Southern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority

Pia Bateman – Chief Executive Officer

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28th October 2025

Dear Member,

MEETING OF THE TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE – 6th November 2025

The Meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) will be held **virtually via MS Teams** on **Thursday 6th November 2025 at 14:00** to discuss the business on the under mentioned Agenda.

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. Election of Chairman and Vice Chairman for 2025-2026
To appoint a Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Technical Advisory Sub-Committee.

- **Nominations for Chairman are to be received via email by 12:00 midday on Monday 3rd November via enquiries@southern-ifca.gov.uk**
- **Nominations for Vice Chairman will be invited by the Chairman at the meeting.**

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 – 21st August 2025
To confirm the Minutes of the Technical Advisory Committee meeting held on 21st August 2025 (Marked A) and consideration of the following matters outstanding:

a. **Recommendation 62:** that a Working Group of interested TAC Members be held to discuss data gathering and analysis in the Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Fishery.

To confirm the Minutes of the Extraordinary Technical Advisory Committee meeting held on 20th October 2025 (Marked B).

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.

b) **Marine Stewardship Council, Audit of the Poole Clam & Cockle Fishery 2025** – to receive an update from IFCO Mullen
c) **Solent Dredge Permit Byelaw, 2025/26 Season** – to receive an update from IFCO Churchouse and DCO Birchenough (Marked C)

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

6. **Whelk Population Survey Report 2025 -** to receive a report from IFCO Mullen (Marked D)

7. **Fisheries Management Plans** – to receive an update report from PO Wright (Marked E)

8. **Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Byelaw Pilot Mid-Season Stock Observer Program** – to receive a report from IFCO Mullen (Marked F)

9. **Date of Next Meeting**
   To confirm the date of the next meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee on the 5th February 2026 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 – 21st August 2025

Minutes of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), held in the meeting room at the Southern IFCA office in Poole at **14:00 on 21st August 2025.**

Present

Dr Antony Jensen	Chairman, MMO Appointee
Mr Richard Stride	Vice Chairman, MMO Appointee
Dr Simon Cripps	MMO Appointee
Mr Gary Wordsworth	MMO Appointee
Mr Mark Cornwell	MMO Appointee
Mr Colin Francis	MMO Appointee
Mr Stuart Kingston-Turner	Environment Agency
Mr Connor Reid	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, Mr Kyle Payton and Mr Jay Bedwell, Project Officers Ms Imogen Wright and Ms Chelsea Perrins were also present. Cllr Paul Fuller, Chairman of the Authority also attended.

Mr Simon Pengelly (Association of IFCA) attended in person.

Apologies

55. Apologies for absence were received from Mr Neil Hornby (MMO Appointee), Ms Elisabeth Bussey-Jones (MMO Appointee), Dr Heidi Guille (MMO Appointee), Dr Richard Morgan (Natural England), Mr James Morgan (Marine Management Organisation).

Declarations of interest

56. The following non-pecuniary interests were declared: Mr Connor Reid (Agenda Item 6), Mr G Wordsworth (Agenda Item 5c & 9). Mr M Cornwell declared a pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 6 & 8.

Minutes

57. Members considered the Minutes of the meeting held on the 8th May 2025 (Marked A) and consideration of the following matters outstanding.

a. **Resolved: 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 minutes were approved by mutual consent.

PROGRESS REPORTS

58.Emergent Updates

The CEO outlined to Members that the updates for this meeting were mainly administrative for Members awareness as well as to provide a brief overview on some national consultations which may be relevant to Members.

The CEO informed Members that she, PDCO Dell, Dr A Jensen and Cllr P Fuller would be on

the Isle of Wight on the 24th September 2025 for the fourth Community Forum. The CEO invited any General Members who wished to attend to inform PDCO Dell. The CEO also informed Members that the September Authority Meeting would be the AGM and that she would be in touch with Members prior to the meeting to seek nominations for Chair and Vice Chair of the Authority.

The CEO outlined that General Member Appraisals are due to take place next week, with Members in post during 2025 having received paperwork on this. All Members were invited to attend a Compliance & Enforcement Training Session in the Solent with correspondence on this having been sent to Members by email, the CEO outlined that this is a first come first served session due to capacity on the vessel Callista which is being used for the training.

The CEO provided information on a number of national consultations that are currently underway. Firstly, a call for evidence running until 5th September which is seeking stakeholder views, encompassing the fishing industry to the general public but not regulators, primarily on how the new Fishing and Coastal Growth Fund should be used and also incorporating a question on how fishing communities have been impacted by recent policy announcements including the EU-UK deal, the proposed ban on bottom trawling in offshore MPAs and the roll out of FMPs. The CEO outlined that if Members are keen to participate, a link to the consultation will be shared after the meeting. Secondly, the CEO covered the MMO Stage 3 Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) Consultation on the impacts of fishing in 43 MPAs and on proposed management measures for 42 MPAs. The CEO outlined that the consultation has been extended and is now open until 29th September 2025. The CEO referenced a third public consultation launched by Defra on proposed reforms to environmental compensatory measures for offshore wind developments. The consultation, which closes on 2nd September 2025, aims to gather feedback on a more flexible and pragmatic approach to managing environmental impacts on MPAs. The reforms seek to clarify requirements for compensation when offshore wind projects cause unavoidable harm to MPAs. The CEO outlined that, according to Defra, the changes are designed to accelerate the UK's transition to net zero and support the Government's "Clean Power by 2030" mission, while also contributing to nature recovery goals. Stakeholders involved in environmental conservation are encouraged to respond with feedback to inform both the legislative framework and accompanying guidance. The CEO stated that she would be happy to circulate links to any of these consultations if Members would like.

The CEO stated that her final update would lead into the next agenda item, informing Members that the Bottom Towed Fishing Gear (BTFG) Byelaw 2023 has now been signed by the Secretary of State. The CEO outlined that PDCO Dell and DCO Birchenough will provide additional updates on how this had directed their relevant teams work in recent weeks but stated to Members that it would be nice to hypothesise that there was a link between the proactive nature of the Southern IFCA in releasing the BTFG Position Statement following the Authority meeting in Winchester and the subsequent ratification of the BTFG Byelaw 2023 by Defra, recognising that inshore fisheries management is a key quantifiable consideration to the UK Government's objectives to achieve 30% protections in the marine environment by 2030.

The CEO drew Members attention to Items 7 & 8 on the agenda which either discuss work which is currently ongoing, as is the case of the REM & AI interim report, or proposed work as per the proposal paper which is looking at gear trials in the Solent Scallop Fishery, both areas of work relying on working with industry in novel ways to help facilitate understandings of sustainable fishing practice and inform management in the inshore environment. The CEO outlined that working with industry in this manner reinforces the importance of using the expertise embedded in the community to find collective solutions to maintaining a viable industry whilst achieving conservation priorities, emphasising that this is also relevant to the

updated on Black Seabream Co-Developed Principles discussed in agenda item 6.

Dr S Cripps stated that the UK Government had been outspoken against bottom trawling at the recent UN meeting but that a new position paper on fishing in MPAs had been published by the WWF which was well balanced and looked at how MPA management can consider communities and impacts through a pragmatic approach. Members briefly discussed legal duties in relation to feature-based management within MPAs.

59. BTFG Byelaw 2023: Byelaw Implementation

PDCO Dell stated to Members that the BTFG Byelaw 2023, ratified by the Secretary of State on 7th July 2025, introduced a mix of new and extended prohibition areas for BTFG, as well as maintaining the requirement for gear to be inboard and above the sea whilst a vessel is transiting through a prohibited area.

PDCO informed Members that since the ratification of the Byelaw, Officers have been carrying out port visits, drone flights and sea patrols across the District, boarding and engaging with towed gear operators. PDCO outlined that conversations have been challenging in some instances, and gave credit to the Officers in their approach to engagement during this time. PDCO Dell outlined that IFCO Payton has assisted the industry by getting the new prohibited area coordinates onto fishing vessel plotters electronically, responding to a previous request from industry and a previous Authority Member that assistance be provided in this regard.

PDCO Dell outlined that Officers have continued to access I-VMS to monitor Byelaw areas and have been engaging with static gear fishers operating on these fishing grounds, noting that since the implementation of the Byelaw static gear operators have extended fishing operations into new prohibition areas.

PDCO Dell stated that the enforcement of the BTFG Byelaw 2023 remains a priority for the Compliance & Enforcement Team and Officers will continue to work to ensure compliance with the new regulation.

The Chairman expressed thanks to the Officers involved in the implementation on behalf of the TAC and echoed the benefits of assisting fishers in having new management areas on their plotters.

60. BTFG Byelaw 2023: Southern IFCA BTFG Position Statement

DCO Birchenough outlined to Members that at a national, and subsequently local level, there has been an increase in attention placed on BTFG activity and associated management, particularly within MPAs. DCO Birchenough informed Members that this has been related to a number of factors, including the proposal for two Private Members Bills, the first of which was withdrawn following a second reading in September 2024, the second titled the 'Marine Protected Areas (Bottom Trawling) (England) Bill' having undergone a first reading in the House of Commons and being timetabled for a second reading in May 2026, the release of the film 'Ocean' with David Attenborough which covered, as one of its topics, the debate on bottom trawling and dredging within MPAs and additional information appearing online including the Blue Marine Foundation #TheBottomLine Campaign and a contextual article from Seafish in response to the 'Ocean' film. DCO Birchenough also outlined that the MMO Stage 3 MPA consultation, as previously referenced by the CEO, had been launched on 9th June 2025 relating to BTFG management.

DCO Birchenough stated that in response to the conversation on BTFG and associated management, the Authority had been 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 environment 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. DCO Birchenough informed Members that the position statement 'Providing some local context on the Bottom Towed Fishing Gear debate' had been published on the Southern IFCA website and social media platforms on 17th June 2025, the statement having then been further updated to reflect the ratification of the BTFG Byelaw 2023, a copy of the updated statement having been provided to Members as part of this agenda item.

Mr R Stride queried whether the calculated percentage coverage of Special Protection Areas (SPAs) by BTFG prohibitions included the Solent and Dorset Coast SPA and if so whether excluding this SPA from the calculations, based on its large spatial footprint, the percentage coverage for SPAs increases. DCO Birchenough confirmed that the calculations did include this SPA and confirmed that if this SPA is excluded from the calculations the percentage coverage of SPAs by BTFG prohibitions increases to c.80%.

61. Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Fishery 2025 season catch data

IFCO Churchouse provided a progress update to Members on the monthly analysis of Manila clam Landings Per Unit Effort (LPUE) data under the Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Fishery Monitoring & Control Plan (M&CP) for the 2025/26 season. IFCO Churchouse provided a brief overview of the introduction of the M&CP and outlined that this monthly analysis formed part of the In-Season Monitoring Programme under the M&CP and aims to track catch data to assess the status of the fishery during the season. The in-season monitoring is not linked a control mechanism but provides information to supporting ongoing monitoring and information to inform any Authority decisions in the event that a control mechanism is activated under either the On-Site Monitoring Programme or the SPA Monitoring Programme.

IFCO Churchouse provided detail on the LPUE values for the months of May and June 2025 as outlined in the paper and verbally provided detail of LPUE values for July 2025 as the most recent month in the fishing season, reporting an LPUE of 91.48 kg/day which represents a 22.2% increase on the same month during the 2024 season. For all three months the LPUE values for 2025 are higher than the corresponding months in the previous years, they remain lower than those for the period 2020-2023 but above those for 2016-2019. IFCO Churchouse informed Members that there had been high catches of cockle at the beginning of the 2025/26 fishing season. IFCO Churchouse outlined that Southern IFCA will continue to monitor the trends of harvested stocks throughout the 2025/26 fishing season in line with the M&CP and provided an overview of the Pilot Mid-Season Stock Observer Programme which had been carried out in August 2025 where CPUE data was collected from fishers to be compared to annual stock survey data. Permit Holders had been very supportive of this process and had assisted Officers in obtaining the relevant samples.

Mr G Wordsworth raised that comparing catch rates to those seen in 2016-2020 needed to account for that data being up to 10 years old and that harvesting methods in the fishery have become more sophisticated over time and therefore catch levels would be expected to be higher. Mr Wordsworth stated that the comparisons to 2021-2023 data would be more representative on this basis. It was discussed that mortality had been reported in the Manila clam in 2025 as well as in 2024 by stakeholders undertaking hand gathering and therefore it should still be considered that the stock is declining despite an uptick in catch levels. It was also discussed that from observations there appears to be only one year class coming through as a smaller range of sizes are being seen with many individuals just over the MCRS of 35mm.

DCO Birchenough commented that whilst some Permit Holders have developed fishing gear for increased efficiency this is not universal across all Permit Holders and that those engaging in the fishery are fishing at different levels. PDCO Dell added that there are restrictions on the fishing gear through the Permit Conditions which achieve high levels of compliance.

Dr S Cripps queried the use of kg/day as a metric. It was discussed that during reporting of catch data during the 2024 season, it was highlighted by Permit Holders that the calculation of Landings Per Unit Effort (LPUE) as kg/m of dredge/hour was not easily understood and to be able to relate data to their fishing practice kg/day was preferred. Southern IFCA reported in 2024 using both kg/day and kg/m of dredge/hour and use the latter in internal calculations when considering seasonal analysis of data.

