 and 13.5kg/m/hr, respectively.

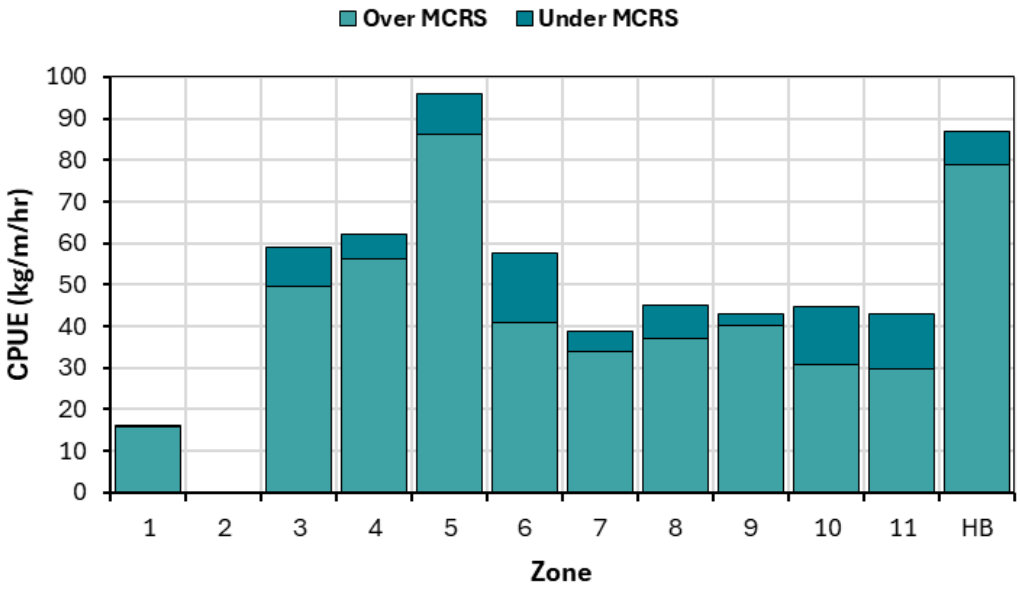

Figure 7: *Average Catch Per Unit Effort (CPUE) for Manila clam in each zone surveyed during the Poole Harbour Bivalve Survey 2025. Bars represent the average $CPUE_{total}$ per zone, divided into $CPUE_{over}$ and $CPUE_{under}$ MCRS, shown in dark blue and light blue, respectively. No samples were taken from Catch Zone 2 in 2025*

- Statistical analysis showed no significant differences between catch zones for $CPUE_{total}$, $CPUE_{over}$ and $CPUE_{under}$, within the 2025 dataset ($p>0.05$).
- $CPUE_{total}$ data was statistically similar between 2024 and 2025 datasets.
- Zone 5 and 10 both displayed significantly less $CPUE_{total}$ and $CPUE_{over}$ in 2025 compared to 2023 however Zone 3 showed significantly higher $CPUE_{over}$ in 2025 compared to 2023 ($p<0.05$) (**Figure 8**)
- Comparing $CPUE_{under}$, all zones were statistically similar in 2025 when compared to the previous two surveys ($p>0.05$).

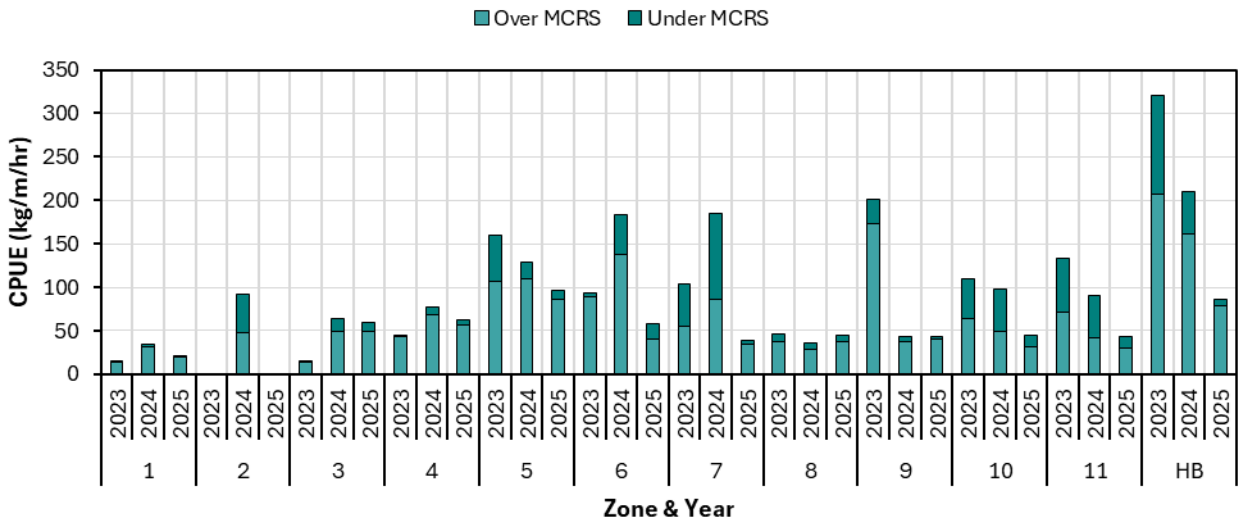

Figure 8: *Average total catch per unit effort (CPUE) of Manila clams, expressed in kilograms of shellfish per metre of dredge per hour, across catch zones 1-11 and Holes Bay (HB) from the 2023 to 2025 Poole Harbour Bivalve Surveys. Dark blue bars represent $CPUE_{under}$ the minimum conservation reference size (MCRS) of 35mm, and light blue bars represent $CPUE_{over}$ the MCRS.*

3.2.2 Common cockle

- The average $CPUE_{over}$ was 91.7 kg/m/hr, the average $CPUE_{under}$ was 0.86 kg/m/hr. The average $CPUE_{total}$ of common cockle was 93.18 kg/m/hr.
- Within the 2025 dataset, Catch Zone 3 showed the highest average $CPUE_{total}$, followed by Zone 1 (399kg/m/hr and 252kg/m/hr, respectively). Zone 3 also showed the highest $CPUE_{over}$ (398kg/m/hr) (**Figure 9**).
- All zones had a greater average $CPUE_{over}$ compared to $CPUE_{under}$, except for zone 11 which had 5.4kg/m/hr $CPUE_{under}$ vs 4.8kg/m/hr $CPUE_{over}$.

