

Southern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority

Pia Bateman – Chief Executive Officer



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28th April 2026

Dear Member,

MEETING OF THE TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE – 7th May 2026

The Meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) will be held in the meeting room at Unit 3 Holes Bay Park, on **Thursday 7th May 2026 at 14:00** to discuss the business on the under mentioned Agenda. Parking is limited, please consider other forms of transport, or share lifts. Parking may be available at the Premier Inn, Holes Bay Hotel, however, please be aware that spaces are not always available. In order to check if parking is available, you are required to use the Horizon Parking App. Poole Railway station is approximately a 15-minute walk from the office.

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

Yours sincerely,

Sarah Birchenough
Deputy Chief Officer

AGENDA

1. Welcome

2. Apologies

To receive apologies for absence.

3. Declaration of Interest

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

4. Minutes – 5th February 2026

To confirm the Minutes of the Technical Advisory Committee meeting held on 6th November 2025 (Marked A).

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 Licence Application – Durlston Head to Hurst Spit Beach Sediments** – to receive a report from DCO Birchenough (Marked B).
- c) **Black Seabream Co-Developed Principles – delivery in the field** to receive a report from PDCO Dell & DCO Birchenough (Marked C).

END OF SEASON SPOTLIGHT: Scallop fishing in the Solent (November 2025-March 2026)

6. To consider the performance of the Solent scallop (SCE) fishery post season end, following the introduction of additional effort management through Category A Permit Conditions pre-season, to support a sustainable fishery (Marked D):
 - a) **Background on fishery**
To receive a PowerPoint presentation from PDCO Dell.
 - b) **New Permit Conditions: November 2025**
To receive a brief overview from DCO Birchenough on changes to PCs made relevant to the SCE fishery in November 2025 and associated drivers. (Marked D – Annex 1)
 - c) **In-season compliance with additional permit conditions**
To receive a verbal reflection from Senior IFCO Adam Parry on the fishery from a compliance perspective, followed by PDCO Dell summary of compliance statistics, as presented in the Executive Summary.
 - d) **Fishery performance indicators**
To receive a report from IFCO Churchouse on (1) fisher catch return data (Marked D – Annex 2) and (2) verbal reflections on survey programme to date.
 - e) **Insight from a Permit Holder**
To receive reflections from Permit Holder Mr Steve Boyd on the performance of SCE fishery during the 2025-2026 season, as well as expert observations on potential gear management solutions which could further support the ongoing sustainability of the scallop fishery.
 - e) **Looking Ahead** – to receive an overview from DCO Birchenough, of intentions regarding the management of the SCE fishery going forward.

ITEMS FOR DECISION

7. **The Poole Harbour Fishery Order 2015 – Management Plan (2026 Update)**
To consider a report from IFCO Meredith-Davies (Marked E).

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

8. **Severall/Regulating Order (SRO) Defra Review Outcome** - to receive a report from DCO Birchenough (Marked F)
9. **Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Byelaw: Monitoring & Control Plan Outputs 2025/26 Season** - to consider a report from IFCO Mullen (Marked G)
10. **Fisheries Management Plans** – to receive a report from PO Wright (Marked H)
11. **Date of Next Meeting**
To confirm the date of the next meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee on Thursday 20th August 2026 at Southern IFCA, Unit 3 Holes Bay Park, Sterte Avenue West, Poole Dorset BH15 2AA.

SOUTHERN INSHORE FISHERIES & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE – 5th February 2026

Minutes of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), held in the meeting room at the Southern IFCA office in Poole at **14:00 on Thursday 5th February 2026**.

Present

Dr Antony Jensen	Chairman, MMO Appointee
Ms Elisabeth Bussey-Jones	MMO Appointee
Mr Colin Francis	MMO Appointee
Mr Rob Milton	MMO Appointee
Ms Rachel Irish	Marine Management Organisation
 Ms Pia Bateman	 Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

Dr Richard Morgan (Natural England) attended the meeting virtually.

Principal Deputy Chief Officer (PDCO) Sam Dell, Deputy Chief Officer (DCO) Dr Sarah Birchenough, IFCO's Ms Hester Churchouse and Ms Celie Mullen were also present.

Ms Hannah Rudd (Angling Trust) attended in person. Ms Jemma Jewkes (Angling Trust) and Mr Peter Morgan (Angling Trust) attended virtually.

Apologies

14. Apologies for absence were received from Mr Richard Stride (Vice Chairman, MMO Appointee), Dr S Cripps (MMO Appointee), Mr Neil Hornby (MMO Appointee), Dr Heidi Guille (MMO Appointee), Mr Mark Cornwell (MMO Appointee), and Mr Stuart Kingston-Turner (EA).

Declarations of interest

15. The following non-pecuniary interests were declared: Dr Richard Morgan (Agenda Item 6).

Minutes

16. Members considered the Minutes of the meeting held on the 6th November 2025 (Marked A). The minutes were approved by mutual consent.

Members considered the Minutes of the Extraordinary meeting of the Technical Advisory Sub-Committee held on 4th December 2025 (Marked B). The minutes were approved by mutual consent.

GUEST SPEAKER

17. The Angling Trust

Members received a presentation from Ms Hannah Rudd, Head of Marine at The Angling Trust. Ms Rudd presented on the work of the marine section of The Angling Trust, outlining the importance of sea angling and the value of this sector from an economic, social and environmental perspective. Ms Rudd provided an overview of The Angling Trust and the marine team, outlining the role of marine management in working across all scales to represent and empower the recreational sea angling community, collaborate with regulators and create a bridge between anglers and decision makers. The presentation outlined the different networks which are facilitated by The Angling Trust, including the Regional Volunteer Group, chaired by Sea Angling Engagement Officer Mr Peter Morgan and the Charter Boat Network, chaired by Charter Boat Officer Ms Jemma Jewkes. Ms Rudd outlined the needs of the sea angling sector and the challenges faced, including data gaps on recreational catches and effort, communication barriers, perceived imbalances in regulation and equality in access, lack of Government investment and limited capacity for funding for outreach and monitoring.

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Ms Rudd reflected on prior successful collaborations through projects such as Angling for Sustainability and through engagement on the Southern IFCA Shore Gathering Review and the Black Seabream Co-Developed Principles and discussed shared goals between the sector and Southern IFCA.

Members discussed the importance of communications and the use of different types of communications with the sea angling sector, including the need for concise and engaging outputs to support engagement both through consultations and more widely, referencing the importance of this across all organisations, for example FMP outputs. Members discussed The Angling Trust's Marine Regional Network and that there was interest from Southern IFCA District stakeholders to be part of the Regional Volunteer Group and the Charter Boat Network. Members discussed these forums as being good opportunities for the dissemination of information and that Southern IFCA continues to review its communications to ensure maximum dissemination and effectiveness in providing information.

PROGRESS REPORTS

18. Emergent Updates

The CEO discussed a recent Community Drop-In Surgery held in Poole attended by the CEO, PDCO, DCO, Chairman of the Authority and Chairman of the TAC, which was attended by a good variety of stakeholders across sectors from Poole Harbour, Poole Bay, Swanage and the RSA sector. The CEO stated that the Surgery had been very useful with a lot of discussion, detailing key themes of the Poole Harbour Dredge Permit fishery & the fishing gear used, gear and spatial conflicts in Poole Bay between static gear and trawling and the RSA sector and trawling and the associated regulatory roles in this regard, low stocks of flatfish, the new MCRS for European lobster of 88mm and the incremental increases over the coming years to 90mm with support that could be provided by Southern IFCA, and communications with the RSA community and updates to the Recreational Angling Sector Group meetings to empower engagement with sea anglers through the right routes. The CEO outlined that all outputs from the Community Drop-In Surgeries are being compiled into a report which will be provided to Authority in due course. Further Surgeries are due to be held in Mudeford & Lymington and Warsash & Portsmouth, all Members and Elected Members are welcome to attend.

The CEO made Members aware of a statutory report published by Defra on the Habitats Regulations to demonstrate actions being taken to protect the marine environment and achieve Government targets and legal duties. The IFCAs and MMO are key in this process for the inshore and offshore sectors respectively. NE have produced, on behalf of Defra, the Habitats Regulations General Implementation Report for England for the period 2019-2024. The CEO reflected that the report is quite terrestrial heavy with the reference to the work of IFCAs being that between 2019-2024 12 byelaws were implemented to support the conservation objectives in 55 inshore SACs. The CEO outlined the work that Southern IFCA have done towards the Habitats Regulations within the defined period, including the development of the Bottom Towed Fishing Gear Byelaw 2023 to protect sensitive designated features in all relevant National Site Network Sites, the introduction of the Net Fishing Byelaw with relevance to designated SACs for salmonids and the Emergency Byelaw and subsequent Permit Condition update in the Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Fishery to protect saltmarsh within the Poole Harbour SPA. The CEO reflected that the report does not reference the wider management toolkit available for fisheries management, for example permit conditions, non-statutory measures, and annual monitoring and control programmes. The CEO informed Members that the enormity of work being carried out by IFCAs is not yet being captured in these national reports, a point which will be raised at a national level. However, this has helped to frame improved Annual Reporting for Southern IFCA to appropriately detail what is being achieved in the inshore marine space and how Southern IFCA are supporting Government delivery of 30 by 30.

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The CEO spoke on the status update on the Solent Dredge Permit Fishery as the next agenda item, reflecting on the implementation of the 2025/26 season following an intervention to reduce daily fishing hours in response to best available data on the sustainability of King scallop stocks. The CEO outlined that it is important to consider how such intervention impacts the fishery with regard to compliance & enforcement, resource requirements, data collection & analysis and stakeholder feedback. The report for this meeting aims to transparently provide this insight, including the approach taken to any incidences of non-compliance, and how the decision-making process continues post-implementation to ensure a continued feedback mechanism.

Members discussed how best to participate in the upcoming Community Drop-In Surgeries. The dates and times for the upcoming Surgeries were provided, and Members were given an overview of how notice of the Surgeries is communicated to stakeholders.