The Chairman commented that from the Southern IFCA Poole Harbour Bivalve Survey Report 2025, the size frequency distribution suggested the fishing gear was well tuned to fishing Manila clam at MCRS and commented that it was positive to see Manila clam at or above MCRS in the samples despite the targeted fishery. Mr R Stride queried whether the same dredge was used in the Southern IFCA Poole Harbour Bivalve Survey each year, it was confirmed that as much as possible the same vessel and same equipment is used each year although this is based on skipper availability. Mr S Kingston-Turner asked whether juvenile samples are taken, it was confirmed that samples of undersized Manila clam are also sought using a second methodology using sediment samples but that this was not exhaustive, the ability to fully survey juvenile populations requires significant resource input.

Members discussed the need for a separate Working Group to discuss data gathering and analysis in the Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Fishery in more detail and further explore potential impacting factors on the trends in stock data.

Recommendation
62. That a Working Group of interested TAC Members be held to discuss data gathering and analysis in the Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Fishery.

63. Live Wrasse Fishery 2025 season

Senior IFCO Condie informed Members that, in line with information received ahead of the usual start of the District's Live Wrasse Fishery Season on 1st July, there had been no active Live Wrasse Fishery take place in 2025. Senior IFCO Condie outlined that this was due to live wrasse being sought from the Scottish live wrasse fishery which opened in May.

Members discussed whether the absence of a live wrasse fishery in 2025 would potentially change perceptions from other sectors of a lack of wrasse species being found in Dorset.

ITEMS FOR DECISION

64. Black Seabream Co-Developed Principles Consultation Outcome

DCO Birchenough provided Members with a summary of outcomes following the conclusion of a Black Seabream (BSB) Consultation which proposed a number of Co-Developed (CoD) 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.

Senior IFCO Condie detailed the consultation which had taken place and that both in-person and online engagement options had been made available to stakeholders including coastal drop-in sessions, a targeted industry workshop, coastal engagement, community forums,

stakeholder group meetings, an online meeting and an online questionnaire. Senior IFCO Condie informed Members that the consultation received 128 responses, the highest number ever received by Southern IFCA during an informal consultation. DCO Birchenough stated that the overriding message from the consultation 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.

Senior IFCO Condie summarised the specific consultation outcomes for each of the Co-Developed Principles. DCO Birchenough reiterated that there had been majority support through the consultation for each of the CoD Principles which had been very positive. DCO Birchenough outlined that some Member Discussion Areas had been identified from specific points raised through a few consultation responses, covering Maximum Conservation Reference Size (MaxCRS), the recreational bag limit and the data collection scheme as detailed in the report with contextual information and potential mitigations also provided for Members consideration.

Members discussed MaxCRS and that the potential for an increase in the number of smaller fish being removed as a result, with it being felt that this would be mitigated by having the CoD Principle of a recreational bag limit of 6 fish per person per day. Members also discussed that for the commercial sector having a MaxCRS would not result in more fishing being caught for in a single trip, for example using a net, as methods of fishing are set up to already support preferred harvesting practices. PDCO Dell provided context on the three relevant commercial fishers who have expressed a willingness to provide data to Southern IFCA to help inform understandings on catch composition. DCO Birchenough outlined that, in implementing any measures, it will be important to provide education as to the rationale for the CoD Principles and the ability of the Principles collectively to support the sustainability of the population.

Members supported proceeding with the CoD Principles for MCRS and MaxCRS considering the consultation outcomes.

Members discussed a recreational bag limit of 6 fish per person per day and the potential risk of grading. DCO Birchenough outlined that, as previously discussed, CoD Principles collectively complement one another with the MaxCRS providing a mitigation to the risk of removing breeding males if grading were to occur.

The Chairman suggested that the 6 fish per person per day is carried forward and that information is sought from stakeholders following implementation as to the response to this CoD Principle and how it is being received and complied with, noting the potential to review in future years. Members also discussed that if appropriate handling practices are followed and fish are maintained in good condition then even if grading did occur the fish that are returned should be in good health. DCO Birchenough outlined that these elements are being explored for inclusion in the Guidance CoD Principle along with elements such as returning breeding males which would help offset breeding males being kept on vessels rather than being returned, further illustrating how the CoD Principles are designed to work together to achieve an overall beneficial outcome. Members reiterated the importance of education to accompany the CoD Principles.

Members supported proceeding with the CoD Principle for a recreational bag limit.

Members discussed the CoD Principle of a data collection program and the positive outcome of the consultation with a consensus that a data collection program should be implemented, recognising the need to deconflict where possible with existing sources of data collection.

Members supported proceeding with the CoD Principle for a data collection program.

Mr R Stride queried whether the issue of CoD Principles being proposed to be voluntary rather than statutory had been raised through the consultation. DCO Birchenough outlined that the opportunity had been provided through the consultation for participants to raise any points they wished in relation to the proposals and that 6 out of the 128 responses had referenced that the CoD Principles should be statutory rather than voluntary. It was discussed that there was a steer from the Seabreams FMP to suggest that initial outcomes in the short to medium term would most likely be explored as non-statutory based on evidence gaps which exist for the species and that guidance from Defra for IFCAs in developing management is to explore non-statutory measures first. Members discussed that voluntary measures are appropriate at this stage and, in the event that further data gathering indicates this is not suitable then the Authority has the ability to introduce statutory measures.

The recommendations in the paper were proposed by Mr C Francis and were seconded by Mr G Wordsworth. All Members were in favour, with the exception of Mr M Cornwell who abstained.

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

67. Southern IFCA Solent Scallop Research Programme
IFCO Churchouse provided Members with an overview of current research carried out within the Solent Scallop Fishery, and a proposal to create the wider Solent Scallop (SCE) 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.

IFCO Churchouse outlined that based on existing research and discussions with the external Environmental Assessment of Scallop Innovation Gear (EASIG) Fisheries Industry Science Partnership (FISP) Project, it had been determined that there was the potential for wider research in the Solent SCE Fishery which could be carried out by Southern IFCA. IFCO Churchouse detailed that the Solent SCE Research Programme would bring together current research and three new research projects to deliver a holistic programme that aims to answer key questions and facilitate improved understandings. IFCO Churchouse outlined that the delivery of the Programme would span the 2025/26 and 2026/27 financial years, with the new research projects covering 1) additions to the current Solent SCE Survey to quantify empty shell, bycatch and assess SCE condition, 2) a desk-based study to identify key fishing areas in the Solent across both the SCE fishery and other Solent fisheries to identify areas of overlap and inform marine planning and 3) a gear trial research project to compare different dredge types specifically within the small-scale Solent SCE Fishery to complement national research.

DCO Birchenough outlined that if Members resolved to recommend the establishment of a Solent SCE Research Programme, then relevant budgetary considerations would be fully detailed and discussed with the Executive Sub-Committee and the Authority at the appropriate meetings.

The CEO thanked IFCO Churchouse for her work in developing this programme and highlighted the importance of carrying out research to complement that being carried out a national level to ensure that the small-scale inshore sector continues to be represented and can provide input to national level discussions such as through the King Scallop FMP.

The recommendations in the paper were proposed by Mr R Stride and were seconded by Mr S Kingston-Turner. All Members voted in favour.

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

GUEST SPEAKER:

69. The Inshore and Small Scale Fisheries Consortium

Members received a presentation from Mr Simon Pengelly, Senior Technical Officer at the AIFCA. Mr Pengelly presented on 'Securing sustainable inshore fisheries in the UK: a vision for thriving small-scale coastal communities' covering the aim and composition of The Inshore and Small Scale Fisheries Consortium (ISSF), as a group of organisations spanning academic, environmental NGO, fishermen organisations and regulators who share a collective concern about the decline in the inshore fishing fleet. Mr Pengelly described engagement events aiming to understand the causes of decline and to co-create solutions to maintain thriving and sustainable inshore and small-scale fishing livelihoods in England and the seven priorities which had emerged. Mr Pengelly covered further engagement intentions and ongoing policy engagement opportunities, including a National ISSF Conference scheduled for 4th – 5th February 2026 in Newcastle with the aim of agreeing feasible actions for a viable, diverse, accessible inshore fleet and to have broader engagement with the fishing community, policy makers and the public.

Members discussed the positive direction of the ISSF and the benefits/concerns which can come with a Consortium comprising regulators and NGOs as well as industry recognising that ultimately this approach allows for different approaches to be discussed and opportunities for collective working. Members discussed the National ISSF Conference and highlighted the importance of Defra attendance as well as the need to progress identified actions with a collective consensus. The Chairman suggested the Dorset Coast Forum as an avenue for further engagement.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

70. REM & AI Project Interim Report

Members received a presentation from IFCO Payton and IFCO Bedwell on the interim report for the REM & AI Project. IFCO Bedwell reviewed the five overarching objectives of the report and described to Members how Southern IFCA have been working with companies to secure technology delivery. The presentation reviewed two pilot fisheries under the project, the first looking at BTFG and the second looking at netting and potting fisheries. IFCO Bedwell described to Members how the technology operated on each vessel and the data outputs which could be achieved. An overview of project costings to date was provided and IFCO Bedwell summarised the next steps in the project including engagement Defra on outcomes and process and aligning work with other IFCAs through a proposed National IFCA REM Strategy.

Members discussed the AI element of the technology and the need for high resolution footage and compatible camera systems. IFCO Bedwell explained that the development of AI is ongoing, and discussion is proposed with Marine Scotland to look further at how AI can be used. PDCO Dell commented that developments were being made to improve the quality of video capture which can then be used to teach an AI, looking to achieve this collaboratively at a national level.

Dr Cripps emphasised the importance of looking at where REM/AI is being used in other fisheries including internationally to determine lessons learned and share knowledge. IFCO Bedwell identified that this had formed part of the literature review for the Project and learning from other projects was ongoing through this workstream.

Mr R Stride stated that the project needed to learn from the VMS process and the benefits of using REM/AI across all groups (regulators and industry) needed to be well understood to ensure the cost effectiveness of any wider roll out. PDCO Dell outlined that the testing which is being achieved through this project is informing these discussions and allowing for costs and benefits to be fully understood.

71. Poole Harbour Bivalve Survey Report 2025

Senior IFCO Condie provided Members with an overview of the Poole Harbour Bivalve Survey Report 2025, outlining the survey process and detailing key points from the analysis.

Senior IFCO Condie informed Members that whilst Catch Per Unit Effort (CPUE) data and landings data 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.

Senior IFCO Condie outlined that Southern IFCA had monitored the sustainability of Manila clam stocks through the Monitoring & Control Plan for the fishery 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. For the 2025 fishing season the Authority resolved that no additional management intervention was required to support a sustainable fishery.

Members discussed the increase in landings of common cockle and that the price per kg had increased as well as the levels of Manila clam declining which had focused effort on the common cockle fishery. Mr G Wordsworth stated that the increase in cockles may have come from areas where fishing has resulted in ground being clearer from weed and thus allowed for increased spat settlement.

The Chairman commented on the size frequency data and that this indicates the fishing gear has become well-tuned to the MCRS of the target species and is minimising bycatch.

72. Fisheries Management Plans

Project Officer Wright provided an overview of the matters captured in the Executive Summary. PO Wright also informed Members that the King Scallop Implementation Group (SCIG) was seeking representatives from the <15m sector.

The Chairman asked whether the request by the KSIG had been disseminated, DCO Birchenough confirmed that the information had been passed to relevant stakeholders who are invited to contact Defra directly if they are interested in sitting on the group.

73. New Southern IFCA Byelaw Book

Senior IFCO Condie showed Members the newly formatted Southern IFCA Byelaw Book, available on the Southern IFCA website, outlining the updates that had been made and the improvements to formatting to aid stakeholders in using the Byelaw Book to quickly and easily find information on Southern IFCA regulations.

Members discussed whether a link could be added to the Byelaw Book to download closed areas, whether there can be a physical copy made available as well as the digital version and whether stakeholders have provided any feedback on the accessibility of the newly formatted version. DCO Birchenough outlined that providing a link to download closed areas is not currently possible but, as described by PDCO Dell earlier in the agenda, Officers are progressing new methods of providing coordinates of closed areas to industry for inclusion on plotters. DCO Birchenough outlined that there is the potential for relevant sections of the Byelaw Book to be made available in hard copy on request and that as part of general engagement on the coast, Officers will pick up on any stakeholder thoughts on the updated Byelaw Book and ease of use.

74. 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.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 16:48.

Chairman: **Date:**

SOUTHERN INSHORE FISHERIES & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY
EXTRAORDINARY TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE – 20th OCTOBER 2025

Minutes of the Extraordinary Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), held in the meeting room at the Southern IFCA office in Poole at **14:00 on 20th October 2025.**

	Present
Mr Richard Stride	Acting Chair, Vice Chair & MMO Appointee
Cllr Paul Fuller	Acting Vice Chairman, Isle of Wight Council
Dr Heidi Guille	MMO Appointee
Mr Gary Wordsworth	MMO Appointee
Mr Mark Cornwell	MMO Appointee
Mr Stuart Kingston-Turner	Environment Agency
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) Mr Adam Parry, IFCO Ms Hester Churchouse were also present. IFCOs Mr William Meredith-Davies, Ms Chelsea Perrins and Project Officer (PO) Ms Imogen Wright were present online.

Mr Steve Boyd (commercial fisher and Solent Dredge Permit 2025/26 Nominated Representative) and Mr Ryan Tyers (commercial fisher and Solent Dredge Permit 2025/26 Applicant) attended in person in the public gallery.

Apologies

1. Apologies for absence were received from Dr Antony Jensen (MMO Appointee), Ms Elisabeth Bussey-Jones (MMO Appointee), Mr Colin Francis (MMO Appointee), Dr Simon Cripps (MMO Appointee), Dr Richard Morgan (Natural England), Ms Rachel Irish (Marine Management Organisation).