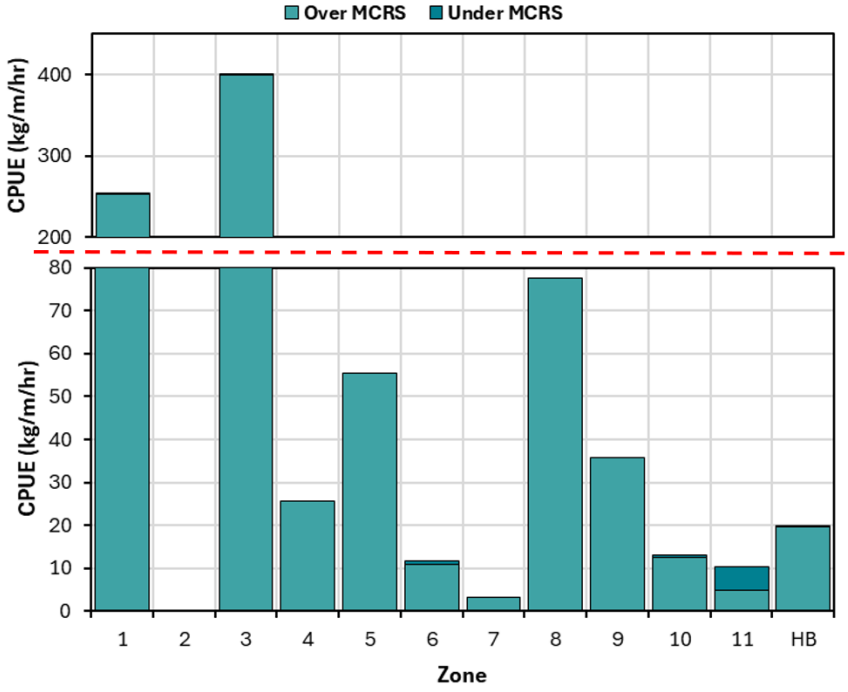

Figure 9: *Average Catch Per Unit Effort (CPUE) for common cockle in each zone surveyed during the Poole Harbour Bivalve Survey 2025. Bars represent the average $CPUE_{total}$ per zone, divided into $CPUE_{over}$ and $CPUE_{under}$ the Minimum Conservation Reference Size (MCRS), shown in dark blue and light blue, respectively. The red dashed line indicates a break in the y-axis due to large quantities recorded for two Catch Zones.*

- There were no statistically significant differences in $CPUE_{total}$, $CPUE_{over}$ and $CPUE_{under}$ between zones for 2025 (all p values >0.05).
- $CPUE_{total}$ zonal data was statistically similar between the 2024 and 2025 datasets (all p values >0.05).
- Looking more in depth at zonal data (**Figure 10**), Zone 1 had significantly higher $CPUE_{total}$ in 2025 compared to 2023 ($p<0.01$). The same conclusions can be drawn for Zone 3 ($p<0.05$). Zone 10 showed a significantly lower $CPUE_{total}$ of common cockle in 2025 compared to 2023 (**Figure 10**).
- This pattern was also seen in Zones 1,3 and 10 when statistically analysing $CPUE_{over}$ data (all p values <0.05). Zone 5 also showed a significantly higher $CPUE_{over}$ in 2025 compared to 2023 ($p<0.01$).
- Zone 3 showed significantly less $CPUE_{under}$ in 2025 compared to 2024 ($p<0.05$).