DCO Birchenough updated Members that, along with IFCO Churchouse, Southern IFCA had participated in a Cefas/IFCA scallop workshop to discuss stock assessments across relevant IFCAs, current survey methodologies and how these align or differ from the methodology used by Cefas for the national scallop survey. The workshop provided an opportunity to discuss the potential for integration of IFCA survey datasets into the national dataset to provide more data for the inshore region, and provided a good opportunity to ask questions of Cefas regarding methodologies and potential updates to the Southern IFCA survey, including the potential to implement mid-season CPUE data analysis. The workshop also included a session on aging scallops using shell markings which will now be trialled with Solent scallop shells obtained during the Southern IFCA surveys.

19. Solent Dredge Permit Fishery 2025/26 Season – Status Update

DCO Birchenough outlined that following a consideration of the data which came out of the Solent Scallop Surveys in 2025, Members at a Working Group determined that there was a need to explore options for additional effort management within the fishery, based around a circa. 48% reduction in effort, to support a sustainable fishery. DCO Birchenough expressed her thanks to Members for their input through the subsequent review process in working to tight timelines and attending an Extraordinary Meeting of the TAC in October to agree a resolution. DCO Birchenough outlined that the outcome of the review, as agreed at the Extraordinary TAC meeting, was a reduction in effort through a reduction in daily fishing hours from 08:00-16:00 to 08:00-14:00 for the scallop fishery, with no intervention in the fishing for other bivalves under a Category A Permit.

DCO Birchenough outlined that, following the conclusion of the review, all eligible applicants for a 2025/26 Category A Permit were informed of the outcomes of the review and invited to take out their permits. To date 40 Category A Permits have been issued and in November 25 of those Permit Holders actively participated in the scallop fishery, an approximate 63% participation rate, reducing to 18 Permit Holders in December, an approximate 45% participation rate. DCO Birchenough outlined that for November the participation in the scallop fishery was slightly elevated on previous seasons but levels for December were within and at the lower end of the level of participation seen in previous years.

PDCO Dell provided an overview of the Compliance and Enforcement Team's monitoring and control within the fishery since it opened on 1st November 2025, providing comparative figures for shore, sea and drone patrols between the current and previous two seasons. PDCO Dell informed Members that the report also provided detail on non-compliance detected and enforcement actions taken during the period 1st November 2025 to 25th January 2026, noting that there had been a slight increase in non-compliance within the Solent scallop fishery.

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PDCO Dell outlined that all enforcement action is taken in line with the Southern IFCA Compliance and Enforcement Framework.

PDCO Dell reflected that Officers have a greater range of tools available to them this season to support the detection of non-compliance, for example the use of Themis to view Inshore Vessel Monitoring Systems (I-VMS) data, which has supported detections of non-compliance and enhanced monitoring of the Solent scallop fishing fleet. There is also increased use of the drone compared to previous seasons recognising risks around the Bottom Towed Fishing Gear Byelaw 2023 closure areas along the northeast of the Isle of Wight.

PDCO Dell informed Members that Compliance & Enforcement activities would be reported to the Authority via the quarterly report at the March Authority Meeting providing a further update post 25th January 2026. PDCO Dell reassured Members that Southern IFCA will continue to work with the fishing industry to ensure compliance with the regulations and that appropriate enforcement action will be taken for detected incidences of non-compliance.

DCO Birchenough gave an overview of catch levels to date in the Solent scallop fishery stating that the overall tonnage landed is lower for the 2025/26 season than for the previous two seasons for both November and December, and importantly, this is also true for the Landings Per Unit Effort (LPUE) which accounts for differences in the number of vessels fishing and the number of hours fished, both of which can influence overall tonnage. Therefore, despite increased activity in November in terms of number of vessels, there is an early indication that catch levels are lower than the previous two seasons. Notwithstanding that there will be further data from January to March 2026, the landings data is providing some early support for the results from the 2025 stock assessment. Anecdotal indications from Permit Holders as of the end of January is that Permit Holders are moving away from the scallop fishery to fish for Manila clam. The rationale for this is not fully clear, however it is understood that this is not necessarily being driven by an absence of scallop stock but that it may be harder to locate whereas Manila clam is more readily available in large quantities with a price of £5-6 per kilo.

DCO Birchenough outlined that the upcoming mid-season Solent Scallop Survey will help provide an indication of stock on the ground and that mid-season catch sampling will also be explored this season to take CPUE data from active vessels in the scallop fishery to enable a greater understanding of any variations in catch levels within the fishery and to make some comparisons to survey data. This type of sampling was implemented in the Poole Harbour Dredge Permit fishery for the first time in 2025 and was very successful, it is therefore beneficial to explore similar data collection in the Solent scallop fishery as an additional source of data. DCO Birchenough outlined that any updates resulting from the recent workshop with Cefas on scallop stock assessments will also be considered, for example recording scallop condition. DCO Birchenough outlined that Southern IFCA is committed to undertaking a wider review of the Solent Dredge Permit Fishery in the coming financial year to look at a longer-term management plan for both scallop and other bivalves.

Members discussed the seasonal management in the Solent Dredge Permit Fishery, referencing the closure of the harbours at the end of February, which are the main areas targeted for Manila clam, and the scallop fishery at the end of March. Members also discussed CPUE data for the scallop fishery and whether this can be used as an indication of the success or not of management measures. DCO Birchenough outlined that it is difficult to attribute changes in stock data to single influencing factor such as management measures as there are likely to be many factors influencing stock levels for example environmental variables, climate change and the inputs to the stock from larvae.

Members discussed intervention in the fishery and whether any further discussions on management would be part of the wider review or occur within the current season. DCO

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Birchenough outlined that there is no indication at present that any further intervention is required at this stage in the season, but that monitoring will be maintained through the survey programme. DCO Birchenough outlined that the intention of the wider review is to look at the fishery as a whole, considering all best available evidence, including information put forward by Permit Holders during the recent consultation, to determine where further updates may be needed, be that administrative, access or related to management of a particular species.

Members discussed data availability within the fishery. DCO Birchenough outlined that catch data for the Solent Dredge Permit Fishery is available from November 2021 onwards and that the Solent Scallop Fishery has survey data available from 2022. Members discussed the emergence of the Solent Scallop Fishery and the potential sources for larval inputs to the population, acknowledging that this remains an evidence gap.

20. Net Fishing Byelaw: Year 2 Net Permit Review

IFCO Mullen presented to Members an overview of the Year 2 Net Permit Review under the Net Fishing Byelaw for Net Permit Areas. IFCO Mullen outlined that the Monitoring & Control Plan (M&CP) for the Net Permit Areas informs the annual management of the permitted net fisheries, ensuring that the Authority are using best available evidence regarding understandings of interactions between net fishing practices and migratory salmonids within the District's harbours and estuaries.

IFCO Mullen gave an overview of the elements of the M&CP and informed Members that during Year 2, no Trigger Threshold Levels (TTL) were reached under any of the 5 monitoring components, outlining that there had been two recorded interactions with a salmonid (sea trout) during Year 2 within Christchurch Harbour which were recorded against the appropriate monitoring components but that this had not reached the TTLs. The available information on salmonid health over time was also reviewed, including the 'Salmon Stock and Fisheries in England and Wales Annual Report 2024 (all rivers)' which, based on adult run data, showed that for Southampton Water there was no change in the TTL for interactions at 4 fish, and for Christchurch Harbour there was a reduction in the TTL for interactions from 8 to 7 fish. IFCO Mullen outlined that a 2026 Update to the M&CP had been developed and included with this agenda item, following this meeting the updated M&CP will be made available on the Southern IFCA website.

IFCO Mullen outlined that, following a review of best available evidence, it was recommended that a minimum cap of four salmonid interactions be set over time, relevant to all Net Permit Areas. This recognises that the general decline in salmonid health is likely a result of multiple factors beyond that of the inshore fishing fleet, and will allow for the net fisheries to remain active (working up to the minimum cap) without any unnecessary hiatus in fishing activity which could have a detrimental impact on the socioeconomics of the net fishing community. IFCO Mullen stated that, in determining the minimum cap level, Members of the Authority considered Year 2 TTL interaction levels and that this would be maintained in the Net Permit Area with the lower TTL interaction for Year 3. It was outlined that the Authority recognises the need to operate in accordance with the Policy Objectives which were defined for the Inshore Netting Review and continue to inform management of net fisheries within harbours and estuaries. The introduction of a minimum cap ensures that, based on best available data, the Authority are able to provide protection to migratory salmonids as they transit through the District's harbours and estuaries, further the conservation objectives of Designated Sites and balance the social and economic benefit of net fisheries. The Authority will continue to be informed by best available evidence in this regard to ensure that Policy Objectives continue to be met, reflecting the Authority's legislative duties.

IFCO Mullen informed Members that a consultation with Net Permit Holders was held between

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5th December 2025 and 3rd January 2026 via two stages of email correspondence in addition to ongoing IFCO engagement. Permit Holders were invited to consider both aspects of the review, namely permit conditions, permit fees and permit numbers, and the introduction of a minimum cap for the TTL for interactions. IFCO Mullen outlined that, specific to the parameters of the consultation, one Permit Holder asked for a reduction in the cost of an annual permit and another Permit Holder provided a response which noted the permit conditions for the forthcoming season.

IFCO Mullen outlined that, following a review of best available evidence, it was recommended that no changes are required to be made to flexible permit conditions, permit fees or the number of permits for Year 3. The number of Net Permits would remain at 17, as compatible with the outcomes of the Conservation Assessments for the Net Fishing Byelaw, and the calculations informing the cost of a Net Permit continue to accurately represent Authority expenditure in managing the Net Permit Areas.

IFCO Mullen informed Members that, following the decision at this meeting, all relevant Policy Documents would be updated and shared online and Permit Holders will be notified in writing of the outcomes of the Year 2 review and invited to apply for a Year 3 Permit.

Members requested further clarity on the application of the minimum cap. DCO Birchenough outlined that the TTL for interactions would continue to be calculated based on the methodology in the M&CP, providing an overview of how this is applied, and once that reaches 4, the TTL would remain at 4. DCO Birchenough stated that the TTL may increase based on the adult run data and the applied methodology but would not drop below 4 whilst the cap is in place. DCO Birchenough provided further detail on the rationale for applying the cap and the potential risks to the Net Permit holders if a cap was not introduced.