Declarations of interest

2. There were no non-pecuniary or pecuniary interests declared.

ITEM FOR DECISION

3. Solent Dredge Permit Byelaw: Review of Permit Conditions under Category A Permit

The CEO outlined that, following the presentation of data from the Southern IFCA Solent Scallop Survey 2025 at a Members Working Group on the 9th October 2025, Members determined that there was a need to explore ways to reduce effort in the scallop fishery and subsequently agreed to take forward draft proposals to public consultation as a starting point for discussions with Applicants for a Category A Permit for the 2025/26 season on potential additional effort management. The CEO thanked Members and Applicants for their input into this process, reflecting that the level of engagement had been very high, with 80% of applicants engaging in the consultation and 63% attending one of the Community Forum Meetings. The CEO outlined that the input and expertise provided through the consultation had helped to inform new Co-Developed proposals and demonstrated the commitment and investment of Applicants in the Solent Dredge Permit Byelaw (SDPB) fishery, further demonstrated by representatives attending the meeting.

DCO Birchenough also expressed her thanks to all Applicants for their levels of participation in the consultation. DCO Birchenough provided an outline of the consultation and different methods of engagement available including in-person meetings and the sending out of a consultation document with Applicants able to provide individual responses. DCO

Birchenough provided an overview of responses to specific questions asked through the consultation, outlining that the initial two proposals taken to consultation had both received limited support in their current forms and that additional information and proposals had been received as well as socio-economic information on potential impacts including economic, social and wellbeing aspects.

DCO Birchenough then summarised the staged approach which had been taken in analysing consultation feedback and conducting feasibility checks on potential management options, the first stage comprising the identification of alternative options, the second stage being a review of those alternative options, the third stage being the development of two new Co-Developed Proposals and the fourth stage being a review of the Co-Developed Proposals against a Management Options Matrix which considered each Proposal (both the Co-Developed and those taken to consultation) against a number of considerations ranging from the overarching IFCA values and purpose to the impacts of intervention. At each stage DCO Birchenough outlined any elements from the consultation which had not been taken through to the following stage and the associated rationale, as detailed in the agenda report, and outlined the detail of the resulting two Co-Developed Proposals.

DCO Birchenough outlined the potential next steps following the meeting including the intention of Officers to commence a wider review of the SDPB fishery in 2026 to encompass consideration of a longer-term management plan.

Ms H Guille requested clarity on how potential percentages of effort reduction had been calculated for each proposal. DCO Birchenough outlined that the percentages were based on consideration of the total time available to fish for scallop under current permit conditions against the total time available to fish for scallop under proposed permit conditions taking account of an identified potential effort level of 38 vessels fishing for scallop during the 2025/26 season. DCO Birchenough explained that it is understood that vessels in the fishery do not utilise all available time during the season but that this calculation provides a proxy for reduction in effort that can be compared between different proposals.

The Chairman invited Mr Steve Boyd to address the Members in relation to the agenda item.

Mr Steve Boyd outlined that he had engaged with Applicants in Warsash and Portsmouth and with the exception of one vessel from Portsmouth, the Applicants were in agreement for Mr Boyd to represent them at the TAC Meeting. Mr Boyd outlined that Applicants understood that there needed to be a reduction in effort but were not supportive of the two Co-Developed Proposals with respect to the fishing season starting on 1st December rather than 1st November. Mr Boyd outlined that the loss of November as a fishing month would have socio-economic impacts on the Applicants as well as their crew through loss of earnings across both the scallop and Manila clam fisheries and an inability to attract or retain crew to work on vessels. Mr Boyd outlined that earnings this year had been poor generally and Applicants had invested in the Solent Dredge Fishery in anticipation of starting to fish on 1st November. Mr Boyd discussed the Southern IFCA Solent dredge fishery surveys, expressing concern about comparisons between previous years' data and this year on the basis of a change in methodology and a previous situation where low stock levels from survey results preceded a fishing season of high scallop landings.

Mr Steve Boyd put forward an alternative proposal of the scallop fishery opening on 1st November 2025 with daily fishing hours of 08:00-14:00 until 30th November, maintaining the five days per week available for scallop fishing which is currently in place, with a meeting being held with Southern IFCA on 1st December, where every Permit Holder does not fish on this day but attends the meeting, to review additional evidence including catch data for scallop from the fishery from November and data on mortality of scallops from causes such as

predation or other environmental factors. At the meeting a determination would be made if further effort management was required for the remaining months of the season (to 31st March) or whether to remove additional hour restrictions, to include consideration of closing the scallop fishery if the data indicated this was required.

Mr Boyd outlined that alternative daily fishing hours for the month of November could be 08:00-12:00, however this had not been widely discussed with other Applicants. Mr Boyd stated that both options would result in the same level of effort reduction as was being sought by the two Co-Developed Proposals.

Members discussed the proposal put forward by Mr Boyd.

Members sought clarity from Mr Boyd that he was representing all the Applicants in the fishery, Mr Boyd stated that he was representing of the majority of the Applicants who intended to fish for scallop in the coming season and had spent the weekend speaking to as many as possible to seek their input, which had included fishers in Lymington, Portsmouth and Warsash. Mr Wordsworth asked for some further information about this process of engagement and how the Applicants had reached the suggested proposal and asked why that was different to the feedback received via the consultation. Mr Boyd outlined that Applicants had responded to the consultation but then had had a period of time to think it over, as he and others felt that the consultation was rushed.

Members thanked Mr Boyd for his contributions.

The Members discussed the IFCA duty to balance the needs of all users and that the proposal for 08:00-12:00, having not been widely commented on by Applicants would require consideration of potential socio-economic impacts, for example based on a vessel's steaming distance and associated fuel costs, however it was also discussed that early months in the season being better for markets may offset those additional costs.

Members discussed management interventions starting in December and the potential risk of increased effort as a result of anticipation of further restrictions following a 1st December meeting, as suggested by Mr Boyd. They also discussed the catch return timelines and the time it took to analyse this data, as well as the challenges associated with the suggested December review timeframe but recognised the potential for effort reduction through daily fishing hours equating to a similar level of effort reduction as that proposed through the Co-Developed Principles.

Members requested the level of effort reduction provided by Mr Boyd's proposal. DCO Birchenough stated that looking at the month of November only, comparing the current available hours to the proposal of an 08:00-14:00 or an 08:00-12:00 daily fishing time, the percentage effort reduction would be c.41% or c.60% respectively. Mr G Wordsworth commented that starting the scallop season on 1st November would also remove the need for additional management in the Manila clam fishery to avoid unintended consequences, stating that there is not an indication based on best available evidence that the Manila clam fishery requires additional management and it should not be subject to measures as a result of the scallop fishery considering the potential socio-economic impacts.

Members also considered the level of effort reduction which could be achieved by applying a daily fishing time of 08:00-14:00 for all months during a season from 1st November to 31st March which, based on the potential for 38 fishers fishing for scallop, resulted in a c.42% reduction in fishing time compared to current conditions. Members further discussed that the percentages calculated on the basis of fishing hours may not represent true effort due to effort levels varying in different months of the season but recognised the use of the current

calculations as a proxy for effort reduction based on the information available.

Members discussed the application of an 08:00-13:00 daily fishing time as a compromise between 08:00-14:00, discussing that, as with 08:00-12:00 this was not a time period which had been put forward through the consultation responses and therefore it was difficult to gauge what support there would be from Applicants for this as a proposal. Members queried whether any consultation responses had referenced an 08:00-14:00 daily fishing time, IFCO Churchouse confirmed that 7 individual responses and 1 group response had referenced this daily fishing time.

Members discussed compliance & enforcement aspects of all proposals, PDCO Dell confirmed that all proposed measures were able to be monitored and enforced appropriately.

Members discussed the need to consider input provided from Applicants at this meeting, in addition to that provided during the consultation, taking into account the short-time frame available for the consultation, alongside the Co-Developed proposals and the best available evidence to reach an appropriate solution. It was discussed that effort reduction would need to be applied to the whole season due to the infeasibility of data being available at a sufficient level to inform a further decision in December. Members also discussed data from the January mid-season Solent Scallop Survey, considering that if action were to be taken on the basis of data from this survey a determination on what action to take would also need to be made at this TAC meeting to avoid having to repeat the full review process. It was also discussed that the January mid-season survey occurs after the majority of effort has taken place therefore to intervene at this point may not achieve the required level of effort management based on current survey data.

Members also discussed that if environmental variables are playing a role in the levels of scallop stock in the Solent, then effort reduction would seek to support a sustainable fishery but there may still be stock impacts, however the IFCA should act to support sustainability and aim to maintain the fishery for future years recognising that the current consideration is for effort management for the coming season only, with the view to developing a longer-term management plan. The environmental parameter of Chlorophyll was discussed with available external data indicating that there had been no Chlorophyll peak in 2025 but equally this had also occurred in 2022 when there were no concerns with the scallop stock from survey results.

Members also reflected on the Southern IFCA Solent Scallop Research Programme which was agreed by the TAC at the August meeting and the intention to collect additional data from the surveys including a quantification of scallop shell which would help inform additional information on the scallop fishery over time, supporting the identified need by Applicants to explore mortality in the stock.

Mr G Wordsworth asked for Members to consider the following proposal:

A reduction in fishing effort in the Solent scallop fishery for the forthcoming season (2025/26), as achieved via the following measures:

a. A reduction in daily fishing hours from 08:00-16:00 to 08:00-14:00

Mr Wordsworth was invited to speak to his proposal by the Chairman. Mr Wordsworth stated that the proposal achieved the level of reduction being sought of over 40% and considered socio-economic impacts put forward by Applicants. Mr Wordsworth also stated that the proposal removes any impact on the Manila clam fishery.

Cllr P Fuller expressed support for this proposal and stated that the fishery should continue to

be monitored during the coming season and consideration given to how to other issues raised over the longer-term such as mortality might be able to be monitored in the future.

The Chairman invited the proposal from Mr Wordsworth for consideration by the Membership. The proposal was seconded by Cllr P Fuller. As the proposal was carried, Mr Wordsworth then proposed Co-Developed Proposal 3, which Cllr P Fuller seconded. All Members were in favour.

Resolved
4. That a reduction in fishing effort in the Solent scallop fishery for the forthcoming season (2025/26), as achieved via the following measures:

a. A reduction in daily fishing hours from 08:00-16:00 to 08:00-14:00

5. Date of Next Meeting
To confirm the date of the next meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee on the 6th November 2025 to be held virtually via MS Teams.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 15:46.

Chairman: **Date:**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Marked C

Solent Dredge Permit Fishery 2025/26 Season
Paper For Information

Report by DCO Birchenough

A. Purpose

To provide Members with a progress update on the management of dredging for bivalves under a Solent Dredge Permit Byelaw (SDPB) Category A Permit for the 2025/26 season following a review of permit conditions.

1.0 Driver for Action

Following the presentation of data from the Southern IFCA Solent Scallop Survey 2025 at a Members Working Group on the 9th October 2025, Members determined that there was a need to explore ways to reduce effort in the scallop (SCE) fishery and subsequently agreed to take two initial proposals to public consultation.

Draft Proposal 1	• Maintain current effort levels in the Solent SCE fishery through **only** successful applicants who held a 24/25 Cat A Permit **and** fished for SCE being entitled to fish for SCE under a 25/26 Cat A Permit; *and* • **Fishing days:** 3 days per week from 1st to 30th Nov 2025 **(Reduction in days from 5 days)**
Draft Proposal 2	• **Fishing season:** 1st Dec 2025 to 31st Mar 2026 **(Reduction in Season from 1st Nov-31st Mar)** • **Fishing days:** 3 days per week from 1st Dec 2025 to 4th Jan 2026, 4 days per week from 5th – 18th Jan 2026 **(Reduction in days from 5 days)**

(*) Note that all proposals are additional management to that currently in place under a Cat A Permit

2.0 Public Consultation 10th-15th October 2025

Engagement during the consultation included in-person Community Forum Meetings, two additional meetings requested by stakeholders and the opportunity to provide an individual response in writing. In addition, a consultation document was sent to all eligible persons.

Through this process, 80% of applicants for a 2025/26 Category A Permit were engaged, with 63% attending the in-person meetings. Twenty-eight individual responses were received, in addition to 3 group responses. The stakeholder community were supportive of the approach taken by Southern IFCA in seeking fisher input to support the development of appropriate management solutions to ensure a sustainable stock.

3.0 Summary of Consultation Feedback

Following the consultation, responses were reviewed. From the consultation it was identified that there was limited support from applicants for the initial draft proposals in their current form, with alternative proposals put forward. Additional information was provided on applicants' intention to fish for SCE (identifying the number of potential fishers as 38) and socio-economic impacts including contextual information on economic, social and wellbeing impacts.

4.0 Analysis of Feedback & Feasibility Checks

A staged process of analysing feedback & conducting feasibility checks on alternative management options was carried out, 1) identifying alternative options, 2) reviewing alternative options, 3) developing Co-Developed Proposals and 4) application of material considerations.

Through each stage of this process any elements put forward through the consultation which were not carried through to the next stage were detailed with the corresponding rationale. Points put forward which related to longer-term management of the fishery were also noted but deemed not to be suitable to inform consideration of additional measures for the 2025/26 season including working with international fisheries to understand

management approaches and lessons learned, having three types of permit under the SDPB for SCE, Manila clam and Native oyster and research to understand scallop populations including larval transport and predation.