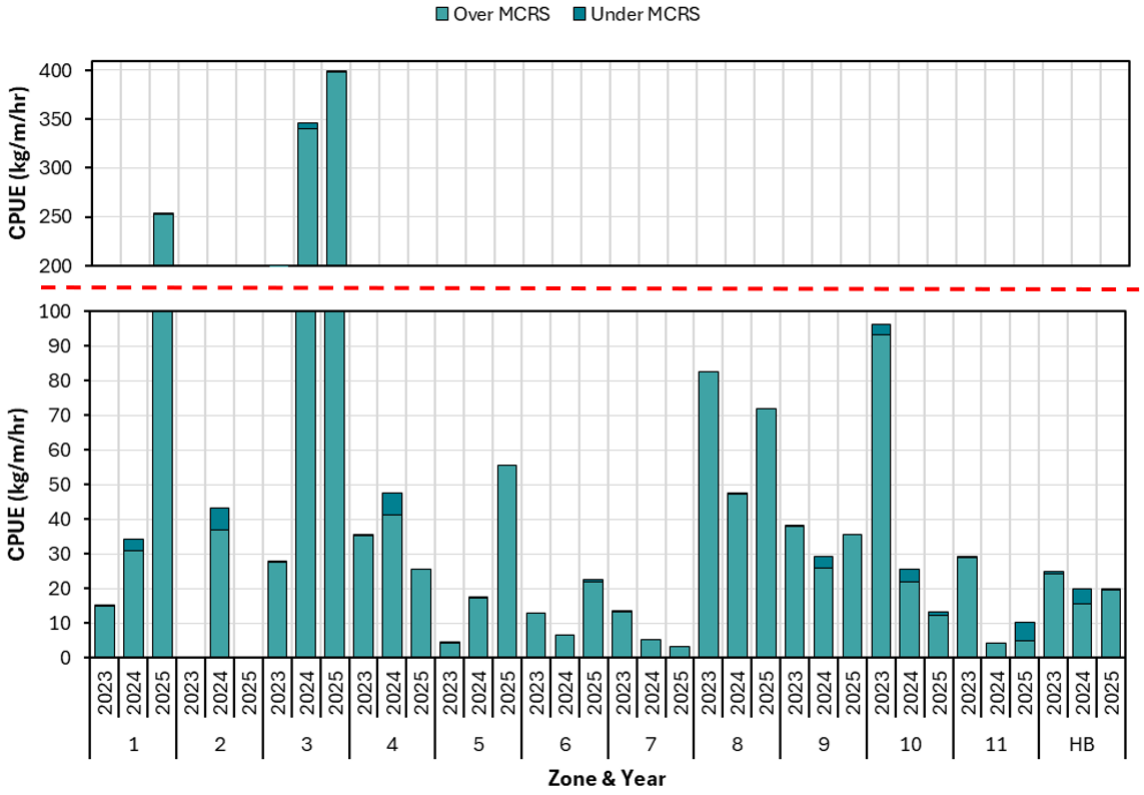

Figure 10: *Average total catch per unit effort (CPUE) of common cockles, expressed in kilograms of shellfish per metre of dredge per hour, across catch zones 1-11 and Holes Bay (HB) from the 2023 to 2025 Poole Harbour Bivalve Surveys. Dark blue bars represent $CPUE_{under}$ the minimum conservation reference size (MCRS) of 35mm, and light blue bars represent $CPUE_{over}$ over the MCRS The red dashed line indicates a break in the y-axis due to large quantities recorded for three Catch Zones.*

3.3 Seasonal Catch Data

- Quantities of Manila clam and common cockle caught each month by the fishery for the 2022, 2023 and 2024 fishing seasons are shown in **Figure 11** and **Figure 12**, respectively. The fishing season runs from 25th May to 23rd December each year, therefore it should be noted than catch weight (kg) for May represents only a 5-day fishing period and December a 23-day fishing period.

3.3.1 Manila Clam

- Total landings of Manila clam within the 2022 season was 337.3 tonnes. There was a slight increase in the 2023 season, to 474.7 tonnes. In the 2024 season, the total landings of Manila clam was 240.4 tonnes.
- Statistical analysis revealed no significant difference in the total landings of Manila clam between the 2022, 2023 and 2024 seasons ($p>0.05$).
- Seasonal trends followed previous years', which showed an increase in landings in the mid-summer months followed by a slow decline towards the end of the fishing season in December.
- In the 2024 season, Manila clam landings peaked in June, at 46.2 tonnes.
- Statistical testing revealed no significant differences in the monthly landings of Manila clam between 2022 and 2024 ($p>0.05$).

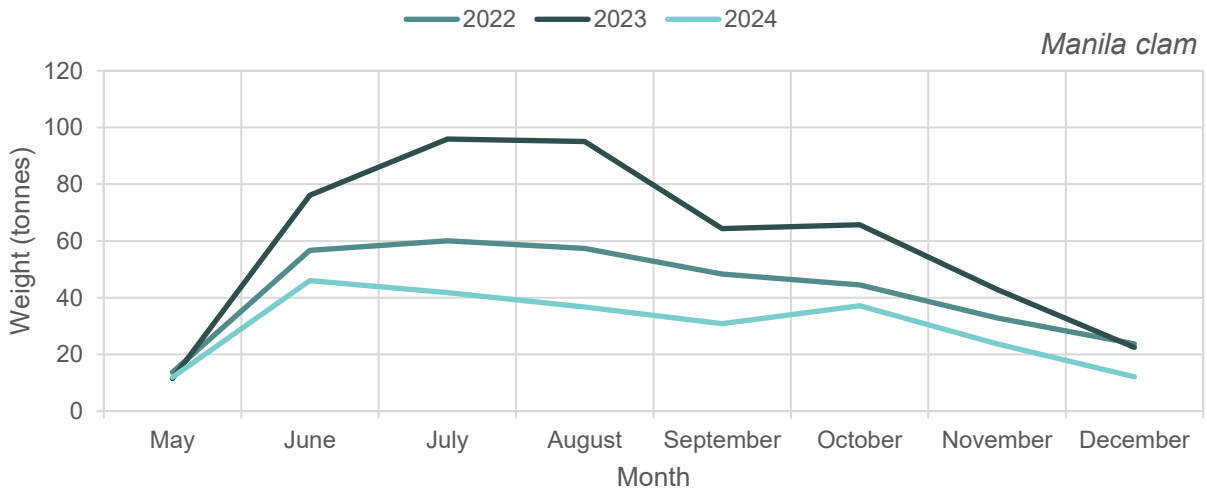

Figure 11: *The monthly total catch (tonnes) of Manila clam submitted in catch returns from permit holders in the Poole Harbour Dredge Fishery for the 2021, 2022 and 2023 seasons.*

3.3.2 Common cockle

- The total weight of common cockle was higher in 2024 that the previous two seasons; 91.04 tonnes in 2024, compared to 44.6 tonnes in 2023 and 34.2 tonnes in 2022.
- Statistical analysis showed that there was no significant difference in the total landings of common cockle between 2022-24 ($p>0.05$).
- Seasonal trends followed previous years' trends of increased landings in the mid-summer months. However, a clear spike in landings occurred in the final two months of the 2024/25 season. Landings in November 2024 spiked at 14.3 tonnes followed by a further increase to 27.6 tonnes in December 2024, however the were no statistical differences in catches between months in the 2024 season or between 2022-24 (all p values >0.05).