Dr Richard Morgan raised a query from the Natural England Freshwater team on the proposed minimum cap, querying what action would be taken in the adult run declines significantly and a minimum cap of 4 becomes greater than 1% of the adult run by a large margin.

The CEO gave an overview of the different management types under the Net Fishing Byelaw, through Net Prohibition Areas, Net Restriction Areas and Net Permit Areas. It was outlined that Net Permit Areas are not the only mechanism for managing net fishing, with Prohibition and Restriction areas also designed to support relevant SSSIs and SACs for high risk areas, the Net Permit Areas providing a management mechanism for functionally linked areas recognising the lower level of risk in these areas to Designated Sites.

DCO Birchenough outlined that the Authority have the ability to review the minimum cap through the annual review process for Net Permit Areas but that in doing so there needs to be regard to all Policy Objectives underpinning the management of net fisheries which includes both providing protection to migratory salmonids but also balancing the social and economic benefit of net fisheries. The Authority would have regard to all best available evidence through this process to ensure that all Policy Objectives continue to be met, alongside the Authority's legal duties.

Dr Richard Morgan outlined that there were updated condition assessments for relevant SSSIs and for the River Avon and River Itchen SACs which will be provided to Southern IFCA after this meeting.

Members discussed reporting under the M&CP for both fisher-dependent and fisher-independent data and the challenges associated with this, as well as the importance of engagement with Permit Holders during the season to encourage feedback on the season as it progresses each year. Members discussed that levels of fishing within Net Permit Areas

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were very low which was impacting the ability for observer trips and reflected on the provision of information to the review consultation, which given the small number of overall Permit Holders, suggests that there is general acceptance of the management through the Net Permits. PDCO Dell outlined that engagement opportunities are provided for Permit Holders through multiple mechanisms including direct engagement on specific aspects such as the annual reviews and by direct interaction with Officers on the coast. PDCO Dell informed Members that multiple tools had been used to gather information on activity within the fishery, including land & sea patrols, use of the drone and the I-VMS system, the latter of which will allow further close monitoring of activity once the system is fully operational. All of the outputs from this operational delivery supported that fishing levels within Net Permit Areas are very low.

The recommendations in the report were proposed by Ms R Irish and were seconded by Mr C Francis. All Members were in favour.

Resolved

- 21.** That Members consider that no changes are required to be made to flexible Permit Conditions, permit fees or limitations on the number of permits for Year 3.
- 22.** That Members consider the addition of a minimum cap on interactions with salmonids under the Monitoring and Control Plan.
- 23.** That Members note the subsequent updates to the relevant Policy Documents.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

24. Solent Scallop Survey Report 2025

IFCO Churchouse provided Members with an overview of the Solent Scallop Survey Report 2025, outlining the survey process and detailing key points from the analysis.

IFCO Churchouse outlined that the outputs from the 2025 survey had been the driver for taking action in the Solent Scallop Fishery under the Solent Dredge Permit Byelaw Permit Conditions ahead of the 2025/26 season. The key points in this regard being that for Total scallop CPUE and scallop CPUE over MCRS, the autumn (post-season) values were statistically significantly lower than the autumn surveys in 2022, 2023 and 2024, and that for scallop CPUE under MCRS, the autumn (post-season) value was statistically significantly lower than the autumn surveys in 2022 and 2024. That the number of individual sampling sites which saw a decline in CPUE between successive Autumn surveys was the highest between 2024 to 2025, compared to 2023/24 and 2022/23 and that whilst numerical increases were seen in CPUE between the Spring 2025 and Autumn 2025 season (fishery closed period), these changes were smaller than the changes seen during the closed seasons in 2024 and 2023, and only one change was statistically significant (for scallop CPUE over MCRS). It was noted that the CPUE data from the surveys was in the context of landings of scallop being lower for the 2024/25 season than the 2023/24 season, noting that lower prices for scallop did contribute to the lower landings recorded.

IFCO Churchouse outlined that the analysis had found a statistically significant effect of survey on width of scallop with the median width of the Autumn 2025 survey higher than both the Winter 2025 and Spring 2025 surveys. IFCO Churchouse also informed Members that trends in CPUE and width from scallop sampled using a modified Queenie dredge had been analysed for the first time following updates to the survey methodology for 2025. When reviewing the comparisons between this and the industry standard dredge type, it was found that there was a statistically significant difference for the scallop population over minimum conservation reference size only, with the median CPUE lower for the Queenie dredge.

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IFCO Churchouse stated that the survey programme will continue to be delivered through 2026 and that the suitability of an observer programme for mid-season catch per unit effort analysis would be explored during February. During 2026 it is the intention to incorporate additional metrics into the surveys including quantification of dead shell present within dredge tows and the condition of scallop, to ensure that the management of the fishery continues to be based on best available evidence and to support the potential for data to be fed into national evidence gathering.

Dr A Jensen thanked IFCO Churchouse for a thorough and well-presented report, stating that it clearly illustrated the data and thus rationale which had informed the requirement to consider management intervention ahead of the 2025/26 season. Members discussed the method of sampling of scallops through the survey and the differences between recording weight data and number data.

25. Whelk LPUE Pilot Project: Year 1 Report

IFCO Mullen provided Members with an overview of the delivery of the Whelk Landings Per Unit Effort (LPUE) Pilot Project for Year 1 under the Southern IFCA Whelk Monitoring Programme. IFCO Mullen detailed the methodology that had been applied and gave a summary of key outputs, stating that the Pilot Project data for Year 1 demonstrates the potential for fishing effort and LPUE (as kg/pot/day) to be calculated and analysed at the level of individual Whelk Catch Zones and seasonally. IFCO Mullen provided examples of how the data received during Year 1 had been analysed and indicated additional analysis which could be carried out in the future as the dataset develops further.

IFCO Mullen outlined that this Project would contribute to the creation of a timeseries dataset under the Whelk Monitoring Programme, to enable LPUE to be reviewed and potentially aligned with national research efforts and data collection programmes being delivered under the Whelk FMP.

IFCO Mullen reviewed the benefits and challenges of undertaking this Project, recognising that during the Pilot year the amount of data received was limited with coverage for two Whelk Catch Zones and seasonal data available for only one Whelk Catch Zone. However, the Pilot year has enabled an analysis of the benefits and challenges of delivering such a project and an identification of how the data provided can be used to support the project aims. IFCO Mullen outlined that initiating fisher-dependent data collection for whelk fisheries through this project offers the opportunity to review and refine the data collection process where necessary ahead of further data collection in subsequent years.

IFCO Mullen outlined that ahead of Year 2, Southern IFCA aims to increase data input through re-engagement with pot fishers in the District, seeking input on the project including any barriers to data submission and any improvements that could be made to the data collection programme. Fishers will be shown the example data outputs from the pilot, illustrating how data has been used and the value it provides in supporting understandings of whelk fisheries within the District. IFCO Mullen stated that Year 2 data collection will aim to commence in the spring through to the end of 2026.

26. Solent Bivalve Survey Report 2025

IFCO Churchouse provided Members with an overview of the Solent Bivalve Survey Report 2025, outlining the survey process and detailing key points from the analysis.

IFCO Churchouse outlined that there was a lack of significant difference in CPUE values for Manila clam during either the fishery open or closed season, suggesting that, at present,

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fishing pressure is not having a significant impact on the stock. For common cockle, it was identified that there is a trend in decreasing stock levels between years for spring and autumn surveys, however, recorded landings of this species under the Solent Dredge Permit Byelaw have been zero or very low to date, the first recorded landing being in the 2024/25 season where 885kg was caught in a two day period in January, suggesting that there may be other influencing factors influencing stock trends. It is recommended that continued monitoring takes place through the survey. IFCO Churchouse provided an overview of landings for Manila clam, that the total landed was higher in the 2024/25 season than the previous two seasons, but due to a higher number of vessels working in the fishery than in previous seasons, the kg/hour/vessel is lower than for the 2023/24 season.

IFCO Churchouse outlined that the results presented in the report add to the timeseries data Southern IFCA are collecting on bivalve populations which aims to provide a greater understanding of stock trends. The timeseries is still in its early stages (5 years of consecutive data collection to date) but the data presented provides an overview of the population condition, with continued data collection enabling further identification of any patterns within the stock and the contribution of different potential influencing factors to any patterns seen, noting that it is likely that multiple factors are influencing the stock pattern, including the management of the fishery. The survey programme will continue to be delivered through 2026 and ongoing consultation with industry will continue to ensure that survey areas and the methodology are aligned with standard practice to ensure that management continues to be based on best available evidence.

27. Juvenile Fish Survey Report 2025

IFCO Churchouse provided an overview of the Juvenile Fish Survey Report for 2025, detailing the rationale for carrying out this survey, the method used and a summary of key outcomes.

IFCO Churchouse outlined that data analysis determined no statistically significant difference between surveys in spring and autumn surveys across the whole timeseries dataset (2017-2025) and that there was also no statistically significant difference for total abundance or species richness Index between spring and autumn surveys. The only difference seen was for the Shannon Diversity Index between Autumn surveys in 2021 and 2024 at Mundeford Spit, the reason being a dominance of Grey mullet which could not be identified to species level.

IFCO Churchouse outlined that for the 2025 surveys, Ferry Bridge at The Fleet had the highest total abundance in autumn and Wick Hams in Christchurch Harbour the highest for spring and overall for 2025. For species richness, the greatest values were seen at Ferry Bridge at The Fleet in autumn 2025, at Mundeford Spit for spring 2025 and at Langton Hive in The Fleet for the year overall. Langton Hive at The Fleet also had the highest Shannon Diversity Index for spring, Wick Hams in Christchurch Harbour for autumn and Langton Hive at The Fleet for the year overall. The most dominant fish species across the surveys was Goby sp. and sand smelt. IFCO Churchouse outlined that additional analysis had been completed this year to look at bass age groups with 0-stage bass recorded at The Fleet, Christchurch Harbour and Yarmouth indicating the use of these areas as nursery habitats, which is of particular importance in The Fleet due to its designation as a Bass Nursery Area. Multiple age groups were recorded in the same sites suggesting ongoing stock recruitment and bass 3+ years old were recorded at The Fleet and Yarmouth indicating habitat use beyond early life stages.