Following identification and review of 14 alternative proposals, two new Co-Developed Proposals were put forward, consolidating both Member and industry inputs and recognising potential unintended consequences of displacement into fisheries for other bivalves. The Co-Developed Proposals, and the initial Proposals taken to consultation, were reviewed against a Management Options Matrix which considered each component against a number of considerations. The Matrix identified that the two Co-Developed Proposals achieved more than the original Proposals which were taken to consultation and thus formed the basis for the new recommendations.

Co-Developed Proposal 1	**SCE**	• **Fishing season**: 1st Dec 25 to 31st March 26 *(reduction in season from 1st Nov to 31st Mar)* • **Fishing hours**: 08:00 – 15:00 *(reduction in hours from 08:00-16:00)*	Effort reduction **c.44%**
	Other Bivalves	• **Fishing season start: 1st Dec 25** *(reduction in season from 1st Nov to 31st Oct, harbour closures from 28th Feb)*	Effort reduction **c.24%**
Co-Developed Proposal 2	**SCE**	• **Fishing season:** 1st Dec 25 to 31st March 26 *(Reduction in season from 1st Nov to 31st Mar)* • **Fishing hours:** 08:00 – 14:00 *(Reduction in hours from 08:00-16:00)*	Effort reduction **c.52%**
	Other Bivalves	• **Fishing season start: 1st Dec 25** *(reduction in season from 1st Nov to 31st Oct, harbour closures from 28th Feb)*	Effort reduction **c.24%**

5.0 Extraordinary Meeting of the TAC – 20th October 2025

At an Extraordinary Meeting of the TAC, Members were provided with 1) a summary of feedback from the consultation and 2) the subsequent analysis of feedback & feasibility checks which informed the recommendations for the meeting, for Members to consider Co-Developed Proposal 1 or Co-Developed Proposal 2 for the 2025/26 season. At the meeting Members were also addressed by a representative of the SDPB fishery who put forward an alternative proposal on behalf of a majority of applicants who intended to fish for SCE in the coming season, including fishers from Lymington, Portsmouth and Warsash. Members considered all available information and a new proposal, Co-Developed Proposal 3, was put forward. The minutes of the Extraordinary TAC Meeting are included as Agenda Item Marked B on this agenda.

Members resolved to introduce Co-Developed Proposal 3, a reduction in fishing effort in the Solent scallop fishery for the forthcoming season (2025/26), as achieved via the following measure:

a. A reduction in daily fishing hours from 08:00-16:00 to 08:00-14:00

6.0 Next Steps

- In accordance with the review process under paragraph (28) of the SDPB, applicants for a 2025/26 Category A Permit were notified of the outcome of the review in writing on 22nd October 2025, in addition each applicant was notified of the status of their application.
- Successful applicants have been invited to take out their Category A Permit ahead of the start of the season on 1st November 2025.
- Southern IFCA will continue to monitor and engage in this fishery and will review catch data provided by Permit Holders on a monthly basis to monitor the status of the fishery through the 2025/26 season.
- Officers will commence a wider review of the SDPB fishery in 2026 to encompass consideration of a longer-term management plan.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Marked D

Whelk Population Survey Report 2025
Paper For Information

Report by IFCO Mullen

A. Purpose

For Members to receive the survey report from the Whelk Population Survey 2025.

B. Annex

Annex 1 - Southern IFCA Whelk Population Survey 2025 Report

1.0 Introduction

- The Southern IFCA Whelk Population Survey has taken place annually since 2023, to assess the population of the common whelk (*Buccinum undatum*) across the Southern IFCA District.
- The 2025 survey was carried out from March-July, utilising local commercial fishing vessels operating within key whelk fishing areas of the Southern IFCA District: Lyme Bay, Weymouth Bay, Poole Bay and The Solent.
- The survey aims to identify potential whelk stocks across the District and develop a timeseries dataset to monitor trends in abundance and size frequency between different areas.
- Data collection contributes to the Southern IFCA Whelk Monitoring Programme, alongside other research initiatives such as the Pilot Whelk Landings Per Unit Effort (LPUE) Project, to establish a robust evidence base to inform and support future management, such as the Southern IFCA Pot Fishing byelaw which is currently in QA with the MMO and through the implementation phase of the Whelk FMP.
- Current management practices include a Minimum Conservation Reference Size (MCRS) of 45mm for the species across the Southern IFCA District.
- Analysis involved calculating Catch Per Unit Effort Data above and below MCRS, as kg/pot/day to account for variation in soak times.
- The length distribution profile of each area was analysed by measuring the total shell length (TSL) and widest shell width (WSW), in mm.

2.0 Summary of Key Points

- It is recognised that the method of sampling is inherently size selective due to methods employed by fishers to reduce the quantity of whelk below MCRS, which is retained in pots and thus the level of post-capture sorting required. There is also likely to be an element of variation introduced by using subtly different pots in each location. However, this risk was weighed up against the need to use pots which are adapted to the conditions of each site and have been optimised by the fisher in each case to maximise capture potential in line with specific environmental considerations. The methodology is repeatable which will allow for comparisons to be made between sites over time to ascertain any changes in CPUE or size frequency.

2025 Results

- The 2025 survey recorded the highest total sampled weight of whelk across the four sampling areas since the survey commenced in 2023, at 217.89kg.
- Consistent with previous years, the 2025 data showed variation in whelk populations across the District suggesting the potential presence of subpopulations. Larger and wider individuals are more common in the west of the district, for example 43% whelks sampled in the Solent were in the size class 45-49mm compared to 4% in Weymouth Bay. In contrast, 58% of the Weymouth Bay samples exceed 65mm in length.
- The length frequency distributions for all sampled areas were skewed towards being above the MCRS (Figure 1).
- The total CPUE in the Solent was significantly higher than other sites at 2.74kg/pot/day ($p<0.05$). The Solent also displayed the largest under MCRS CPUE at 0.94kg/pot/day.
- The largest CPUE over MCRS was in Weymouth Bay, at 1.82kg/pot/day, and the lowest CPUE of under MCRS occurred in the same area, at 0.01g/pot/day.

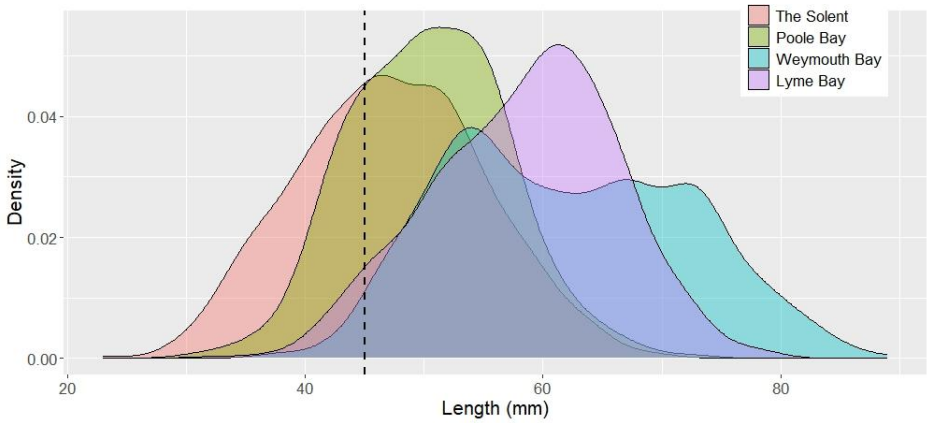

Figure 1. *The length distribution of the 2025 dataset. Weymouth Bay is represented in blue, Poole Bay in green, the Solent in red and Lyme Bay in purple. The minimum conservation reference size of 45mm is represent by a vertical dashed black line.*

- Total CPUE showed Lyme Bay and Weymouth Bay were statistically similar in 2025 ($p>0.05$), whereas other comparisons between sites were statistically different. With total CPUE and CPUE under MCRS for the Solent being significantly higher than all other surveyed sites and total CPUE and CPUE over MCRS in Poole Bay being significantly lower than all other sites (all $p<0.05$) (Figure 2).
- CPUE showed fluctuations between years for individual sites ($p<0.05$) (Figure 2). Fluctuations in CPUE may be influenced by variation in specific fishing locations each year. For example, CPUE levels in the Solent were similar in 2023 and 2025, but significantly lower in 2024. This may reflect the 2024 sampling that focussed on the southeastern Solent, compared to northern and eastern areas sampled in other years.
- CPUE in the Solent showed an increase in 2025, though the individual size decreased, potentially suggesting a younger population and an increase in spawning. In contrast, Lyme Bay showed lower CPUE but larger individuals in 2025, indicating a potentially more mature population compared to 2023.

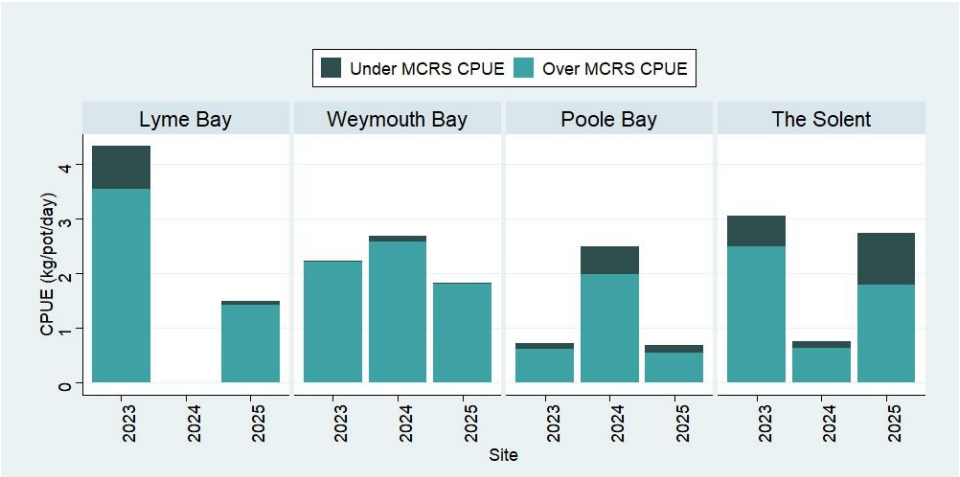

Figure 2. *A comparison of Catch Per Unit Effort (CPUE) (kg/pot/day) of sites surveyed within the whelk survey between 2023-25. Please note Lyme Bay was not surveyed in 2024. Above MCRS CPUE (above 45mm) is represented in light blue and under MCRS CPUE is represented in dark blue.*

- The notable differences observed between areas highlights the complexity surrounding whelk populations in the District and supports the continued gathering of evidence through a timeseries dataset to improve understandings of the whelk populations and identify trends or patterns which can help to inform appropriate future management.

3.0 Next Steps

- That Members notes the report.
- The report will be published on the Authority's website.

SOUTHERN IFCA WHELK POPULATION SURVEY 2025

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The 2025 Whelk Population Survey gathered samples of common whelk (*Buccinum undatum*) from four regions within the Southern IFCA District: Lyme Bay, Weymouth Bay, Poole Bay and The Solent and forms part of the Southern IFCA Whelk Monitoring Programme, alongside other whelk focussed workstreams such as the Southern IFCA Pilot Whelk LPUE Project. The data collection is aimed at enhancing our understanding of whelk stocks across Dorset, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight and will provide evidence on the effectiveness of future management, such as the proposed Southern IFCA Pot Fishing Byelaw, currently undergoing QA with the MMO. Data will also help contribute to the national research efforts and support the implementation phase of the Whelk Fisheries Management Plan (FMP).

Whelks are exempt from EU Total Allowable Catch (TAC) limits as they are classified as a non-quota species. Within the Southern IFCA District, current management practices include the national Minimum Conservation Reference Size (MCRS) of 45 mm in shell length, which is applied across the supply chain and to both commercial and recreational fishers under the Southern IFCA MCRS Byelaw[1]. Given the commercial significance of this species, it is important to assess the District's whelk populations to provide data that will inform sustainable management strategies.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

Survey areas were selected to encompass four primary fishing regions within the Southern IFCA District, aiming to identify any variations within the whelk population across the District and as a time series is built, any temporal changes in populations. These fishing areas were chosen in collaboration with local fishers, leveraging their knowledge and experience of commonly utilised fishing grounds (Figure 1). The selected areas for sampling included the Solent, Poole Bay, Weymouth Bay, and Lyme Bay. Samples are collected throughout the main fishing season from March-July 2025.

Fishers were asked to conduct their usual fishing practices, utilising their own site-specific whelk pots, which are typically adjusted in height based on sea conditions, tidal ranges, and water flow. This approach ensured a more representative sample of the typical catch in each area, making the data relevant to local fishing practices. It is acknowledged that data analysis will need to account for variations in pot setup and soak time. Fishers conducted their fishing activities independently under relevant dispensations. Samples were transferred to officers at the conclusion of the fishing trip to be analysed at the lab facilities at Bournemouth University.

2.1 Collection

Date of fishing trip, gear type, bait type, soak time and location (latitude and longitude) were collected on the day of retrieval. Five whelk pots from 3 strings were selected, providing 15 samples from each area. The methodology included:

- Baited whelk pots deployed between 12 and 72 hours before retrieval, dependant on weather windows.
- The GPS position, using the vessel GPS system, was recorded upon retrieval of the first pot and last pot.
- The pots were recovered in-board and all whelks, from each chosen pot, emptied directly into sample bags and labelled according to area, string number and pot number.