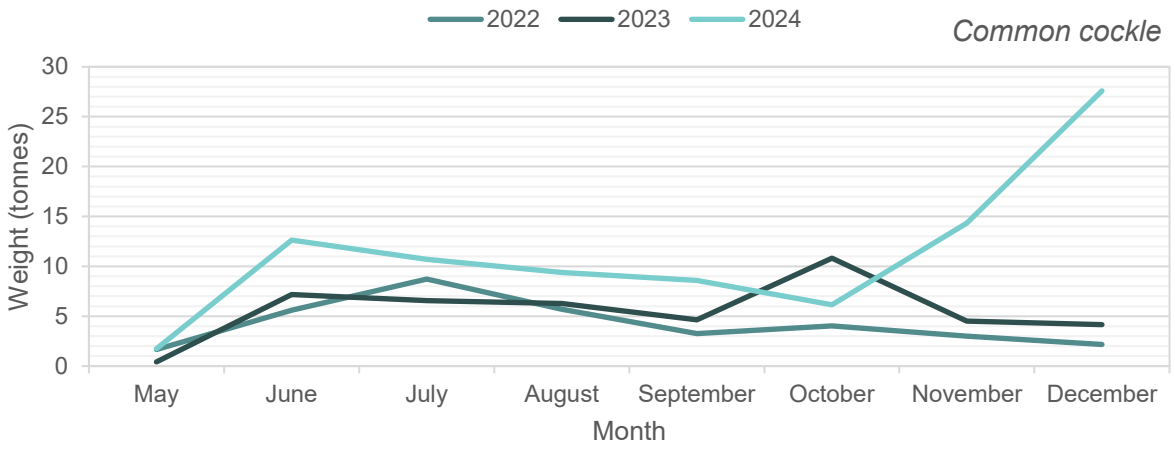

Figure 12: *The monthly total catch (tonnes) of common cockle submitted in catch returns from permit holders of the Poole Harbour Dredge Fishery for the 2022, 2023 and 2024 seasons.*

3.4 Zonal Catch Data

- Since 2019, fishers have been required to report which fishing zones have been fished each day. This provides zonal application to catch data that can then be related to the catch zone analysis of the survey CPUE data where required. Note that there is no catch data for the Holes Bay as this is a prohibited area year-round for the dredge fishery.

3.4.1 Manila clam

- Zones 8,10 and 11 have consistently been favourable fishing grounds for Manila clam in previous years. In the 2024 fishing season, Zones 1, 8 and 10 had significantly more catch, compared to other zones, at 15.2t, 112t and 75.4t (all p values $p<0.01$). However, Zone 1 had significantly less landings in 2024 than in 2023 although significantly higher landings than 2022 (p values <0.05). Zone 10 had significantly less catch in 2024 than 2023 ($p<0.05$) (**Figure 13**).

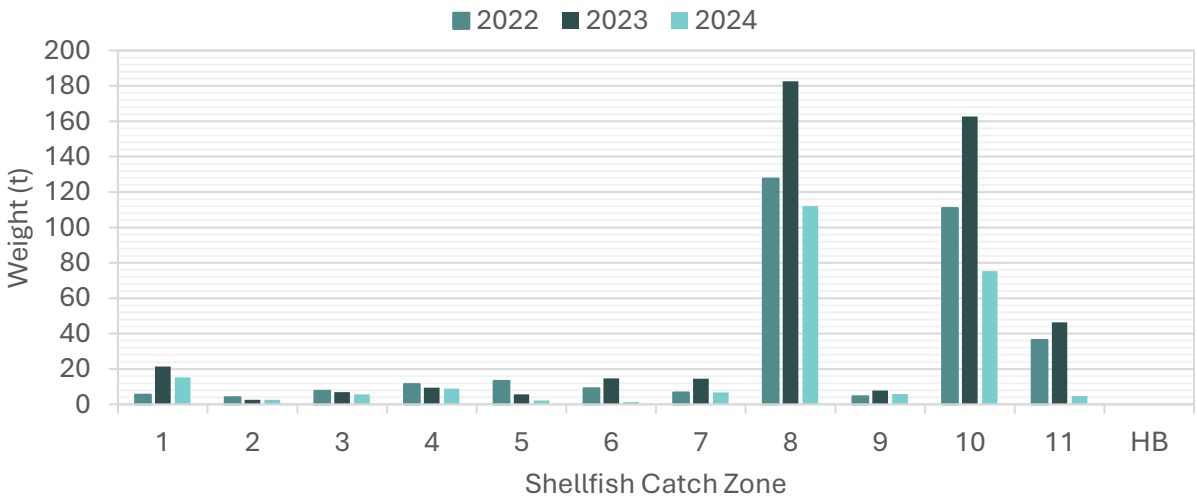

Figure 13: *Landings of Manila clam between 2022-2024. Information was gathered by submitted catch returns from permit holds of the Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Fishery. Zonal distribution of catch has been categorised by year.*

3.4.2 Common cockle

- Zones 1, 3 and 8 were the favourable fishing grounds for common cockle within the 2024 fishing season (34.1t, 18.1t and 26.0t, respectively) (**Figure 14**).
- Statistical analysis showed there was significantly more catch in these zones compared to others, and Zone 1 had significantly greater catch than all other Zones in the 2024 season. Similarly, in 2024, Zone 1 had significantly more landings that in 2022 and 2023 ($p<0.05$).

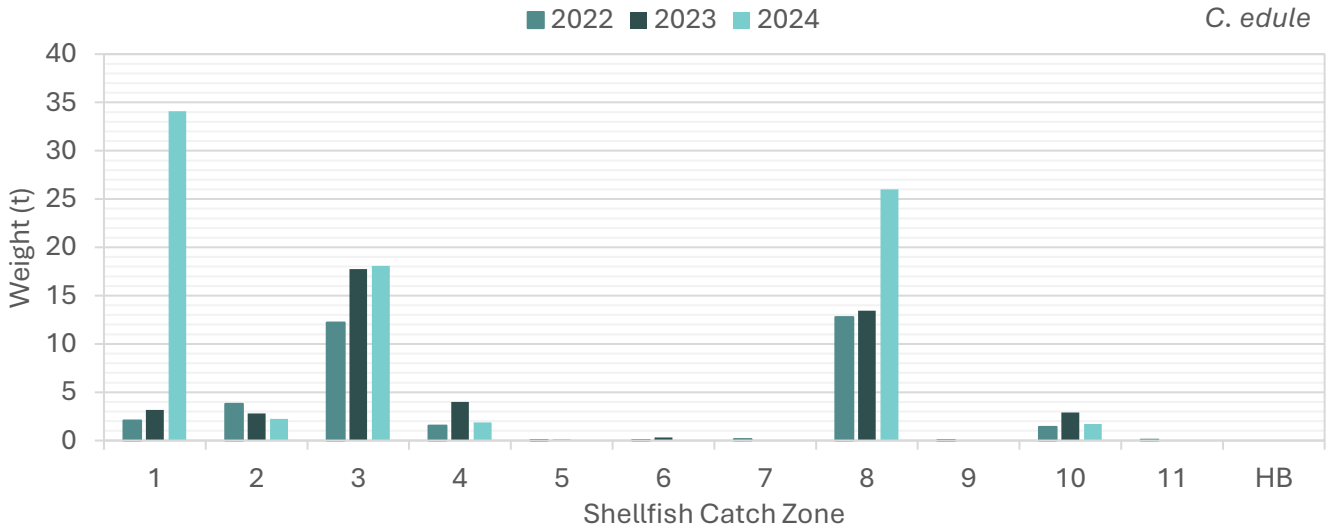

Figure 14: *Landings of common cockle between 2022-2024. Information was gathered by submitted catch returns from permit holders in the Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Fishery. Zonal distribution of catch has been categorised by year.*