IFCO Churchouse outlined that the surveys will continue to be delivered through 2026, with the aim of maintaining and expanding the partnership working which is a key feature of this survey and offers a platform for continued research and networking. Southern IFCA expresses its thanks to all partner organisations and individuals who have assisted with the 2025 surveys.

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The CEO reflected on recent engagement with the recreational sea angling sector and seeking methods of improving communication of this survey data to the wider community to support understandings of fish populations within the District. Members discussed the availability of datasets for example data held by Seasearch and how other data sources could be utilised to support the overall picture of species locations and distributions.

28. Fisheries Management Plans

DCO Birchenough provided an overview of the matters captured in the Executive Summary, providing updates on the implementation of the Bass FMP, Channel Demersal Non-Quota Species FMP and Crab and Lobster FMP. DCO Birchenough informed Members that the Tranche 3 FMPs had been published in December 2025, four of which are relevant to the Southern IFCA District and provided an update on Scottish led FMPs which are currently under public consultation, three of which have a geographic overlap with parts of the Southern IFCA District. These FMPs are currently being reviewed to understand how any proposed goals and actions relate to relevant fisheries within the District and Southern IFCA is engaging with IFCA colleagues and the AIFCA to understand other perspectives on the Scottish led FMPs and the potential for a joint response to the consultation.

DCO Birchenough raised two matters which have emerged since the publication of the Executive Summary. Firstly, that input is being sought from south coast fishers operating in the inshore, small-scale potting sector for attendance at a Crab and Lobster Implementation Workshop being run this week in York. Southern IFCA have facilitated engagement with the South Coast Fishermen's Council but unfortunately no local fishers are able to attend to date. It is noted that Defra may be exploring additional opportunities to engage with industry on this FMP. Secondly, Defra has asked the Bass Management Task & Finish Group to consider the recommendations from the Bass Authorisation Review Report which has been narrowed to three proposals, the issuing of unused authorisations, allowing fishers to switch from fixed gillnets to hook & line gear and the development of a young person's scheme. Discussion on this is aimed to conclude by the end of March with a report to Defra and the Bass Management Group, where recommendations will be considered before any final outcomes are agreed.

29. Date of Next Meeting

To confirm the date of the next meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee on the 7th May 2026 at Southern IFCA, Unit 3 Holes Bay Park, Sterte Avenue West, Poole Dorset BH15 2AA.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 16:21.

Chairman:

Date:

Marine Licence Application – Durlston Head to Hurst Spit Beach Sediments

Report by DCO Birchenough

A. Purpose

For Members to receive a copy of the response letter from Southern IFCA to the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) Marine Licencing Team concerning the consultation on Marine Licence Application MLA/2025/00553 – Area 2105 Marine Licence Application for beach sediments Durlston Head to Hurst Spit.

B. Recommendations

1. That Members receive the report.

C. Annexes

- **Annex 1:** Southern IFCA consultation response to MLA/2025/00553

1.0 Background

- Marine licencing is one of the principal responsibilities of the Marine Management Organisation (MMO). Through marine licencing, the MMO plays a key role in providing advice and making decisions on what happens in England's seas. The MMO considers multiple factors when handling marine licence applications, from protecting the marine environment to helping the UK achieve renewable energy targets to enabling sustainable economic growth.
- Southern IFCA is a consultee on Marine Licence Applications (MLAs) relevant to the District. Southern IFCA is able to review the application and determine if a response is required, in line with the Authority's role and remit, to aid the MMO in its' decision making and to further inform the applicant of any relevant fisheries information or considerations. This is a statutory role for Southern IFCA and falls under supporting Defra delivery through Marine Consents.

2.0 MLA/2025/00553 – Area 2105 Marine Licence Application for beach sediments Durlston Head to Hurst Spit

- The MLA has been submitted by Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council, proposing dredging works in a defined area over Dolphin Sands and Spit Bank to obtain sediment for beach replenishment within the region.
- Southern IFCA responded to a Scoping Study ahead of the drafting of the Environmental Statement for this MLA in October 2024 through the MMO Marine Licencing System. In this response Southern IFCA offered to provide data held on fishing activity in the relevant areas, provided data on local fisheries for both commercial and recreational interests, and offered to facilitate further engagement between the applicant and relevant stakeholders.

3.0 Southern IFCA Consultation Response

- Southern IFCA have responded to the MLA consultation via the MMO Marine Licencing system. The response raises serious concerns with the proposed works with the potential for impacts on fisheries of commercial and recreational importance that would result in negative social, economic, cultural and community effects, and the overall sustainability of the inshore, small-scale fishing fleet in the Poole Bay and Christchurch Bay areas.
- To inform the consultation response, Southern IFCA engaged with representatives of the commercial and recreational sectors through the South Coast Fishermen's Council, Poole & District Fishermen's Association and the Poole and District Sea Angling Association.
- The response sets out (1) **recommendations** based on reviewing the application and associated documentation, (2) any identified **inaccuracies**, (3) points where **further clarity is requested**, (4) points and **concerns raised by the stakeholder community** and (5) **general comments** which concern the process and consultation on the application.

4.0 Next Steps

- The MMO will review all consultation responses both from statutory authorities/organisations and from a public consultation which was also held on this MLA. Southern IFCA will receive further communication from the MMO in due course on the outcome of the consultation and any next steps.

Southern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority

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

17th April 2026

Marine Management Organisation Marine Licencing Team
FAO: Dr Matthew Wadey
Bournemouth Christchurch and Poole Council
BCP Council Civic Centre
Bourne Avenue
Bournemouth
BH2 6DY

REF: MLA/2025/00553 Area 2105 Marine Licence Application for beach sediments Durlston Head to Hurst Spit

Dear MMO Marine Licencing Team,

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the marine licence application for Area 2105 for beach sediments Durlston Head to Hurst Spit.

Southern IFCA aims to lead, champion and manage a sustainable marine environment and inshore fisheries, by successfully securing the right balance between social, environmental and economic benefits to ensure healthy seas, sustainable fisheries and a viable industry. The Southern IFCA District includes the inshore regions and Dorset, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight from coastal baselines out to 6 nautical miles. Within this area Southern IFCA shapes inshore fisheries and conservation management in accordance with statutory core duties under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009, in addition to duties under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations [Amendment] [EU Exit] Regulations 2019) and The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, in doing so supporting the UK Government's vision in accordance with the UK Marine Policy Statement and delivery of the Environment Act 2021, The Marine Strategy Regulations 2010 and the Fisheries Act 2020.

Southern IFCA, as a statutory body, wishes to raise serious concerns with the proposed works under the licence application, with the potential for impacts on fisheries of commercial and recreational importance that would result in negative social, economic, cultural and community effects and the overall sustainability of the inshore, small-scale fishing fleet in the Poole Bay and Christchurch Bay areas.

Southern IFCA understands the importance of appropriate coastal management to manage erosion and flood risk and also for the benefits offered by local tourism. However, having reviewed the application, it is felt that the potential impacts to fish and shellfish species, as well as local fishing fleets, encompassing both commercial and recreational sectors, have not been fully assessed, primarily due to the absence of current best available data and a reliance on data sets which are now c.10+ years old, in addition to missing data on the commercial inshore fishing fleet arising from a reliance on data systems which are not currently applicable to the <12m sector. Data of greater relevance to the region's fishing activity is available and has been identified and made directly available through this response.

It is noted that the application for Area 2105 states that the benefits will outweigh the negatives, with this being the optimal solution for the taxpayer, for carbon reduction and for working with

nature, however whilst the negatives for the inshore sector may not be the highest in monetary value, the nature of the inshore fleet, a limited ability to move to alternative areas and a close integration with the culture of coastal communities means that the impacts from a socio-economic perspective are greater than have been considered in this application.

In its current form, the application and supporting documentation does not contain sufficient information to demonstrate how these risks would be avoided, minimised or mitigated, as required under Marine Policy S-FISH-2, primarily as a result of the use of outdated data on fishing activity and harvestable species which has resulted in the inclusion of inaccurate information. In addition, it is felt that the application does not fully consider the relationship between the proposed works and the achievement of objectives for a sustainable marine environment, looking collectively at the legislation and policy underpinning marine sustainability.

Marine Policy S-FISH-2 recognises the benefits that sustainable fishing provides to coastal communities and UK food security, making particular reference to these activities being restricted in where they can operate, making them vulnerable to loss of access caused by surrounding sea use. S-FISH-2 promotes maximum marine resource use to generate prosperous resilient and cohesive coastal communities. Through the risks identified to the commercial and recreational fishing industry in this response, Southern IFCA concludes that the proposed works would not allow maximum marine resource use through the direct or indirect exclusion of local, small-scale vessels from the dredging area and the wider bay areas which will erode the resilience and cohesiveness of local coastal communities, potentially resulting in the loss of all local commercial vessels from the port of Christchurch/Mudford.

The proposal is in conflict with a number of intentions for delivering sustainably managed coastal waters. This includes the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 as it relates to the management of Marine Conservation Zones, where there is identified overlap between the SIZ and the Purbeck Coast MCZ and close proximity to Southbourne Rough MCZ and Poole Rocks MCZ. Also of relevance is the Marine Strategy Regulations (2010), which require the achievement of Good Environmental Status for all UK waters reflecting the UK's vision for 'clean, healthy, safe, productive and biologically diverse oceans and seas', seeking to apply an ecosystem based approach to keep the collective pressure of human activities within levels compatible with the achievement of GES. Through the most recent assessment against the 11 indicators of GES, it is identified that for 'Fish', biodiversity is recovering but that this can be impacted by activities including coastal and flood defence and material extraction, for 'Benthic Habitats', that physical loss of seabed, loss of important habitats, and the extent of adverse effects on condition, function and ecosystem process should all be minimised, for 'Commercial Fish and Shellfish' the environmental status of commercial fish and shellfish is affected by habitat loss or modification and for 'Food Webs', that healthy marine food webs are linked to species composition, relative abundance and productivity of key species. These are some examples of the requirements to achieve GES and whilst it is noted that GES is referenced in Chapter 9 of the Environmental Statement (ES), it is not clear how working to support GES has been considered as part of individual assessments, such as those into impacts from identified pressures on fish species and commercial fishing operations.