[1] SIFCA-MCRS-Byelaw.pdf (toolkitfiles.co.uk)

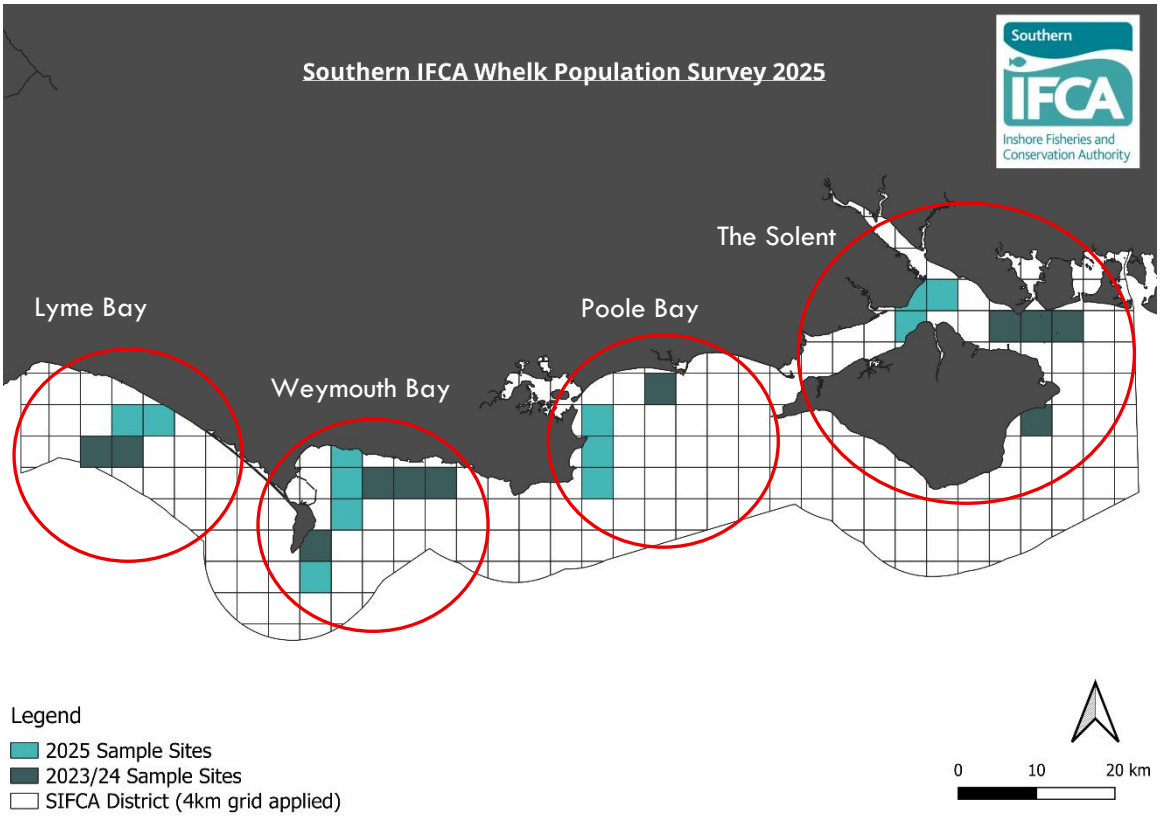

Figure 1. The 4 regions sampled; Lyme Bay, Weymouth Bay, Poole Bay and The Solent, highlighted in red and labelled. Sampled sites within each region are highlighted within a 4km grid system. 2025 survey sample sites are highlighted in light blue, whereas sample sites of the previous 2 surveys (2023 and 2024) are highlighted in dark blue.

2.2 Measurement

- The retained whelks were measured for total shell length (TSL) and widest shell width (WSW) for the first 50 individuals, measurements in mm were made using Vernier callipers (Figure 2). Individuals were categorised into the following size groups and weighed (in kg): <45mm, 45-49mm, 50-54mm, 55-59mm, 60-64mm and 65+mm.

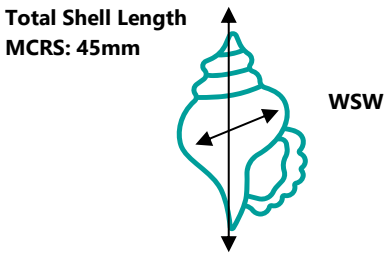

Figure 2. Diagram of the common whelk showing the total shell length (TSL) and widest shell width (WSW).

3.0 RESULTS

The weight data collected was analysed to provide a value for Catch Per Unit Effort (CPUE), defined as kilograms of whelk per pot per day (kg/pot/day). CPUE was calculated for total kg of whelk, kg of whelk over the MCRS and kg of whelk under the MCRS (MCRS = 45mm). Please note that potting methods used to obtain data for this survey are size selective due to the escape holes for drainage, which also minimise catches of whelk under the MCRS. On this basis the data for CPUE under MCRS will not be representative of this size class as it cannot be guaranteed that all whelk under MCRS have been sampled. However, comparisons can be made between sites and over time to look for changes, in the knowledge that the sampling method is consistent.

3.1 CATCH PER UNIT EFFORT

3.1.1 Analysis of the 2025 dataset

- In the 2025 survey, the area with the largest landed weight was the Solent, at 82.22kg.
- The Solent also displayed the largest average total CPUE across the 15 sampled pots, at 2.74kg/pot/day.
- The largest average CPUE over MCRS was in Weymouth Bay at 1.82kg/pot/day. Weymouth Bay also showed the lowest average CPUE under MCRS at 0.01kg/pot/day (Table 2).
- The Solent displayed the largest CPUE under MCRS at almost 1kg/pot/day.

Table 2. The whelk CPUE values of each region sampled within the 2025 survey.

Site	Total CPUE kg/pot/day	CPUE over MCRS kg/pot/day	CPUE under MCRS kg/pot/day
Lyme Bay	1.49	1.42	0.07
Weymouth Bay	2.00	1.82	0.01
Poole Bay	0.69	0.56	0.13
The Solent	2.74	1.80	0.94

- Statistical analysis of total CPUE using the Kruskal-Wallis test, showed Lyme Bay and Weymouth Bay to be statistically similar ($p>0.05$).
- All other comparisons for total CPUE showed sites to be statistically different (all p values <0.05).
- The total CPUE in the Solent was significantly higher than all other surveyed sites (all p values <0.05).
- Poole Bay displayed significantly lower total CPUE and CPUE over MCRS than all other sample sites ($p<0.05$).
- Total CPUE and CPUE over MCRS was statistically similar between other sites ($p>0.05$).
- The Solent displayed significantly higher CPUE under MCRS than all other sites ($p<0.05$).

3.1.2 Comparison between the last 3 years.

- In 2025, total sampled weight across the four regions was 217.89kg. This was the largest weight harvested since the beginning of the survey in 2023 (Table 2). Please note that in 2024, Lyme Bay was not able to be sampled, and this must be taken into consideration when analysing the total sampled weight for that survey year.

Table 2. The total sampled weights of each survey year of the Whelk Population Survey. Please note that in 2024, Lyme Bay was not sampled and this must be taken into consideration when looking at the total sampled weight.

Survey Year	Total Sampled Weight (kg)
2023	191.52
2024	100.90
2025	217.89

- Looking at all sites combined, total CPUE differences between sites have varied across the last three years (Figure 3).

Poole Bay

- Statistical analysis showed that total CPUE and CPUE over MCRS were significantly lower in 2025 than in 2024 ($P<0.05$ and $p<0.01$ respectively).
- CPUE under MCRS was also significantly lower in 2025 than 2024 ($p<0.01$), although similar to that seen in 2023 ($p>0.05$).

Lyme Bay

- Total CPUE and CPUE over MCRS in 2025, was significantly lower than in 2023 ($p<0.05$).
- CPUE under MCRS was significantly lower in Lyme Bay in 2025 than 2023 ($p<0.05$) (though it should be noted that a different vessel was required to be used in 2025 and may adopt different gear types and fishing methods).

Weymouth Bay

- Total CPUE and CPUE over MCRS were significantly lower in 2025 compared to 2024, although both years were statistically similar to 2023 ($p>0.05$).
- There was significantly lower CPUE over MCRS in 2025 than 2024 ($P<0.05$), whereas 2025 was statistically similar to 2023 ($p>0.05$).

The Solent

- 2025 displayed significantly higher total CPUE, CPUE over MCRS and CPUE under MCRS than 2024 (all p values<0.05), whereas the 2025 dataset was statistically similar to 2023 ($p>0.05$).

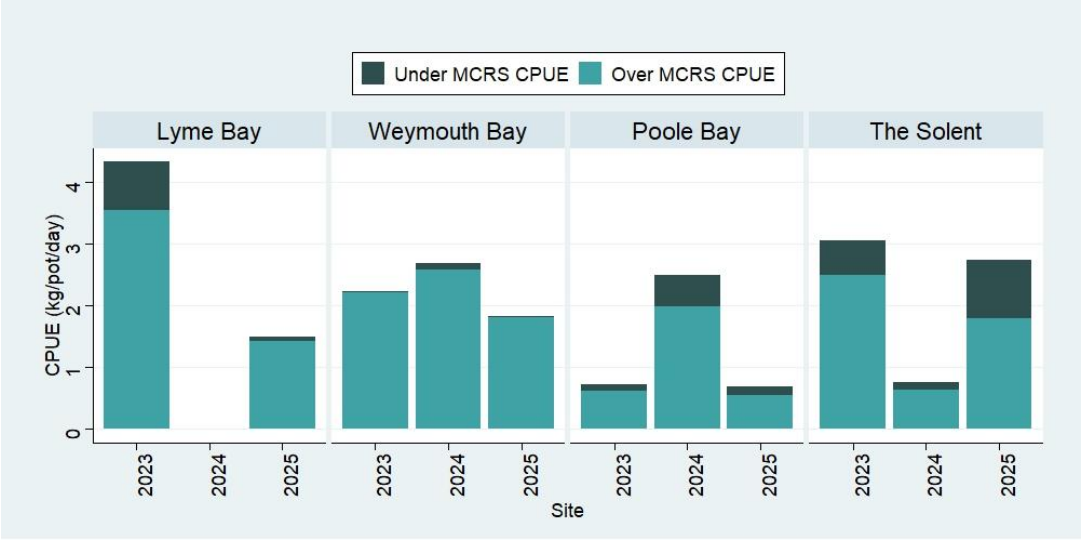

Figure 3. A comparison of Catch Per Unit Effort (CPUE) (kg/pot/day) of sites surveyed within the whelk survey between 2023-25. Please note Lyme Bay was not surveyed in 2024. Above MCRS CPUE (above 45mm) is represented by light blue and under MCRS CPUE is represented by dark blue.

3.2 LENGTH DISTRIBUTION PROFILE

3.2.1 Analysis of 2025 dataset

- The length frequency distributions for all sampled sites were skewed towards being above the MCRS (Figure 4).
- Weymouth Bay displayed the largest sampled whelks, with a maximum size of 89mm in length and a mean length of 61.2mm (Table 3).

- Weymouth Bay displayed the largest width compared to other surveyed sites in 2025, averaging at 40.05mm (Table 3).
- Poole Bay displayed the smallest mean length, at 50.44mm, while the Solent displayed the smallest mean width at 28.09mm.

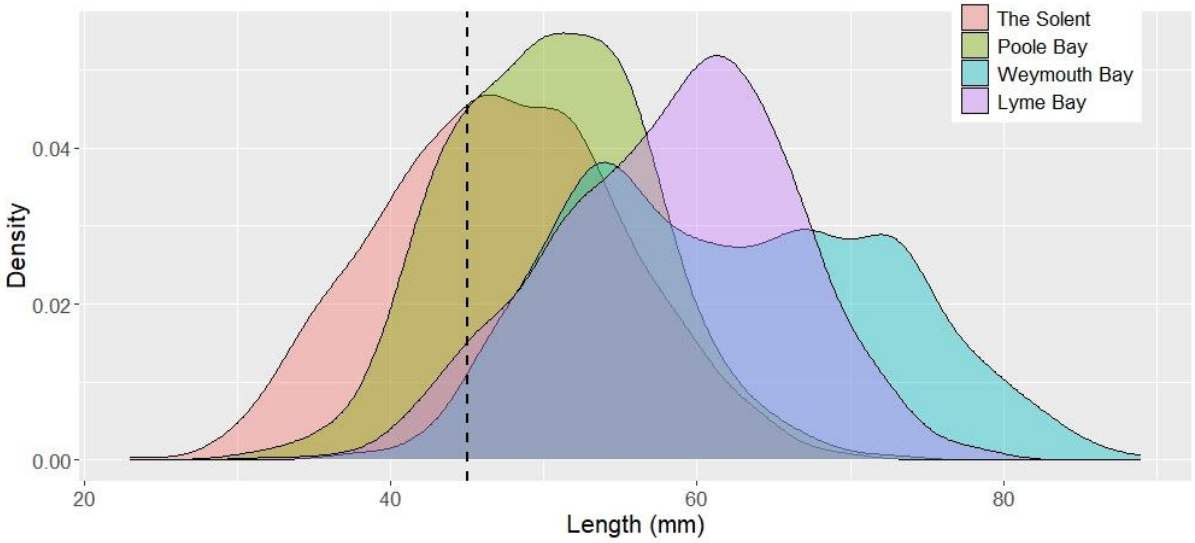

Figure 4. The length distribution of the 2025 dataset. Weymouth Bay is represented in blue, Poole Bay in green, the Solent in red and Lyme Bay in purple. The minimum conservation reference size of 45mm is represent by a vertical dashed black line.