3.5 Monitoring and Control Plan

- The Monitoring and Control Plan (M&CP) On-Site Monitoring Programme is linked to Control Mechanisms activated by Threshold Trigger levels (TTLs) for two Monitoring Variables: Poole Harbour Bivalve Survey Data (CPUE TTL) and Landings Data (LPUE TTL) from monthly catch returns submitted by Permit Holders. The M&CP is linked to Manila clam data only at this time.
- Analysis of catch data from the 2024 fishing season and data from the 2025 Poole Harbour Bivalve Survey were used to inform a decision by the Authority as to whether any additional management was required to support a sustainable fishery for the 2025/26 season.

3.5.1 Monitoring Variable: Poole Harbour Bivalve Survey

- The annual average Manila clam CPUE value for the 2025 survey was 43.48 kg/m of dredge/hr (excluding unfishable zones, Holes Bay), which is above the CPUE TTL of 34.60 kg/m of dredge/hr (by 8.9 kg/m of dredge/hr) (**Figure 15**)**, the CPUE TTL was not reached**.
- The annual average CPUE value across the Harbour as a whole for the 2025 survey is below the current lowest rolling 5-year average by 9.6 kg/m of dredge/hr. Reviewing the data there was no

statistical difference (p>0.05) between the survey data for the Harbour as a whole for the 2025 year and any other year surveyed across the full timeseries dataset (2016-2025) (**Figure 16**).

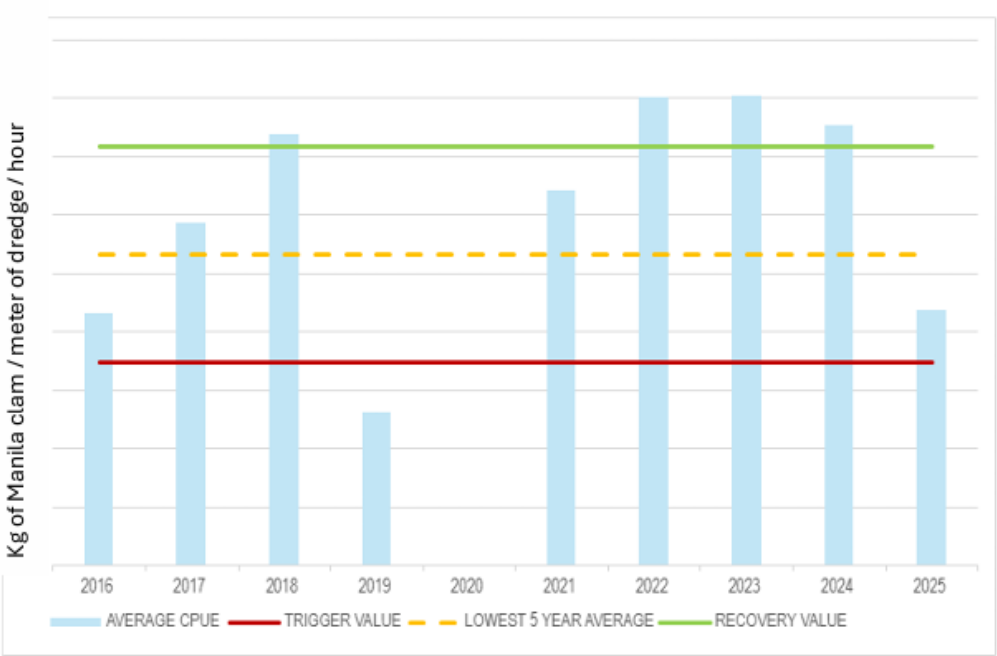

Figure 15: *Graph shows the average CPUE (kg/m of dredge/hr) (n=27 survey sites) for Manila Clam species from 2016-2025 surveys (blue bars), the CPUE TTL (red line), the CPUE RT (green line) and the lowest five-year rolling average used to calculate the TTL and RT values (orange dashed line). Note there is no survey data for 2020 due to the Covid-19 Pandemic.*