Attention is also drawn to the Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP) 2025, which builds upon the 25 Year Environment Plan (25YEP) and key legislative frameworks to outline the Government's vision to '*...help the natural world regain and retain good health...*' following the commitment to '*...leave the environment in a better state for future generations...*' and '*...halt the decline of nature by 2030*'. Southern IFCA have been unable to find reference to the EIP

or the 25YEP in the documentation provided as part of the application. Finally, the application is in conflict with the provisions for fisheries, fishing, aquaculture and marine conservation made in The Fisheries Act 2020 (FA2020), which enshrines in law the UK's commitment to sustainable fishing, and supporting future generations of fishers, while allowing the marine environment to thrive. The Joint Fisheries Statement, which recognises the importance of the UK fishing sector as a public resource and a national asset, sets out how the eight objectives of the FA2020 will be achieved or contributed to, and identifies the importance of both the commercial and recreational sector in food security and employment as well as seeking to ensure fish stocks and the environment are sustainably managed. The application does not reference the FA2020 or the JFS and thus fails to account for how potential impacts may affect the ability of fisheries and fisheries managers to support the Government's vision for sustainable management.

In this response, Southern IFCA aims to set out (1) **recommendations** based on reviewing the application and associated documentation, (2) any identified **inaccuracies**, (3) points where **further clarity is requested**, (4) points and **concerns raised by the stakeholder community** and (5) **general comments** which concern the process and consultation on the application.

1. Recommendations

This section contains a list of recommendations from Southern IFCA to the applicant with contextual information provided to support the recommendations made. Recommendations are in relation to Chapter 6 'Fish and Shellfish Ecology', Chapter 11 'Commercial Fisheries', and Chapter 10 'Other Marine Users'.

Chapter 6 'Fish and Shellfish Ecology'

- a) It is recommended that the applicant engages with the Professional Boatman's Association and individual operators to discuss species relevance for the charter sector so that this can be included in the ES.**
- b) It is recommended that the applicant engages with the Poole & District Sea Angling Association and individual recreational fishers to discuss species relevance for inclusion in the ES.**

For all species referenced in this chapter, consideration is given to the relevance of the species to commercial fishing activities, however there is no reference to the relevance or importance of the species to the recreational angling or charter fishing sectors. Both of these sectors are significant within the region and more locally within Poole Bay. From recent work carried out by Southern IFCA to engage with the charter fishing sector on black seabream fisheries management, at least 17 charter vessels are known to operate out of ports in proximity to the proposed works and fish within the region. Regarding the recreational sea angling sector, there are numerous angling clubs which operate within the region and a large number of individual recreational anglers who undertake boat-based fishing, both local to the area and as visiting tourists.

- c) It is recommended that other sources of evidence such as commercial landings data and direct engagement with local fishers are used to supplement published literature on European bass to support that the species is found in the region year-**

round rather than seasonally as is indicated in the ES. Examples of data sources include publicly available MMO landings data into local ports which shows landings of bass in January, February and from October to December, a proportion of which will have come from the inshore region.

- d) It is recommended that Section 6.3.3.2 be updated to include reference to Southern IFCA's management of black seabream as a designated species of three Dorset MCZs which has now been published. It is also recommended that consideration is given to the statutory management in place to further the Conservation Objectives for this designated species, and the implementation of non-statutory measures, developed with the Dorset Community, to complement statutory management and further understandings of the species and relevant fisheries, in light of the importance of the species across all fishing sectors and a designated species.**

In section 6.3.3.2, reference is made to management plans due to be published by Southern IFCA for black seabream management within the Purbeck Coast, Poole Rocks and Southbourne Rough MCZs. Southern IFCA has now published a Black Seabream Management Package and associated supporting documentation which details the process undertaken to determine suitable management for this designated species within three Dorset MCZs. The documentation details statutory management to further the Conservation Objectives of black seabream as a feature of each of the three MCZs, and a series of Co-Developed Principles to complement statutory management and support furthering understandings of black seabream and relevant fisheries. The documentation details the importance of black seabream to commercial, recreational and charter fisheries and to the marine environment. All information on the management of black seabream within the three MCZs, including Policy Documents, management measures, and supporting documentation (Conservation Assessments, Literature Review, Site Specific Evidence Packages) can be found on the Southern IFCA website here - [Black Seabream Fisheries : Southern IFCA](#).

- e) It is recommended that the impacts of sediment on black seabream nests should consider the potential energy expenditure required of male black seabream when assigning the risk score for the assessment of this species in relation to impacts from fine sand dispersion. The assessment should take into account where management has been applied for other activities that risk causing the same impact in order to mitigate that risk.**

With regard to the assessment for black seabream, it is stated that '*lower mobility*' of black seabream eggs would result in a medium score. Having recently reviewed literature for black seabream, both locally, nationally and internationally, as part of the development of management for this species in the three relevant Dorset MCZs, it is felt that the laying of eggs onto nests made by male black seabream and the guarding of those eggs within the nests would indicate that the eggs, once laid are not mobile and therefore should be assessed as being immobile where they are found. It is noted that Area 2105 and the sediment plume (given as 0.5km up to 2km from Area 2105) has a close proximity between the 2km sediment plume area and the Southbourne Rough MCZ indicating that there may be a risk of increasing suspended sediment potentially covering nest sites. It is also noted that the SIZ will cover part of the Purbeck Coast MCZ with associated potential for sediment deposition on nesting sites. The mitigation for this is given as male black seabream being adaptable to fine sediment

deposition due to fanning and nest maintenance behaviours. From Southern IFCA's work with black seabream, it was noted that the maintenance of sediment on nests is an energetically expensive procedure with increased sediment levels potentially causing greater energy expenditure which could adversely affect the health of the guarding male and therefore the individual's ability to successfully guard the eggs on the nest. Southern IFCA's management of Bottom Towed Fishing Gear (BTFG) under the BTFG Byelaw 2023 ([BTFG-Byelaw-2023-signed.pdf](#)) removes BTFG from 100% of the Poole Rocks MCZ and Southbourne Rough MCZ and 93% of the Purbeck Coast MCZ (the remaining area not containing evidence of the location of black seabream nesting habitat as a designated feature), in order to mitigate against the high risk posed by this gear type to the feature through a number of pressures, including smothering and siltation rate changes caused by suspended sediment from BTFG and, amongst other impacts, the potential energy expenditure of male black seabream in cleaning those nests. It is felt that consideration should be given to how other activities are managed for the same pressures and the resulting mitigation to help inform the level of risk and potential mitigation which may be required for the proposed works. The Southern IFCA Black Seabream Literature Review is available on the Southern IFCA website here - [BSB-Literature-Review.pdf](#).

- f) In Section 6.3.6, for the shellfish detailed as being the primary target of commercial fisheries, brown crab also needs to be included here.**
- g) It is recommended that consideration is given to the removal of the oxygenated sediment layer and the food bearing layer which will occur with removal of approx. 0.26m to 0.48m of sediment from the proposed dredging areas.**

For impacts from seabed removal, it is noted in the ES that 0.5m of sediment, on average, will remain after dredging with the proposed works having potential to reduce areas by approx. 0.26m with a worst case of 0.48m. It is stated that this will result in the sediment composition and therefore habitat remaining similar to the start of the dredging period. This is referenced as a rationale for lower impact in the risk assessments for fish and shellfish species. It is felt however that the removal of up to 0.48m of the top sediment layer would remove a large part, if not all of the oxygenated sediment layer, therefore whilst there will be sediment remaining after dredging, this is likely to have different properties and levels of dissolved oxygen than the surface layer which may impact the suitability or recovery of the area for fish and shellfish species. From reviewing the ES, references to changes in oxygen availability are referenced in relation to suspended sediments but not to remaining sediments at the dredge site post dredging. Additionally, the removal of up to 0.48m of the top sediment layer will remove the food bearing layer which will subsequently impact fish and shellfish feeding on epifaunal and infaunal species. Therefore, although 0.5m of sediment is proposed to remain this will not have the same composition of food species and therefore risks overall impacts to local food webs.

- h) It is recommended that risk assessments take into account the proposed recovery and recolonisation of the area being given as within 12-24 months and the relevance of this to the small-scale, inshore fishing communities across all sectors.**

There is reference to recovery and recolonisation of the area within 12-24 months after dredging. This is a long time period for inshore, small-scale fishers in both the commercial and recreational sectors, who are dependent on known fishing grounds and species extent and

distributions within the region. Given the common vessel size (all commercial vessels are required to be less than 12m in length under Southern IFCA legislation) and set up, fishers are not able to move large distances to find other suitable fishing areas if their local areas are impacted. In addition, there is a risk of activity being displaced to smaller areas within the wider region which can result in greater impacts to species and increased socio-economic impacts to the fishing industry.

- i) It is requested that information is provided on the outcomes of a wider ecosystem assessment for fish and shellfish species which accounts for connections between species within a wider system.**

Noting the assessments which deal with demersal or pelagic species assemblages, the use of multiple assessments for individual species does not take account of the interplay between these different species within the region and how this supports the functioning of the wider ecosystem. Changes to a single species can have ramifications for other species through changes in competition for prey and space, changes in food webs and predator/prey relationships and in the provision of ecological services.