Table 3. Mean and mode (most common) length and width, expressed as mm of each sampled site in 2025

Site	Year	Mode Length	Mean Length	Mode Width	Mean Width
Weymouth Bay	2025	53mm	61.2mm	33mm	40.05mm
Lyme Bay	2025	60mm	58.46mm	33mm	35.16mm
Poole Bay	2025	50mm	50.44mm	32mm	30.19mm
The Solent	2025	52mm	47.19mm	25mm	28.09mm

3.2.2 Comparison within the last 3 years

Table 3 shows the mean and mode (most common) length and widths, expressed as mm, seen in each sample site in the 2024 and 2023 surveys.

Table 3. Mean and mode (most common) whelk length and width, seen at each surveyed sight in 2024 and 2023.

Site	Year	Mode Length	Mean Length	Mode Width	Mean Width
Weymouth Bay	2024	69mm	63mm	35mm	38mm
Weymouth Bay	2023	72mm	61.14mm	40mm	33.68mm
Poole Bay	2024	50mm	50.4mm	31mm	30.38mm
Poole Bay	2023	52mm	50.96mm	28mm	29.03mm
The Solent	2024	49mm	48.89mm	31mm	28.57mm
The Solent	2023	54mm	51.87mm	29mm	30.4mm
Lyme Bay	2023	52mm	54.3mm	30.01mm	24mm

Weymouth Bay

- Average length of whelk in Weymouth Bay was significantly larger in 2024 than in 2023 and 2025 ($p<0.05$).
- Average width in 2025 was similar to that seen in 2024, but was significantly smaller than 2023 ($p<0.05$).

Poole Bay

- Average length sampled in Poole Bay was statistically similar between 2024 and 2025 ($p>0.05$), although the size in 2023 was significantly larger than in 2024 and 2025 (both p values $p<0.05$).
- The average width seen in 2025 was statistically similar to that of 2023 and 2024. ($p>0.05$).

The Solent

- Average length of whelk was statistically different between all survey years ($p<0.05$), suggesting that the size of whelk in the Solent has progressively become smaller each year.
- Similarly, the average width was significantly larger in 2023 than both other years ($p<0.05$).

Lyme Bay

- Average length of whelk was significantly larger in 2025 than 2023 ($p<0.05$).
- Average width was significantly larger in 2025 than 2023 ($p<0.05$).

4.0 DISCUSSION

- The survey contributes to the development of a comprehensive data series for whelk populations within the Southern IFCA District as part of the Whelk Monitoring Programme. The aim is to conduct annual surveys to build a robust dataset that establishes characteristics of the whelk populations along the Hampshire, Dorset, and Isle of Wight coastlines. This dataset will help identify trends and patterns in whelk stock abundance across different sampled areas and over multiple years. The ongoing survey efforts will enable the analysis of long-term trends to inform an evidence base for this species.
- It is recognised that the method of sampling is inherently size selective due to methods employed by fishers to reduce the quantity of whelk below MCRS which is retained in pots and thus the level of post-capture sorting required. There is likely to be an element of variation introduced by using subtly different pots in each location. However, this risk was weighed up against the need to use pots which are adapted to the conditions of each site and have been optimised by the fisher in each case to maximise capture potential in line with specific environmental considerations.
- The analysis revealed variations in whelk populations across the district, indicating that there is the potential for subpopulations with differing characteristics. Areas to the west show larger samples predominantly consisting of over MCRS, whereas east of district shows average of smaller sized whelks. The percentage of population in the size class 45-49 displayed in Poole Bay and the Solent in the 2025 dataset was 29% and 43%, respectively, whereas this was 7% and 4% when looking at Lyme Bay and Weymouth Bay in the west of the District (Figure 5). Over 50% of the sample population in Weymouth Bay was over 65mm in length.

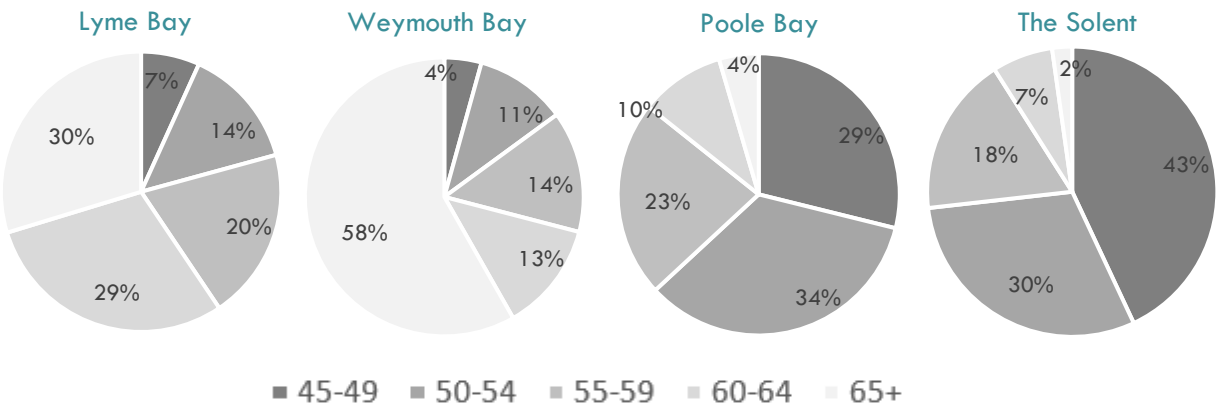

Figure 5. Pie charts representing the length distribution of whelks at each location surveyed in 2025, categorised by size above MCRS: 46-50mm, 51-55m, 56-6mm. 61-65mm >65mm. The colour varies through a gradient from dark grey to represent the smaller whelks to light grey, the larger sized whelks.

- CPUE of whelk appears to fluctuate within the sampled areas throughout years. For example, the Solent displays similar CPUE levels in 2023 and 2025, however 2024 showed a significant decrease in CPUE levels.
- While Solent CPUE has increased, statistical analysis of the length and width distribution profiles suggest smaller individuals were present in the 2025. This could suggest an increase in spawning in this region within the last year, leading to smaller size proportions yet increased CPUE. In contradiction, although CPUE has decrease in Lyme Bay in 2025 compared to 2023, analysis of the length distribution has shown an increase in size. This could suggest that the population in Lyme Bay may be more mature in the 2025 sample compared to the 2023 sample. While there was significant less total CPUE in Lyme Bay in 2025 compared to 2023, recognising that a different vessel was required to be used, there was no significant difference in the over MCRS CPUE in Lyme Bay between 2023-25, however levels of over MCRS CPUE were identified to be lower in 2025 than in 2023. Whilst there have been fluctuations and noted statistically significant differences, samples from Weymouth Bay show the most consistency in total, over MCRS and under MCRS CPUE between the three sampling years.
- The results may be explained, in part, by the different fishing locations in each survey (shown in Figure 1) and emphasises the point of potentially multiple stocks of whelks within localised areas of the District. The notable differences observed between areas highlights the complexity of whelk populations over small spatial scales and supports continued evidence gathering over a time series to effectively understand whelk populations and support a robust evidence base to inform appropriate management strategies which support the sustainability of whelk stocks and fisheries.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

The survey findings continue to identify and highlight that features of whelk populations vary across different geographical regions and can exhibit small subpopulation variations over short distances. This evidence, combined with data from the Whelk LPUE Pilot Project, will contribute to the Southern IFCA Whelk Monitoring Programme. This programme seeks to establish a robust evidence base to evaluate the effectiveness of future management strategies within the Southern IFCA District and contribute to national data collection program. The identified variation in populations over the current 3 year dataset, both within sites and between sites emphasises the need to continue building a timeseries of data to establish any patterns or trends.

Southern IFCA
Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Marked E

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

- The Defra FMP Blog has recently published posts for the Bass, Channel Demersal NQS and Crab & Lobster FMPs titled 'FMP explained: goals, benefits and updates'. Each post provides a spotlight on the published FMP, infographics detailing the updates and goals of each FMP and a short video giving a summary of the goals.
  - Bass FMP explained: goals, benefits and updates – Fisheries Management Plans
  - Channel demersal NQS FMP explained: goals, benefits and updates – Fisheries Management Plans
  - Crab and lobster FMP explained: goals, benefits and updates – Fisheries Management Plans
- Defra has published the final Blog Post in the three-part series to dive into FMPs, the first part looking at governance (Dive into FMPs: a look at governance in fisheries management plans – Fisheries Management Plans), and the second looking at partners and experts (Dive into FMPs: who are the experts delivering Defra's plans – Fisheries Management Plans). The final part is titled 'Dive into FMPs: engaging with stakeholders, groups and forums' and explains how and

when FMP engagement takes place and how stakeholders can get involved - Dive into FMPs: engaging with stakeholders, groups and forums – Fisheries Management Plans.

Tranche 1 and Tranche 2 FMPs

- **The King Scallop Implementation Group (KSIG)**
  - The minutes for the August meeting have been published (King Scallop Implementation Group meeting minutes - GOV.UK); Southern IFCA continues to keep up to date with updates from this group as it becomes available, recognising the relevance of Kings scallop management to important fisheries within the District. Some of the main points covered in this meeting were the Scallop Fisheries Improvement Project considering the links between this and the FMP, work plan updates and the establishment of task and finish groups/working groups that are relevant to the KSIG.
  - A Defra FMP Blog Post is available which outlines the role of the KSIG and intended workstreams - King Scallop Implementation Group: transparency and updates – Fisheries Management Plans.
- **Whelk Science Group (WSG)**
  - Following the establishment of the FMP Implementation Group for the Whelk FMP, Seafish have re-convened the Whelk Science Group to provide scientific support to the FMP.
  - Officers will be attending the WSG to continue understanding the ongoing whelk research and provide insight into the ongoing research at SIFCA.
- **Bass FMP**
  - The Bass Fishing Guidance for 2025 has been updated following discussions with the Bass Management Group (BMG) to allow the guidance to be clearer, offer more clarification and simplified guidance in line with Goal 4 of the Bass FMP to ensure regulations are followed by improving communication and understandings - MMO updates bass fishing guidance for 2025 – Fisheries Management Plans.

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 most recent CSWC Pelagic online briefing was attended by PO Wright.
  - This briefing ran through the changes that had been made to the draft FMP during the review phase.
  - The evidence statement for the FMP was run through allowing partners to understand how the evidence statement supported the development of the FMP. A copy of the Evidence Statement was provided for the members of the partnership to provide feedback on.
- There are no further updates on the Tranche 4 FMPs at this time, the timing for public consultation on these FMPs is 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).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Marked F

Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Fishery
Pilot Mid-Season Stock Observer Programme
Paper For Information

Report by IFCO Mullen

A. Purpose

For Members to receive a report on the outcomes of the pilot Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Fishery Mid-Season Stock Observer Programme under the Monitoring & Control Plan (M&CP).

B. Annex

Annex 1 – Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Fishery Pilot Manila Clam Mid-Season Observer Programme 2025

1.0 Introduction

- A Monitoring and Control Plan (M&CP) was established for the Poole Harbour Dredge Permit (PHDP) fishery ahead of the start of the 2025 season.
- The Pilot Mid-Season Stock Observer Programme was developed under the In-Season Monitoring Programme of the M&CP to monitor Catch Per Unit Effort (CPUE) data for Manila clams harvested within the permit fishery at the mid-season point.
- The survey utilised active permitted fishing vessels to collect samples of Manila clam stocks within the designated Shellfish Catch Zones (Zones) of Poole Harbour over the period of the 14-15th August 2025.
- Permit holders were asked to complete three standard dredge tows and provide the unsorted catch of Manila clam for analysis. Officers recorded lengths and weights of both over and under Minimum Conservation Reference Size (MCRS) (35mm) Manila clams. Oversized clams were then return to the permit holder.
- Mid-season samples were compared to CPUE data from the annual pre-season Poole Bivalve Survey 2025, which is a data source under the On-Site Monitoring Programme under the M&CP, for Manila calm stocks within the fishery.
- The comparison aimed to identify seasonal changes in stock characteristics, supplement monthly catch return data submitted by permit holders and provide a mid-season indication of the stock of Manila clam.

2.0 Summary of Key Points

- A total of 36 tows were complete using 12 permitted fishing vessels across Zones 4, 8 and 10. The total sampled weight above MCRS was 41.76kg, whereas the total sampled weight under MCRS was 15.16kg.
- The Mid-Season Observer Programme provided a valuable opportunity for collaboration between Southern IFCA and permit holders of the PHDPB Fishery. Southern IFCA would like to thank all those who participated in and supported the data collection efforts.

Catch Per Unit Effort

- Zone 8 had the most active fishing vessels, consistent with activity levels for previous seasons for the fishery, although it is noted that in part this may be due to the spatial extent of the Zone in comparison to other zones. Zone 4 showed the highest average total CPUE and CPUE over MCRS at 109.43kg/m/hr and 83.63kg/m/hr, respectively, though statistical analysis showed that there were no significant differences between the total CPUE, over MCRS CPUE and under MCRS CPUE between the three sampled sites during the mid-season survey (all p values >0.05). This suggest that the CPUE of Manila clam across these three areas of the Harbour were statistically similar.
- Monthly catch return data to the end of August 2025 indicates that Zones 4, 8 and 10 continue to be among the preferred fishing areas within the fishery for the 2025/26 season, consistent with the activity seen during sample days.