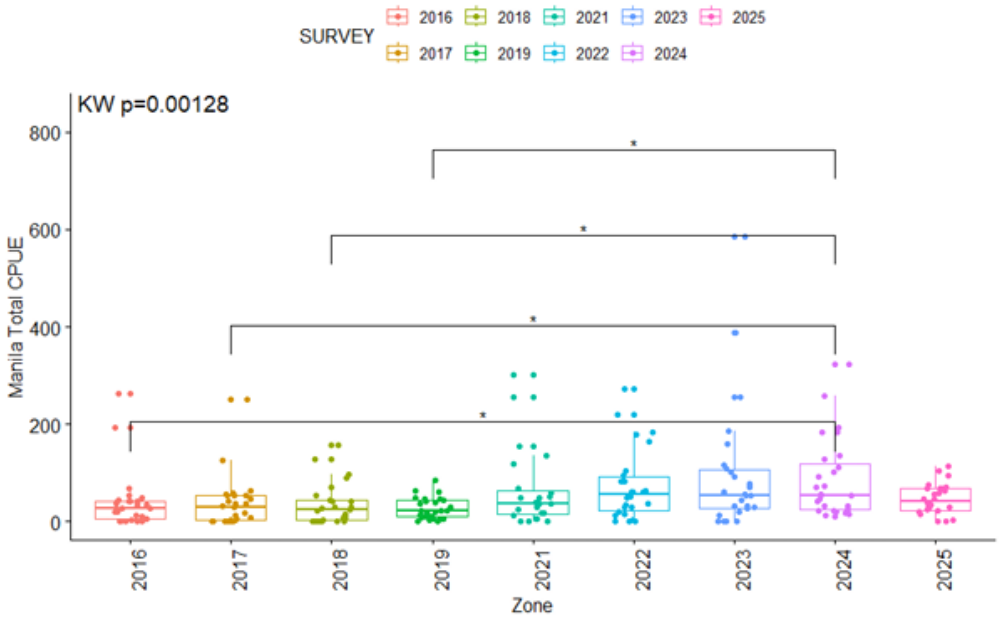

Figure 16: *Box and whisker plots of the Poole Harbour Bivalve Survey data for the years 2016 to 2025, statistical differences (P<0.05) between years are shown by the brackets above using a Dunn's Test with a 'holm' adjustment. Note there is no survey data for 2020 due to the Covid-19 Pandemic.*

3.4.2 Monitoring Variable: Catch (Landings) Data

- The annual average Landings Per Unit Effort (LPUE) value for the 2024/25 season was 72.41kg/day, below the LPUE TTL of 78.25kg/day (**Figure 18**), **the LPUE TTL was reached** and the Control Mechanism activated.
- Reviewing the data, the pattern of monthly catch return data showed that average catch rates for kg/hour were lower than the period 2020-2023 but were consistent with catch rates from the 2016-2019 period (**Figure 19**). Only September during the 2024/25 season showed CPUE values lower than the same month in all previous years although this was by a small margin of only 0.02-0.1 kg/hour.

3.4.3 M&CP Outcomes: 2025 Fishing Season

- The Authority considered the outcomes of the On-Site Monitoring Programme under the M&CP at the May meeting of the Technical Advisory Sub-Committee. The Authority resolved that, based on analysis of the data for the LPUE TTL and CPUE TTL, no additional management was required to support a sustainable fishery for the 2025/26 season.
- It is recognised that CPUE data from the 2025 survey is lower than in the previous four years. The M&CP allows Southern IFCA to take a proactive approach to in-season monitoring as well as annual monitoring to aid understanding of how catch rates may be varying and how data across both variables compares to previous seasons.

Figure 18: *Graph shows the average LPUE (kg/day) from the 2016 to 2024 fishing seasons (blue bars), the LPUE TTL (red line), the LPUE RT (green line) and the lowest five-year rolling average used to calculate the TTL and RT values (orange dashed line).*

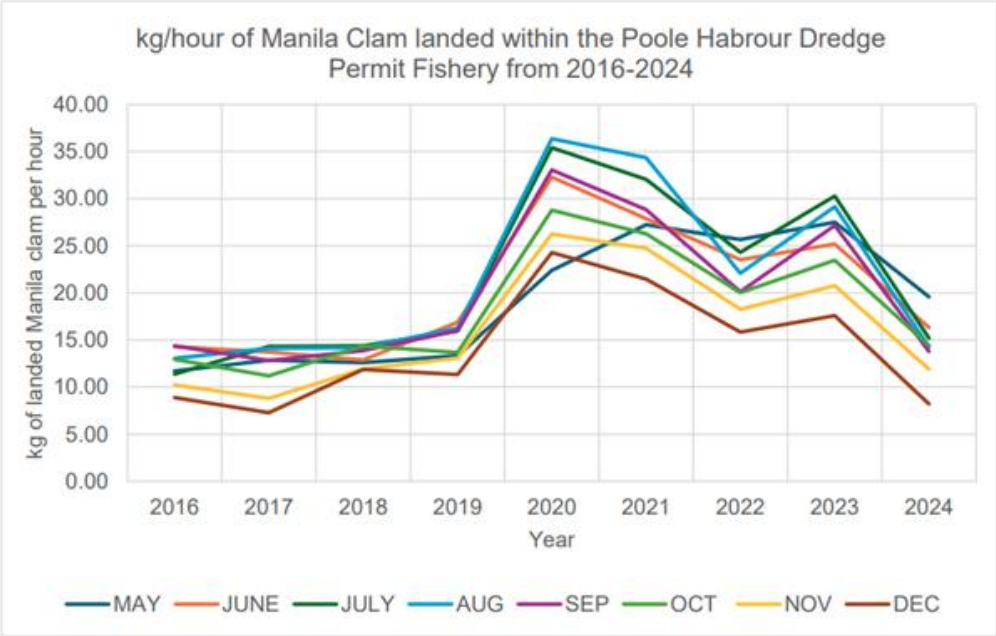

Figure 19: *average kg of Manila clam per hour for the months of May, June, July, August and September for 2016-2024 based on data supplied by Permit Holders in the PHDP fishery through monthly catch return submissions.*

4 Discussion

CPUE

- The distribution of CPUE data appears to reflect environmental stimuli driving habitation for both species. Higher CPUE of Manila clam are seen in muddy and fine-grounded sedimental areas of the Harbour, whereas higher CPUE of cockles is found in sandy and coarse sediments. The preferred locations for dredging within the fishery usually reflect those areas which show higher CPUE outputs.

Manila Clam

- While $CPUE_{total}$ of Manila clams decreased compared to the last three years, the average CPUE (including over and under MCRS) has been statistically similar in Poole Harbour over the last three years, indicating, at present that there is not a trend in stock changes being observed and that differences may be due to natural fluctuations in the population.
- Typically, the site with the highest landings, such as Zone 8, also records some of the lowest CPUE (Catch Per Unit Effort) levels. This year, however, other Zones where there is more abundance of preferred habitat type for Manila clam including 6, 7, 9, 10 and 11 also showed similarly low CPUE levels, comparable to Zone 8.
- Sites 23 and 24 in Holes Bay display a high total CPUE of Manila clams. The combination of a permanent fishing closure within Holes Bay since 2015, alongside preferred conditions for Manila clam growth, may be causing the results seen.
- The cause of the lower CPUE values observed for Manila clam in the 2025 survey are unknown. The survey was carried out later in April than in previous years to increase the chance that if any spring mortality event were to occur, this would be captured in the survey. There were no