- j) It is welcomed that there is reference to required monitoring of the site in relation to dredging activity. If the activity were to be licenced, it is recommended that monitoring should be extended to incorporate monitoring of commercially and recreationally important fish and shellfish species to ascertain any impacts from the dredging activity at individual population levels or considering wider ecosystem interactions and effects.**

Chapter 11 'Commercial Fisheries'

- a) It is recommended that additional, more up to date data sources are used to describe commercial fisheries in the region surrounding Area 2105.**

With regard to Table 11-1 and the evidence sources presented for describing the commercial fisheries in the area surrounding Area 2105 –

- The data from Cefas on fishing intensity is dated 2012, this is now 14 years out of date and will not appropriately represent the inshore fishing sector.
- MMO UK Fleet Landings data is given up to 2022, data is publicly available up to 2025, in order to provide the best understanding of fishing vessel activity and landings of relevant species, the most up to date available data should be used.
- MMO VMS data detailing >15m fishing activity data for UK vessels (2011-2020) will not be applicable to fishing activity within the 6nm limit. Southern IFCA's Vessels Used in Fishing Byelaw ([Vessel-Used-In-Fishing-Byelaw.pdf](#)) prohibits the use of any vessel which exceeds 12 metres in overall length for fishing for or taking sea fish, noting that this applies to commercial fishing vessels only. There is one vessel within the District which holds grandfather rights to operate over 12m. It is noted that this legislation is referenced in this chapter and a recognition that this will not represent all fishing activity, however, given that there is only one vessel in the District to which >12m VMS data would apply it is suggested that this is not a suitable data source to be using in the assessments.
- MMO AIS for fishing vessel tracks is very limited for the inshore sector. Vessels operating in the inshore sector, by virtue of their size, are not required to have AIS equipped, and

although some vessels may choose to do so, this will be an underrepresentation of fishing activity in the inshore area.

b) It is recommended that the applicant should be seeking to use all available evidence in combination to give a full picture of the spatial extent and intensity of fishing activities. Southern IFCA requests once again, following the detail provided in the Scoping Study as to how the applicant could request such data, that fishing activity data held by Southern IFCA is included as part of this evidence base. To aid the applicant, this data has been provided as part of this response in Annex 1.

c) It is recommended that additional data from Southern IFCA on the number of commercially registered fishing vessels within the District who have given a home port as one of those listed within the Commercial Fisheries Study Area, is incorporated into the ES to complement the data given from other sources.

Noting the point made in the ES that the number of vessels taken from MMO Administrative Ports may not encompass all active vessels, Southern IFCA can provide data on the number of commercially registered fishing vessels within the District who have given a home port as one of those listed within the Commercial Fisheries Study Area. All commercial fishing vessels operating within the District are required to hold a Southern IFCA Fish for Sale Permit under the 'Vessels Used in Fishing for Sale' Byelaw ([Vessel-Used-in-Fishing-for-Sale.pdf](#)). As of 10th April 2026, Southern IFCA has 167 commercial vessels with a Fish for Sale Permit across the eight listed ports, 8 of which are over 10m in length, the following breaks those vessel numbers down by home port:

- Swanage = 5 vessels (all <10m)
- Poole = 77 vessels (74 <10m, 3 >10m)
- Christchurch = 11 vessels (all <10m)
- Lymington and Keyhaven = 16 vessels (15 <10m, 1 >10m)
- Southampton = 7 vessels (6 <10m, 1 >10m)
- Portsmouth = 33 vessels (30 <10m, 3 >10m)
- Langstone Harbour = 7 vessels (all <10m)
- Isle of Wight = 11 vessels (all <10m)

d) Southern IFCA request sight of a copy of the email referenced in Table 11-3 dated 30th September 2024 so its origin and contents can be verified.

Southern IFCA would like to question the reference in Table 11-3 to an email from a Southern IFCA representative dated 30th September 2024. Having reviewed the points that have been captured in that email, Southern IFCA are concerned that this email has not originated from the organisation and have no record of it. The only correspondence provided prior to this consultation response was via the MMO MCMS system to the EIA scoping study in 2024.

e) It is recommended that commercial rod and line fishing should be considered within the static gear assessment or as a separate gear category as the gear type is used to target a range of species, not just European seabass as detailed in the ES.

For the risk assessments for static and mobile fishing gears, consideration is given to the potential for spatial movements of vessels under 'seabed removal'. It is welcomed that recognition is given to the potential for limited choices of alternative fishing grounds for static vessels, however it is felt that, as rod & line has been included as a mobile gear type, that the assessment that mobile gear vessels are generally greater in length with a greater operational range will not apply to all mobile gear vessels, particularly rod and line vessels. This is also relevant to the consideration of vessel displacement as a pressure.

- f) It is recommended that the impacts to the commercial sector from the pressure 'seabed removal' should include consideration of the socio-economic impacts arising from the given recovery period of 12-24 months.**

It has been detailed in this response that, for the small-scale, inshore sector, potential impacts to stocks for 12-24 months may have serious socio-economic impacts, assessing those impacts as part of the risk to each gear type would ensure that this has been appropriately considered.

Chapter 10 'Other Marine Users'

- a) It is recommended that data on the location and extent of fished areas for recreational and charter fisheries is included in this Chapter and considered as part of relevant risk assessments.**

In this chapter, reference is made to recreational rod and line angling and charter fisheries under section 10.3.5. It is noted that an assessment of fish and shellfish species relevant to these activities is given in Chapter 6, and consideration is given to impacts arising from displacement, suspended sediment and underwater noise. However, there is little information provided on locations of activity within the region. In order to fully understand the ability and impacts of displacement for these activities, it would be beneficial to include data on the location and extent of fished areas for recreational and charter fisheries. Southern IFCA holds sightings and inspection data for these activities, the ability for this to be requested from Southern IFCA was included in the response to the EIA Scoping Study and is provided as part of Annex 1 to this response to aid the applicant.

- b) It is recommended that information is sought from relevant recreational angling clubs and charter businesses operating within the area to support understandings of these sectors and potential impacts.**

As outlined in this response, Southern IFCA is aware of at least 17 charter vessels operating out of ports in proximity to the proposed works, and numerous angling clubs as well as local and visiting recreational anglers (details of relevant organisations have been provided in this response). It would be beneficial to understand if engagement with the recreational and charter sectors took place and if so, for the points raised and responses to be given in Chapter 10, as has been done for the commercial sector in Chapter 11 (Table 11-3). The stocks of species within the region are important for the recreational and charter sectors, both economically and in terms of the cultural and community significance of the sea angling sector and local businesses. It is therefore important that consultation is carried out equally amongst all participants in inshore fisheries to ensure that all views are captured.

2. Inaccuracies

This section details any inaccuracies identified by Southern IFCA in the relevant listed chapters.

Chapter 6 'Fish and Shellfish Ecology'

- a) It is noted that Area 2105 is documented to overlap with spawning areas for thornback rays and undulate rays and is also a low intensity nursery ground for thornback rays, tope and undulate ray. It is stated in section 6.3.2 of the report that these species are not a target species for commercial fisheries which is incorrect. Mixed fisheries using net fishing gears, trawls and rod & line, all of which have been documented to occur within the area of the proposed works and the wider area of Poole Bay, will target these species as part of fishing operations. This is supported by publicly available MMO landings data which Southern IFCA has reviewed to help inform this response. Considering net fishing gears and trawl gear, landings into the ports of Christchurch, Poole and Swanage (as landing ports in the proximity of the proposed works) show landings of thornback ray, undulate ray and tope with values of over £3,300 in 2025, over £9,300 in 2024 and over £6,800 in 2023. If this were extended to include all eight ports within the Commercial Fisheries Study Area identified in section 11.3.2 of the report this value would be increased. Southern IFCA's knowledge of local fishing vessels and the extent over which they operate indicates that at least part of these catches will have come from the Poole Bay and Christchurch Bay areas.
- b) Section 6.3.3 states that, out of the provided list of demersal species, black seabream, Dover sole and European bass are commercially fished. The majority of the species listed, plus the additional species not currently listed, are fished commercially within the relevant area. It is recommended that the applicant reviews the publicly available MMO landings data, and engages directly with the local fishing industry, to ensure that the assessment accurately represents species which are of commercial importance within the region.
- c) It is documented in Table 6-4 that European bass are '*most likely to be present during summer, when feeding inshore. Migrate offshore during the colder winter months*', Southern IFCA disagrees with this statement on the basis of Officer experience and engagement with local fishers who see bass year-round in the region. The nature of this statement not reflecting the current situation may again be reflective of the most up to date evidence used being from 2017.
- d) For shellfish species, Manila clam is currently listed a primary target species for Poole Bay, this is incorrect. Manila clam is targeted within the Poole Harbour Clam & Cockle Fishery, managed under the Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Fishery which is restricted to Poole Harbour only. Additional fisheries for this species occur in The Solent but it is not a target species in Poole Bay.
- e) Section 6.3.6 states that shellfish are the primary target of commercial fisheries in Poole Bay. Whilst shellfish fisheries are important in this area and support a number of vessels,

fisheries for fish species using net fishing gears and trawls are also important for this area, targeting mixed species catches. Inshore vessels have the ability to diversify to a certain extent; however, vessels will often have a specific set up to accommodate specific gear types, therefore it is important to recognise that both shellfish and finfish species are important commercially, with vessels set up to target both types of species actively working within the region. In addition, the importance of finfish species to the recreational and charter sectors needs to be considered as the primary target species within the region are not limited to just commercial activities.

Chapter 11 'Commercial Fisheries'

- a) This chapter references the document which details comments raised during the EIA scoping study and how these have been addressed. It is noted in this document that, against comments provided by Southern IFCA on fishing activity data held by the Authority, that '*Data from SIFCA has been considered, however as it is primarily ad-hoc sightings data of vessels fishing within the 6nm, including estimated the lat/long on an irregular basis it is considered to contain errors as people record sightings differently. Therefore, it was decided that this data would not be suitable for use within the assessment*'. In responding to the scoping study, Southern IFCA did not indicate that the sightings data which could be provided was an estimation of location nor was information provided on how locations are determined. Sightings locations of fishing vessels are made using radar plotters from fishing vessels or obtained whilst alongside the vessel as part of an inspection making the location data accurate. The caveat provided was that, unlike a system such as VMS, sightings data is not taken continuously therefore does not represent a full picture of all activity taking place at all times, however it is erroneous to suggest that the location data itself is inaccurate. It is felt that Southern IFCA data on fishing activity provided by sightings and inspection data, in conjunction with data sought directly from the fishing industry, would provide an indication of fishing areas which, at present, is limited in its availability for the inshore sector. It is suggested that the applicant should be seeking to use all available evidence in combination to give a full picture of activities and Southern IFCA requests once again that fishing activity data from vessel sightings is included as part of this evidence base, with the data provided in Annex 1 of this response to aid the applicant.