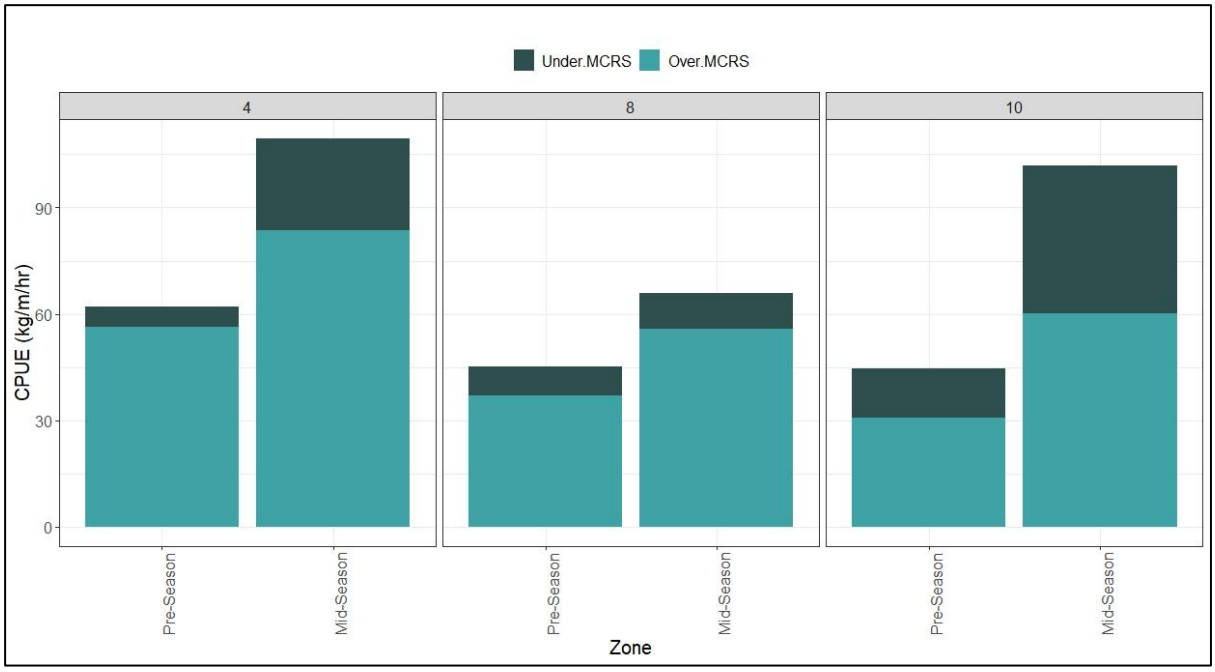

***Figure 1**. A comparison of the Catch Per Unit Effort (CPUE), expressed as kg/m/hr, of Manila clam within Shellfish Catch Zones 4,8 and 10 of the PHDP fishery during sampling in the pre-season and mid-season. Pre-season sampling was conducted as part of the Poole Bivalve Survey (over the period of 26-27/04/2025) and the mid-seasons sampling was conducted over the 14-15/08/2025. CPUE has been stacked into over the Minimum Conservation Reference Size (MCRS) or 35mm (as light blue) and under MCRS (as dark blue).*

- All Zones surveyed showed an increase in CPUE at the mid-season point when compared to the pre-season survey (Figure 1), Total CPUE was significantly higher in Zones 8 and 10 compared to the pre-season annual survey ($p<0.05$) and CPUE over MCRS was significantly higher in Zone 4 when compared to the pre-season annual survey ($p<0.05$).
- The average CPUE of clams under MCRs remained statistically similar across all sampled zones between the mid-season and pre-season surveys ($p>0.05$).

Length Distribution Profile

- Statistical analysis revealed significant differences in the average length of Manila clam between sampled zones, although this variation was anticipated, given the variety of vessels and gear types used for sampling across these areas.
- Zone 4 recorded the largest average Manila clam size at 39.13mm. This was significantly larger than the average size recorded for this Zone during the pre-season survey ($p<0.01$).
- In contrast, Zone 8 displayed significantly smaller average size at the mid-season (35.58mm) compared to pre-season (37.3mm) ($p<0.05$).

- The data from the pilot mid-season survey indicates that the potential increase in the availability of over MCRS Manila clam, potentially driven by warmer waters and increased growth during the summer, is not being impacted by fishing activity to a point where the increase in the proportion of the population cannot be seen, even in the area showing the highest levels of fishing activity (Zone 8) there is still a noted increase in total CPUE and CPUE over MCRS. For CPUE under MCRS, it may be that additional growth has resulted in individuals reaching a size where they are more likely to be captured by a dredge but remain below the MCRS, further data collection would be required to explore this further. Overall, the levels of Manila clam seen in the pilot mid-season survey show a positive picture and indicate that, at current levels of fishing, the population seems sustainable by the midway point of the season.

3.0 Next Steps

- That Members note the report.
- Southern IFCA will continue to monitor the Manila clam stocks, alongside other harvested species, throughout the remainder of the fishing season in accordance with the M&CP.

Marked F – Annex 1

POOLE HARBOUR DREDGE PERMIT FISHERY
PILOT MANILA CLAM MID-SEASON OBSERVER PROGRAMME 2025

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Fishery is a well-established fishery, that a pump-scoop dredge to harvest bivalve species within Poole Harbour, such as Manila clam, common cockle, American Hard-shelled clam and native clam. The fishery runs from the 25th May- 23rd December annually and is currently made up of 45 permit holders managed under permit conditions within the Southern IFCA Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Byelaw (PHDPB).

The Monitoring & Control Plan (M&CP) for the fishery, established prior to the opening of the 2025 fishing season, provides a comprehensive framework for monitoring and potential management, utilising a flexible permit system and the best available evidence on dredging practices and species interactions. The 2025 version of the M&CP focusses on the monitoring of Manila clam species following concerns over stock levels in the previous 2024 season. The M&CP is comprised of an SPA Monitoring Programme, an In-Season Monitoring Programme and an On-Site Monitoring Programme, the latter incorporating threshold-based control mechanisms, based on Landings Per Unit Effort (LPUE) and Catch Per Unit Effort (CPUE) data, derived from permit holder catch returns and SIFCA led surveys, respectively.

The Pilot Mid-Season Stock Observer Programme forms part of the data collection under the In-Season Monitoring Programme of the M&CP, whilst not linked to a control mechanism, the programme aims to give an indication of Manila clam stocks within the Harbour, approximately mid-way through the fishing season, focusing on CPUE data from active fishing vessels. The 2025 survey acted as a pilot programme to explore the ability to obtain CPUE data (as kg of Manila clam per metre dredge per hour) from the active fishing vessel at the mid-season point, with the aim to continue to use this as a form of joint data collection between SIFCA and permit holders of the PHDPB fishery.

2.0 METHODS

The pilot mid-season stock observer programme was completed over the period of the 14/08/2025-15/08/2025 and employed the use of FPV Endeavour and collaboration from permit holders. Sampling efforts were determined by the number and location of permit holders actively operating on these days (Figure 1).

Fishers were asked to complete 3 standard duration dredges, to reflect their usual fishing activity. The average dredge time was 2mins 49seconds. The officers recorded the duration of each dredge alongside GPS coordinate data, which was subsequently aligned to the corresponding Shellfish Catch Zone (Zone) within the Harbour, which permit holders are asked to include as part of their monthly catch returns under PHDPB Permit Conditions. The catch return forms provide the LPUE data collection under the In-Season Monitoring Programme and annual catch statistics under the On-Site Monitoring Programme under the M&CP and Zonal information provides spatial context to this data.

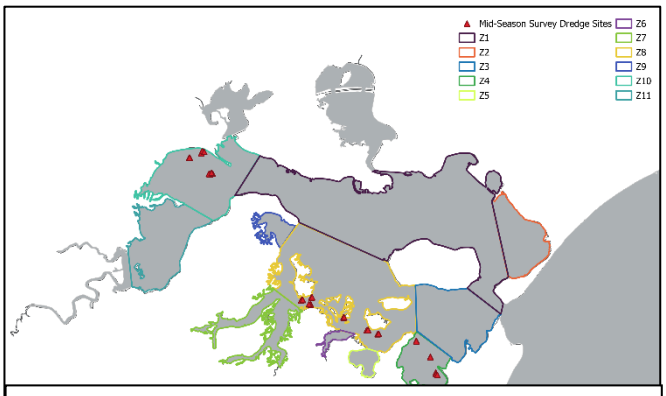

Figure 1. A map of the PHDPF covering Shellfish Catch Zones 1-11and sampled areas within the 2025 Pilot Mid-Season Stock Observer Programme.

Permit Holders were asked to provide officers with all Manila clam catch harvested in each dredge. Manila clam over and under the Minimum Conservation Reference Size (MCRS) (35mm) were sorted, measured and weighed. Over the 2 sampling dates, 12

vessels were used to complete 36 tows. 1,843 Manila clams were sampled across 3 Shellfish Catch Zones. It must be noted that a number of different vessels were used to sample the data. While regulations under the PHDPB Permit Conditions govern certain aspects and dimensions of the dredge, permit holders have the flexibility to adjust specific features such as bar spacing to larger than the minimum spacing requirement. A range of vessels were intentionally included in the sampling to ensure a representative dataset for the fishery and account for the potential difference in number of under MCRS individuals being captured by each individual dredge.

3.0 2025/26 MANILA CLAM FISHERY INSIGHT

Manila clam stocks were sampled within Shellfish Catch Zones 4, 8 and 10. The total sampled weight of Manila clam above MCRS was 41.76kg, and below MCRS was 15.16kg. The total weights sampled in each Zone are listed in Table 1 below.

Table 1. The weight (kg) and average CPUE of Manila clam sampled within the PHDP Pilot Mid-Season Stock Observer Programme in Zones 4, 8 and 10. Weights over and under the Minimum Conservation Reference Size (MCRS) have been included.

Zone	Total Weight (kg)	Over MCRS (kg)	Under MCRS (kg)	Total CPUE (kg/m/hr)	Over MCRS CPUE (kg/m/hr)	Under MCRS CPUE (kg/m/hr)
4	19.13	16.02	3.11	109.43	83.63	25.80
8	23.79	17.20	6.59	91.54	55.73	35.81
10	14.00	8.54	5.46	101.95	60.19	41.76

3.1 CATCH PER UNIT EFFORT

Zone 4 showed the highest average total CPUE and CPUE over MCRS at 109.4kg/m/hr and 83.63kg/m/hr, respectively. Zone 10 displayed the largest average CPUE under MCRS 41.76kg/m/hr (Figure 2). Statistical testing using the Kruskal-Wallis test revealed no significant differences when comparing Total CPUE, CPUE over MCRS and CPUE under MCRS between sampled zones. This suggests that the CPUE of Manila clam across these 3 primarily favoured harvesting areas of the Harbour were statistically similar.

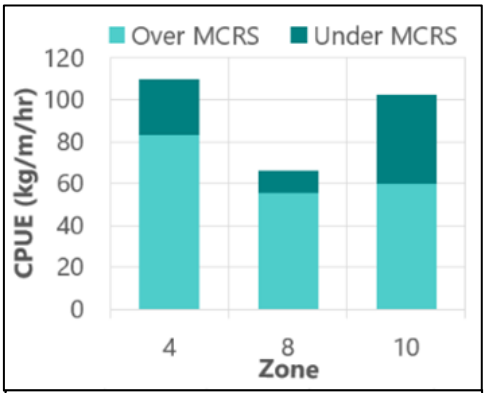

Figure 2. The CPUE, expressed as kg/m/hr, of Manila clam within Shellfish Catch Zones 4, 8 and 10 of the PHDPB Fishery during sampling over the period of the 14-15/08/2025. CPUE has been stacked into over the MCRS of 35mm (as light blue) and under MCRS (Dark blue).

3.2 LENGTH FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION

The average sized Manila clam measured in the mid-season sampling for all three zones combined was 37mm. Zone 4 showed the largest averaged size clam at 39.1mm, followed by Zones 10 and 8 at 37mm and 35.6mm, respectively. Statistical testing showed that length distribution was statistically different between all zones, however this was expected due to the variety of vessels used with different modifications to dredging equipment.

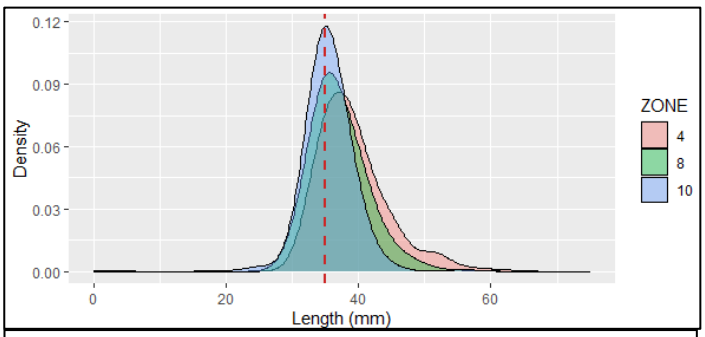

Figure 3. Length frequency distribution of Manila clams sampled within the PHDP Mid-Season Stock Observer Programme.

3.3 COMPARISONS TO THE OTHER IN-SEASON DATA OUTPUTS AND ON-SITE MONITORING PROGRAMME DATA

The mid-season sampling dataset was compared to the CPUE data obtained from the annual Poole Bivalve Survey, which is a data input under the On-Site Monitoring Programme of the PHDPB Fishery M&CP. This comparison aims to identify any seasonal difference, provide an additional form of data collection alongside the monthly catch return forms submitted by permit holders, and offer an indication of the fishery's condition at the mid-point of the season in relation to landings data.