indications through observations of Manila clam during the 2025 survey that a spring mortality had occurred. When lower landings levels for Manila clam were identified from catch data during the 2024 fishing season, it was postulated that a spring mortality may have occurred, or that increased levels of rainfall and associated freshwater inputs to the Harbour may have impacted the Manila clam population. This could not be evidenced, however if conditions in 2024 affected the Manila clam population, it is likely that these effects in terms of lower CPUE may be seen in subsequent years. During spring 2025, conditions for Manila clam growth and the onset of reproduction were more favourable, with warmer weather and lower levels of rainfall, however it may take time for population impacts in a specific year to return to previously identified levels. In addition, bivalve populations are known to exhibit cyclical patterns in abundance, current levels in catch data are in line with those seen in the fishery between 2016-2019, therefore the current lower CPUE may be reflective of a cyclical period of lower population abundance within the population. Continuing to develop a timeseries dataset from annual survey data and catch data will provide further data to inform any long-term trends in the population.

Common Cockle

- Statistical analysis of cockle landing data showed no significant changes in landings over the last three fishing seasons. However, cockle landings have increased from 11 tonnes in 2020 to 91 tonnes in 2024 suggesting the cockle population remains in a positive state and interest in the harvested species has increased.
- Landings from Zone 3 have steadily increased over the past three years, making it the most heavily fished area during the 2023 season. This can also be seen in CPUE data, with Zone 3 having the highest total CPUE in both 2024 and 2025.
- A year-on-year analysis reveals a notable increase in activity in Zone 1 alongside increased CPUE suggesting cockle populations remain in a positive state in this area.
- The average $CPUE_{total}$ for cockles across the Harbour as a whole in the 2025 survey was the highest on record, reaching 93.18 kg/m/hr. The next highest $CPUE_{total}$ was recorded in 2022 at 92.6 kg/m/hr. In contrast, the $CPUE_{total}$ levels in 2023 and 2024 were approximately 50% lower than those observed in these two peak years.
- The $CPUE_{total}$ in the 2025 survey is heavily influenced by the strong performance of Zones 1 and 3, which recorded the highest $CPUE_{total}$ for common cockles (252.5 kg/m/hr and 398.7 kg/m/hr, respectively). This is largely due to their optimal sediment and environmental conditions. Both zones are characterized by coarser-grained sediments (sand fractions) that create stable, lagoon-like habitats ideal for cockle burrowing and feeding. The combination of this and sheltered conditions in Zones 1 and 3 appears to be a key factor supporting the high productivity of cockles in Poole Harbour.
- $CPUE_{under}$ remained consistently low, following similar levels to previous years at 0.86 kg/m/hr. Despite significantly lower levels for $CPUE_{under}$ being recorded in 2025 for two Catch Zones compared to 2024 data, this was not consistently observed across the Harbour. It is likely that the size selective nature of the fishing gear allows cockles under MCRS to pass through the dredge bars, given the general size and shape this is more likely to occur for cockles than Manila clam, therefore $CPUE_{under}$ will be lower on this basis. However, the repeated methodology allows for comparisons to be made. Monitoring of Catch Zones where significant differences were observed will be continued through future surveys to identify any patterns in CPUE.
- The unfished Holes Bay control zone showed similar levels of $CPUE_{total}$ to previous years. There

was no statistical difference was identified ($p > 0.05$), however, $CPUE_{total}$ was slightly increased compared to 2024 at 55.6kg/m/hr compared to 53kg/m/hr.

Length Frequency

- The size distribution of Manila clams in the 2025 survey showed greater variability than that of cockles, which were mostly above the Minimum Conservation Reference Size (MCRS). Previous studies and zonal observations indicate that Manila clam growth patterns vary depending on their location within the harbour. Some individuals grow along their widest axis but remain thin, while others grow in depth but stay narrow in length. As a result, thicker Manila clams may be retained by the dredge even if their length falls below the MCRS.
- In contrast, cockles tend to grow more uniformly across all dimensions, reducing the likelihood of undersized individuals being unintentionally caught. This structural difference, combined with potentially differing fishing pressures between the two species, may influence their respective size distributions. Consequently, a higher proportion of undersized Manila clams is often reflected in CPUE data compared to cockles.

Manila Clam

- The average size of Manila clam across the Harbour as a whole has stayed consistently above MCRS for the last 3 years of surveys, although similar to CPUE and landings statistical testing, there was no significant difference observed in Manila clam length frequency between the last three survey years.

Common Cockle

- The length frequency of cockles in the 2025 survey showed a shift towards a larger average size when compared to the previous four years. As for Manila clam, the dominance of cockle over MCRS will influence the size frequency results.
- The shift in size is inconsistent between catch zones and for some sites is more varied between years. It is not possible to attribute the pattern seen to fishing influences, however, as for Manila clam and longer-term trends in average size is a factor that can continue to be monitored through the annual surveys.

5 Summary

The 2025 Poole Harbour Bivalve Survey indicates lower total CPUE levels for Manila clam than in the previous two years, however changes are not consistently statistically significant. Populations of common cockle continue to be stable, any potential emerging trends in the data need consideration against future survey results to determine if any longer-term trends are being seen.

Manila Clams (*Ruditapes philippinarum*):

- **CPUE Trends:** A decrease in CPUE was observed compared to the previous two years. However, no statistically significant difference was found between the last three years of survey data when comparing CPUE over and under MCRS across the Harbour as a whole. There was also no significant difference found for catch zones between 2024 to 2025, and statistical differences between 2023 and 2025 were not consistent across all catch zones, therefore

variation may be due to natural fluctuations in the population. The cause of the lower CPUE values observed for Manila clam in the 2025 survey are unknown but may be related to a suggested impact to the population in 2024 which could have resulted from environmental factors such as cooler temperatures and increased freshwater inputs.