It is noted that in the ES in section 11.3.1, it states '*Therefore, although VMS data for the inshore fleet may be absent, fishing vessel lists, landings data, sightings data, consultation and expert knowledge of local fisheries have been used to best inform the commercial fisheries baseline for this area*', it is not clear which sightings data have been used but this appears to contradict the scoping study outcomes which suggest that such data cannot be used. This is also true of section 11.3.7.1 and 11.3.7.2 which states '*...there is additional inshore vessel sightings data collected by IFCA's...sightings data from the IFCA's between 2010 and 2012 can be used to demonstrate estimated fishing intensity in inshore waters...*', however this data has not been used in this report nor requested from Southern IFCA. This section of the report suggests that sightings data was used to inform the 2012 Cefas dataset, however this will not be fully representative of the sightings data currently available

and introduces confusion when it has been determined that sightings data offered directly by Southern IFCA was determined to not be useable.

- b) In Section 11.3.6, reference is made to the permitted scallop dredge fishery which is The Solent Dredge Permit Byelaw fishery. It is stated that the fishing season runs from April to October inclusive, this is incorrect, the fishery for scallop in The Solent is open from 1st November to 31st March inclusive.
- c) Section 11.3.7.1 states that for net fishing vessels sole is the primary target species. There are many fish species targeted by net fishers within Poole Bay and the wider region, including mixed species fishing.
- d) Section 11.3.7.2 in reference to Figure 11-11, it states that the intensity of mobile gear in The Solent is driven by the Solent scallop and clam fisheries, however the Solent scallop fishery only emerged as a significant fishery from approx. 2019 onwards so would not have been active in the 2010-2012 period from which the data for the figure was taken.

3. Requests for Clarification

This section contains points from the relevant listed chapters where Southern IFCA feel that further information or clarity on the information provided is required.

Chapter 6 'Fish and Shellfish Ecology'

- a) It is noted that the assessment for both thornback and undulate ray references the small area of the wider spawning and nursery areas which is covered by Area 2105 as a rationale for a medium sensitivity score, however the data used to inform this is from 2012. It would be helpful to understand if any more recent data is available to help inform this scoring and, additionally, whether any literature had been reviewed to determine wider impacts from aggregate dredging on these species in adjacent areas to support assessments of impacts directly in the area dredged. The Angling for Sustainability Fisheries Industry Science Partnership Project run by the University of Plymouth included the tagging of ray species to inform knowledge of movements and occurrence within the region, this would provide an additional data source to inform understandings.
- b) Information used to inform the list of relevant demersal fish species within the relevant area in section 6.3.3 is from 2012, it would be beneficial to understand whether there is any more up to date data which could be used to complement this baseline dataset. For example, the use of commercial landings records and information from recreational sea angling clubs on species caught would allow for understandings of changes in species composition since 2012 and capture species not currently included in the lists in Chapter 6. Southern IFCA has identified at least three species not currently included, Cuckoo wrasse, gilthead bream and red bream.

- c) Section 6.3.3.1 references that Area 2105 is a preferred supporting habitat for sandeel but that further low to moderate potential habitat for supporting sandeel is present along the South Coast. In this area, sandeel provides a food source to support other species of commercial and recreational importance, for example juvenile mackerel and supports the presence of important adult species at harvestable quantities. It would be beneficial to understand the proximity of other preferred habitat for this species to the relevant area as local inshore fishing vessels have limited abilities to move their activities spatially based on a number of factors including regulation, suitability of seabed, considerations of costs associated with fuel etc. The degree to which any impacts to sandeel populations may be negative will be dependent on the distance to the next suitable area of supporting habitat, it is felt that the assessment would benefit from further detail in this regard.
- d) For Atlantic mackerel, it is referenced that Area 2105 is a nursery area for this species. In the corresponding assessment, reference is made to the ability of the species to displace spatially to avoid impacts, however it appears that this is mainly associated with adult fish movements. It would be helpful to understand if the same applies to juvenile fish which will be utilising this as a nursery area. It would also be helpful to understand where the next suitable nursery habitat may be and how that relates to the spatial area of the region and the ability for that nursery habitat to support adult populations of Atlantic mackerel. Atlantic mackerel is important for both commercial and recreational fisheries in the region and is currently subject to stock level concerns at a national level. The latest data on Atlantic mackerel stocks may impact the level of impact on this species under the current assessment, noting that the most recent data on this species to inform the assessment is taken from 2016.
- e) For pelagic species, it is stated that all species are mobile and are able to move to areas containing other suitable or alternative prey. Whilst the mobility of the relevant species is accepted, the assessment does not currently consider the geographic scope over which such changes may occur which is a key consideration when determining wider impacts such as general population dynamics, diversity of species within the region and also impacts on commercial and recreational fisheries. If species are displaced outside of the region, this will have a much greater impact on the general ecosystem of the Bay and the fishing sectors which depend on this area. It would be beneficial if clarity could be provided on the expected spatial scope of displacement for relevant species.
- f) Southern IFCA requests clarity on why, under the risk assessments, species have been screened in or out based on whether there is overlap with spawning or nursery grounds rather than also considering the risk to adult populations, for example from changes to general fish assemblages from displacement or changes to seabed habitats. The relevant pressures are included in the risk assessments but are then not considered in relation to adult fish for those species that have been screened out on the basis of no known spawning or nursery grounds. Risks to adult fish are therefore only assessed for species which have known spawning or nursery grounds within Area 2105.

Chapter 11 'Commercial Fisheries'

- a) There is reference in Table 11-1 to '*Southern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (SIFCA) Local Fisheries Assessments and Overviews*', please can clarity be provided on which documents have been used under this evidence header, does it refer to those given in the reference list for this Chapter? It is important to understand which documents have been used to enable an assessment of whether this still represents best available evidence.

4. Points and Concerns Raised by the Stakeholder Community

This section details points raised directly to Southern IFCA during the consultation period for the marine licence for the proposed works. This does not replace any individual representations by members of the fishing industry or relevant organisations, Southern IFCA asks that the points represented here are considered by the MMO alongside Southern IFCA's response as a representation on behalf of the local fishing industry.

- The proposal to undertake dredge works through until March will overlap with the spring period of fishing when the majority of net fishing takes place over the proposed dredging areas and potential area of the sediment plume. This will cause significant displacement of net fishing activity which will have economic impacts.
- The maps currently presented in the ES of fishing activity are inaccurate, in the period since 2012 there has been a reduction in trawling activity and the area is now shared between more different gear types with a combination of trawling and net fishing working in the areas where the dredging is proposed to take place allowing for greater diversification and more opportunities to use multiple gear types as required.
- The areas proposed to be dredged are key for small commercial vessels working out of Christchurch and Mudeford.
- Dolphin Sands provides a holding area for fish species in the winter months, during this period the area is key in supporting commercially important species that support local fishers. For example, skate use this area in the winter during adverse weather as a holding area.
- The Dolphin Sands and Shingle Bank protect vulnerable inshore features such as Alum Bay, Colwell Bay and the north head buoy rock which is an important area for cuttlefish eggs. Concerns that if dredging occurs on a flood tide then the sediment will go into the bays on the Isle of Wight and smother those areas, the sheltered nature of those areas risks the sediment immediately being deposited.
- There is a need to maintain a variety of habitats within the Poole Bay area as this supports a wide variety of species, changes to one habitat and the associated movement of species may impact the habitat in another area and have a knock on effect.
- Christchurch Bay hosts significant worm beds, the smothering of sediment from dredging activity will effectively remove this feature.
- Concerns that the sediment modelling has not adequately taken account of adverse weather which can occur quickly.

- Fishers in the local area have previously requested further information from the applicant to aid understanding of the proposed works but have not received anything in response.
- The sediment plume risks silting up the groynes around Christchurch, this habitat is used by juvenile fish including bass as nursery areas. Increased siltation will make this habitat unsuitable.
- There are concerns that, if a licence is granted, into the future it will be opened up to other operators besides BCP who will look to dredge much larger areas over a longer period of time.
- Excess suspended sediment has been known to settle in whelk pots, with increased turbidity in the water having been observed to result in an accumulation of several inches. This sediment can impact the functioning of the pot and can be hard to remove, requiring high pressure jets of water. There is a concern that this is also what would happen with increased turbidity and sediment settling into any rocky areas, where it is then difficult for that sediment to be removed by waves and tidal action resulting in an overall change to the habitat.
- Small changes in topography risk destabilising the banks overall, removing the top 0.5m will remove the seabed where all the life is found. Therefore, although given as a small sediment removal the implications would be much bigger for the ecosystem. Impacts on the dredging area and sediment plume will not take account of the wider system changes that could be seen across a much larger area.
- The dredging proposal is a disproportionate response to the identified risk to the state of local beaches and coastal flooding. The impacts to local fisheries will be significant, economically and socially and have not been appropriately considered.
- There will be disruption when the dredging is carried out through displacement. The area is used year-round by different gear types. When fishing activity is displaced, the whole of the Poole Bay area is not a suitable alternative, fishing activity will only take place where suitable grounds and species are found which will create an increasing volume of fishers in smaller areas.
- On Christchurch Ledge, which is in the vicinity of the works, small holes in the ledges were used by juvenile lobsters and supported kelp beds. Sediment from increased beach replenishment has removed the kelp and changed the habitat so it is no longer suitable for lobsters. There are concerns that sediment from dredging as well as the beach replenishment will compound these types of issues.
- Cuttlefish traps and nets have historically been observed to be fouled with sediment and weed following previous beach replenishment works.
- There used to be worm beds in Poole Bay and Christchurch Bay which supported a sole fishery, these have suffered from sediment smothering from beach replenishment which has affected the population of sole.
- Dredging may impact the recovery of European bass in the area, this species has showed a positive trajectory recently and is supporting licenced fishers, concerns that this will be impacted by new dredging in the area.
- Bass come to the proposed dredging area to spawn, it is not viable to fish for other species such as sole until April as fishers risk catching spawning stock bass of males and females who are there up until April.

- There are significant concerns that if the dredging goes ahead, it will effectively end the commercial fishery out of Christchurch and Mundeford. There are limited fishers remaining in this area who rely on Christchurch and Poole Bays as their fishing grounds and have little scope to relocate. This would have knock on effects on local businesses and impact the cultural heritage of fishing out of this port and associated tourism interest.
- There should be an assessment of the social and cultural importance of commercial and recreational fishing, not just economic impacts. These elements are just as important for local, small-scale inshore fishing communities and are currently not considered within the scope of the assessment for the licence application.
- Increased impacts and impediments to inshore fisheries will further impact younger people coming into the industry.
- Juvenile cuttlefish may disperse to the areas around the dredge works to feed on small shellfish, in addition sediment movements within the Bay may impact larval stages and move them to less suitable locations for settling out.
- Further clarity is sought on what levels of recovery would be expected within the 12-24 months stated, would this be sediment levels, benthic communities, stocks of fish and shellfish or a combination of all three. Regardless, this recovery period, if recovery was to post-dredging levels in all aspects, would only give a couple of years of viable fishing before the cycle was repeated.
- Monitoring should include assessments of socio-economics and, if a licence is granted, how this changes during the period of the licence.