3.31 Catch Per Unit Effort

Figure 4 shows the differences in Manila clam CPUE for Zones 4, 8 and 10 in the pre-season annual Poole Bivalve Survey compared to the Mid-Season Stock Observer Programme. Each zone displays higher CPUE levels in the mid-season survey.

Statistical testing using a paired t-test revealed that the Mid-Season Survey had significantly higher total CPUE outputs in Zones 8 and 10 compared to the Pre-Season annual survey (both p values <0.05). The total CPUE output in Zone 4 was statistically similar between the Pre-Season and Mid-Season surveys in 2025. CPUE over MCRS was statistically similar between surveys in Zones 8 and 10 (p values >0.05). The mid-season survey showed significantly higher CPUE over MCRS than the pre-season in Zone 4 (p<0.05). All zones displayed similar CPUE under MCRS between surveys (all p values >0.05).

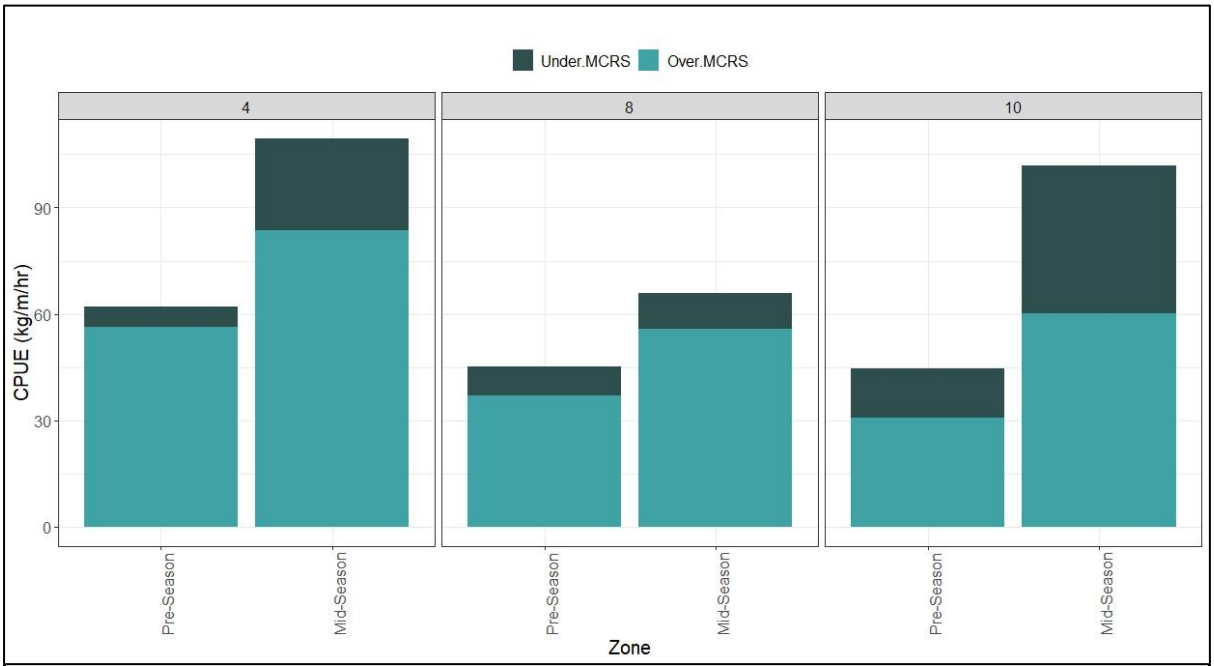

Figure 4. A comparison of the CPUE, expressed as kg/m/hr, of Manila clam within Shellfish Catch Zones 4, 8 and 10 of the PHDPB Fishery during sampling at the Pre-Season and Mid-Season points. Pre-Season sampling was conducted as part of the Poole Bivalve Survey (over the period of the 26-27/04/2025) and Mid-Season sampling was conducted over the 14-15/08/2025. CPUE has been stacked into over the MCRS of 35mm (as light blue) and under MCRS (Dark blue).

2.3.2 Length Distribution

Statistical testing using paired t-tests showed that the average length of Manila clam was statistically similar in Zone 10 between surveys. The average length in Zone 4 was significantly higher in the mid-season, at 39.13mm, than pre-season, at 38.77mm (p<0.01). In comparison, Zone 8 displayed significantly smaller average length in the mid-season survey, at 35.58mm, than pre-season, at 37.3mm (Figure 5).

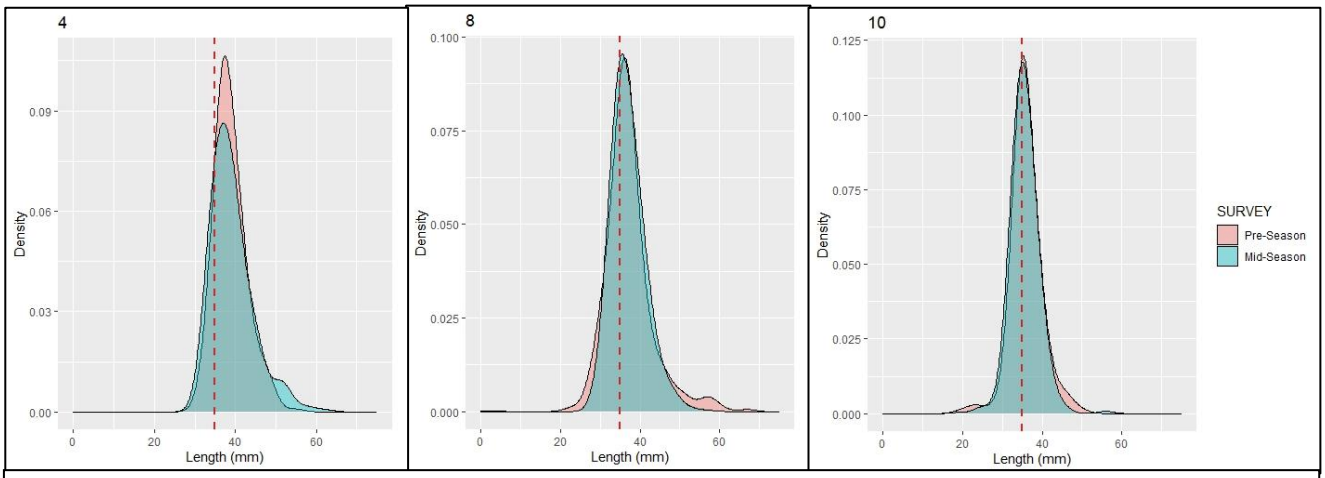

Figure 5. Length distribution comparisons in each of the 3 sampled zones, 4, 8 and 10, between the pre-season and mid-season surveys within the PHDPB Fishery in 2025. The pre-season length distributions are represented in red and the Mid-Season is represented in blue, the MCRS is shown by a red dashed line.

4.0 DISCUSSION

Based on monthly catch return data submitted by permit holders within the 2025/26 fishing season and up to 31st August, Zone 8 recorded the highest landings and appears to be the most preferred fishing ground, consistent with previous seasons for the fishery. This was consistent within the mid-season survey sampling, where six vessels were sampled in Zone 8 compared to three each in Zones 4 and 10, reflecting the higher concentration of fishing activity in that area. However, Zones 4 and 10 are also shown to be some of the additional preferred fishing grounds in 2025/26 compared to other zones (Figure 6).

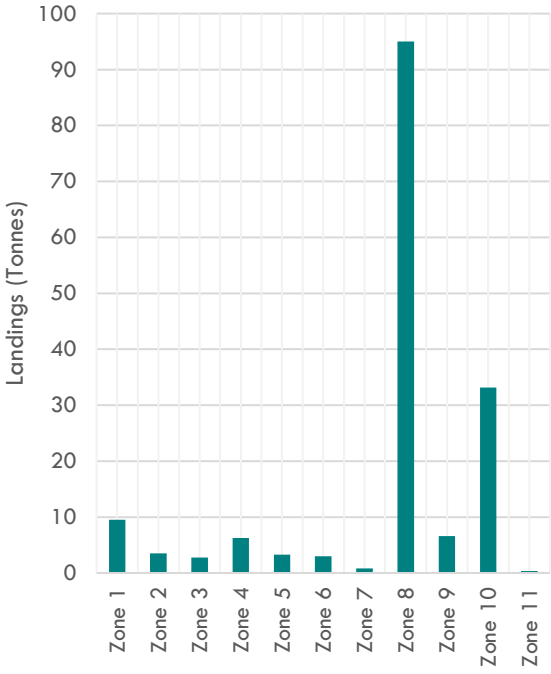

Figure 6. Landings in tonnes of Manila clam within the PHPDF from 23rd May-31st August 2025, based on catch return data submitted by permit holders, on a monthly basis.

Despite being a favoured fishing ground, sampling displayed the lowest average CPUE in Zone 8 of other zones, though statistical testing using the Kruskal-Wallis test reveal no significant differences when comparing Total CPUE, CPUE over MCRS and CPUE under MCRS between sampled zones. This suggests that the CPUE of Manila clam across these 3 areas of the Harbour are relatively similar. It is important to note that the survey data reflects the zones where permit holders were fishing at the time of sampling, which may influence results. The high quantities of landings in Zone 8, may be reflective of the spatial extent of the Zone in comparison to other Zones within the Harbour (refer back to Figure 1) and emphasises the usefulness of analysing LPUE alongside CPUE outputs to monitor harvested stocks.

Each sampled Zone displays higher CPUE levels in the Mid-Season Survey compared to the Pre-Season annual Poole Bivalve Survey. This pattern may be indicative of the warmer waters in the summer allowing for reproduction and growth of Manila clam, leading to an increase in the proportion of the population over MCRS. This is also reflected in LPUE catch data, which shows a yearly cycle of increases in kg/day from the start of the fishing season, peaking in July and august, followed by a steady decline towards the end of the season in December (Figure 7). The data from the pilot mid-season survey indicates that the potential increase in the availability of over MCRS Manila clam is not being impacted by fishing activity to a point where the increase in the proportion of the population cannot be seen, even in the

area showing the highest levels of fishing activity (Zone 8) there is still a noted increase in total CPUE and CPUE over MCRS. For CPUE under MCRS, it may be that additional growth has resulted in individuals reaching a size where they are more likely to be captured by a dredge but remain below the MCRS, further data collection would be required to explore this further. Overall, the levels of Manila clam seen in the pilot mid-season survey show a positive picture and indicate that, at current levels of fishing, the population seems sustainable by the midway point of the season.

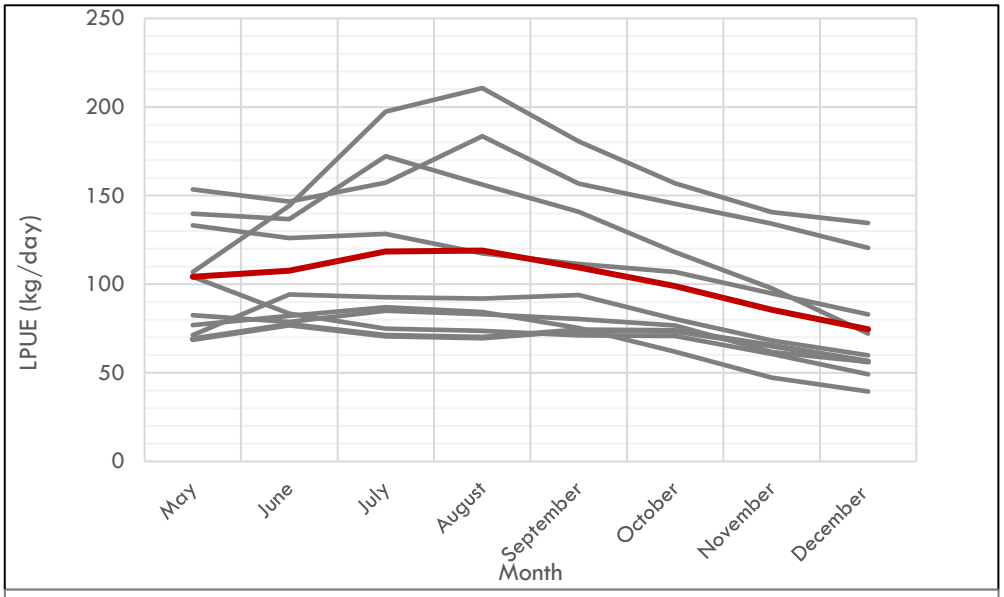

Figure 7. The seasonal Landings Per Unit Effort (expressed as kg/day) of Manila clam in the PHDPF. Grey lines represent individual fishing years, covering each fishing season in the period of 2016-2024, whereas the red line represents the average kg/day for each month of these years.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

The Pilot Mid-Season Observer Programme has provided a valuable opportunity for collaboration between Southern IFCA and Permit Holders of the PHDPB Fishery. The methodology enabled the collection of CPUE data for Manila clam stocks within the fishery at the mid-season point to help inform understandings of stocks during a fishing season. Southern IFCA would like to thank all those who participated in and supported the data collection efforts.

The data collection contributes to the In-Season Monitoring Programme under the PHDPB M&CP and complements existing CPUE and LPUE data collection included in the M&CP On-Site Monitoring Programme, under the annual pre-season Poole Bivalve Data and landings data analysis derived from monthly catch returns data submitted by permit holders.

The data collection aims to assist in identifying seasonal trends, offer an additional source of data alongside current data collection outputs, help inform any considerations made under the On-Site Monitoring Programme and provides a valuable inside into the stock status of Manila clam at the mid-point of the fishing season.