- **Size Distribution:** The average size of Manila clams has stayed consistently above MCRS over the last three survey years. There has been a shift towards a smaller average size, however this is not consistent across all catch zones, and further monitoring is needed to identify any longer-term trends or possible related factors.
- **Landings Data:** Total landings showed a decrease within the 2024/25 PHDP fishing seasons, although statistical analysis showed no significant differences when compared to previous fishing seasons. Zones 1, 8 and 10 were favoured for Manila clam harvesting. While landings in Zones 1 and 10 were significantly lower in 2024 than the 2023 fishing season, 2024 zonal data results were comparable to, and in some instances exceed, landings from the 2022 season, suggesting 2023 was an exceptionally productive fishing season.

Cockles (*Cerastoderma edule*):

- **CPUE Trends:** The 2025 survey recorded the highest CPUE for cockles at 93.18 kg/m/hr compared to any previous survey, however results were not significantly different to the previous two survey years across the Harbour as a whole. CPUE trends for individual catch zones were mixed with some significant increases and some decreases noted but no consistent trend.
- **Size Distribution:** The average size of cockles has increased from 2023 to 2025. However, the shift in size is not consistent across all catch zones, and further monitoring is needed to identify any longer-term trends or possible related factors.
- **Landings Data:** Annual cockle landings rose by 166.2% over the last 3-year period, from 32.4t in 2023 to 91.0t in 2024. Zones 1, 3 and 8 were the most favoured for cockle harvesting areas in 2024, each recording their highest catches within the past three years.

Fishery Management:

- **Monitoring and Control:** The Southern IFCA monitored the sustainability of Manila clam stocks through the M&CP for the first time ahead of the 2025 season with analysis under the On-Site Monitoring Programme on landings data from the 2024 fishing season and data from the 2025 Poole Harbour Bivalve Survey. The M&CP will continue to be implemented for Manila clam within the fishery with both annual and in-season monitoring of stock levels.
- **Management Recommendations:** For the 2025 fishing season the Authority resolved that no additional management intervention was required to support a sustainable fishery.

In summary, while Manila clam populations show a slight decline in CPUE, cockle stocks appear robust, and the fishery continues to operate sustainably for both species under current management.

Southern IFCA
Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Marked G

Fisheries Management Plans Updates
Paper For Information

Report by PO Wright

- **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.

The FMP Program

	Tranche 1 & Tranche 2	Tranche 3	Tranche 4
No. of Plans:	6	5	4
Relevant to SIFCA:	6	4	4
Development:	2021-2023	2023-2025	2023-2026
Publication:	Dec 2023 (*)	*Intended 2025*	*Intended 2026*
Implementation:	2024 - ongoing	*Intended 2025*	*Intended 2026*

(*) Mixed Flatfish FMP published in October 2024

2.0 Summary of Key Updates

General

- An updated Evidence Gaps document was released by Defra, this now includes the Tranche 3 FMPs Southern North Sea and Channel Skates and Rays, North Sea and Channel Sprat, Cockle, Queen Scallop, and Southern North Sea Demersal Non-Quota Species (NQS).
- The identified evidence gaps are currently being reviewed to determine relevance to District fisheries and ongoing Southern IFCA research and evidence gathering.
- The evidence gaps have been divided into themes, these are: life history, stock assessment, fishery, social and economic, wider environment, climate change-adapt, climate change-mitigate, management approaches, marine pollution, benthic impacts, bycatch and discards.
- The Defra FMP Blog has recently published posts for the Whelk, King Scallop and Bass FMPs titled ‘FMP explained: goals, benefits and updates’. Each post provides a spotlight on the relevant FMP, infographics detailing the updates and goals of each FMP and a short video giving a summary of the goals.
  - Whelk FMP explained: goals, benefits and updates – Fisheries Management Plans
  - King scallop FMP explained: goals, benefits and updates – Fisheries Management Plans

- Bass FMP explained: goals, benefits and updates – Fisheries Management Plans
- Additional update graphics have been published for the Channel Demersal Non-Quota Species FMP.
  - Channel NQS FMP Updates

Tranche 1 and Tranche 2 FMPs

- The Bass Authorisation Review online meeting was attended by PO Wright and DCO Birchenough. The aim of this meeting and previous in-person events was to seek stakeholder views as part of an analysis of the current bass authorisation system, addressing goal 2 of the Bass FMP.
  - The main points discussed in the meeting included:
    - Options for removing the track record requirement, how to maintain current authorisations and a process for considering new entrants
    - Options for vessel size exemptions
    - Options for gear use and gear trials
    - Guidance on bass measures, catch recording and discards
- The Cuttlefish Stakeholder Roundtable was attended by PO Wright. This meeting was to review the Cuttlefish Action Plan that was published in April this year, including work that has been undertaken since the publication of the Action Plan along with future actions and potential timelines for research goals under the Channel demersal NQS FMP.
  - The main points discussed in the meeting included:
    - Updated landings data
    - Market sampling that the MMO had undertaken
    - Outputs from the action plan, including future research and the harvest control plan that is currently awaiting publication

Tranche 3 FMPs

- There is no update on the status of Tranche 3 FMPs at this time.

Tranche 4 FMPs

- There are 4 T4 FMPs which are currently being developed:
  - Seabream FMP (*all Southern IFCA District*)
  - Wrasses complex FMP (*all Southern IFCA District*)
  - Celtic Sea and Western Channel demersal FMP (*ICES 7e part of Southern IFCA District)*
  - Celtic Sea and Western Channel pelagic FMP (*ICES 7e part of Southern IFCA District*)
- The Wrasses Complex WG and Seabream WG meetings were attended by DCO Birchenough, this meeting was to review the draft FMP and provide an opportunity for members of the WG to provide feedback.
- The CSWC Pelagic online briefing was attended by PO Wright. This briefing ran through the changes that had been made to the draft FMP since the previous meeting based on the feedback given by the group and gave an opportunity for any further feedback before the draft was finalised.
- Draft feedback was given by Southern IFCA on all four FMPs relevant to The District
  - The draft FMPs have now been finalised and submitted to Defra; they will undergo public consultation later in the year, timelines for this are yet to be announced.

3.0 Next Steps

- That Members note the report.
- The Southern IFCA FMP webpage continues to be updated with all new developments in the FMP program - Fisheries Management Plans : Southern IFCA (southern-ifca.gov.uk).