5. General Comments

Regarding the application and documentation made available for consultation, Southern IFCA wish to raise that two versions of the 'Area 2105' Environmental Statement were provided with the application, one titled v1.0 and one titled v1.1. Both versions of the ES are dated the same (6th October 2025), however given the length of the document (931 pages), it has not been possible to fully determine if any changes have been made between v1.0 and v1.1, it would be beneficial if clarity could be provided on the nature of any changes made between versions of the ES. Southern IFCA have endeavoured to review both documents and ensure that our comments reflect all the information provided as far as is possible.

The ES constitutes the main document providing information on the nature of the proposed works and an assessment of potential impacts and mitigations. At a length of 931 pages, it has been challenging to ensure that all the information provided can be fully reviewed to support the provision of a response to the licence application. This is also only one document for the application, with additional annexes and assessments also needing to be reviewed. Southern IFCA thanks the MMO for providing an extension in order to ensure that the response provided is robust and captures all relevant points. It would have been beneficial for the applicant to create summaries of key points to support the ES and other documents to allow for easier identification of where to find key information.

Southern IFCA is aware that stakeholders within the District have faced challenges in reviewing the volume of information. Through initial engagement with BCP Council, it was indicated that further engagement materials to aid stakeholders in understanding the nature of the proposed works and potential impacts would be forthcoming. Southern IFCA are aware

of the website which accompanies the project ([Beach material supply - South West Flood and Coastal](#)), however the only visual engagement materials are for sediment transport pathways and the timeline of proposed works. To aid stakeholders in responding to the licence application it would have been beneficial for additional materials to have been made available detailing the potential impacts and proposed mitigations. Southern IFCA would also like to raise that the above linked website continues to state that '*the marine licence application will be available for public consultation via the MMO website*' and has not been updated to reflect that the consultation is now live and the dates within which stakeholders need to respond.

Southern IFCA appreciates that direct engagement with the commercial fishing community has taken place during previous phases of this project, however, at the point of consultation on the full marine licence application, in order to ensure that affected members of the community, and wider stakeholders, including both the commercial and recreational sectors have all opportunities to comment on the application and engage with the applicant, it would have been beneficial for additional in-person engagement to be carried out where the large volume of relevant information could have been described and open for discussion and questions.

Through this response, Southern IFCA have endeavoured to provide as much information as possible to support the serious concerns that are held in regard to the licence application and to aid the applicant in ensuring that relevant fisheries, species, the marine environment and the associated impacts to each are best represented and can be subject to full and robust risk assessments. Southern IFCA welcomes continued engagement with the applicant in this regard, and encourages the applicant to reach out via enquiries@southern-ifca.gov.uk for further dialogue or if any further information is required. Southern IFCA maintains that the licence application and proposed works will have serious and potentially in some cases irrecoverable impacts on local, small-scale operators, across multiple sectors as well as the wider marine environment, impacting the ability for national legislation and policy to be delivered as well as impacting sustainable operations at a local scale and the coastal communities which rely on them.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S. Birchenough".

Dr Sarah Birchenough
Deputy Chief Executive Officer – Research & Policy Team
Southern IFCA

Annex 1 – Fishing activity maps from Southern IFCA sightings and inspection data

The below maps show, for different gear types (including recreational and commercial), data held by Southern IFCA for fishing activity in the Poole Bay and Christchurch Bay areas for the period 2015-2026 (to March) which has been collated and anonymised to protect commercial sensitivities, presented on a 4km² grid.

The data has been collected from the following sources:

- Vessel sightings, made by Officers when undertaking operational work, where this details the location of fishing activity and gear type
- Vessel inspections, completed by Officers, where this details the location of fishing activity and gear type

Please note that whilst the data from vessel sightings and inspections provides a good indication of patterns of fishing effort for different gear types within this area, these data sources are dependent on the location and timing of operational work by Southern IFCA Officers and therefore should be taken as a representation rather than a complete record of all fishing activity.

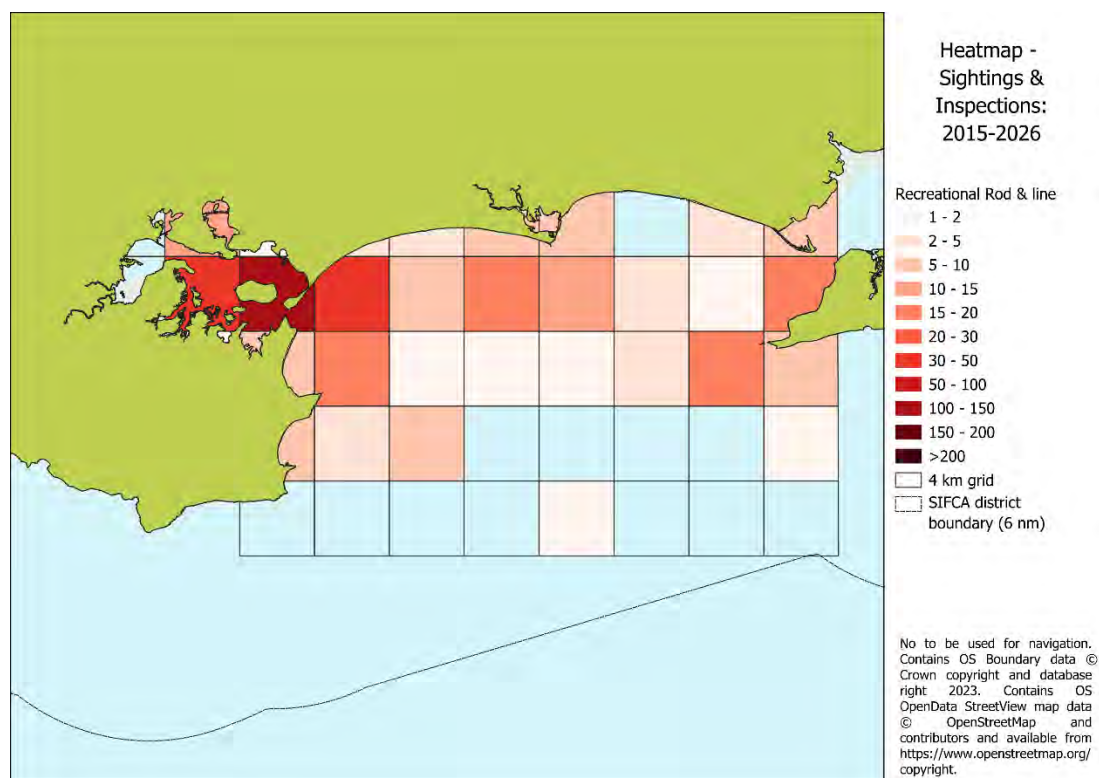


Figure A1-1: Map of sightings and inspections data held by Southern IFCA for 2015-2026 (to March) for recreational rod and line fishing, displayed as number of occurrences within a 4km² grid.

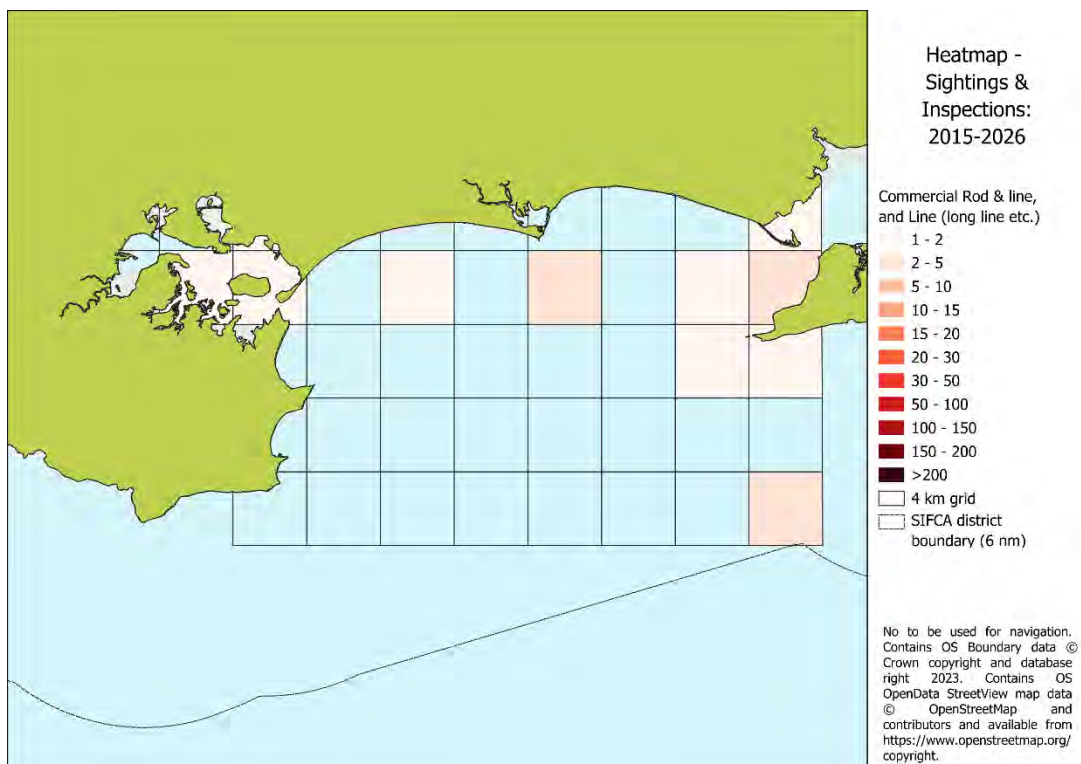


Figure A1-2: Map of sightings and inspections data held by Southern IFCA for 2015-2026 (to March) for commercial rod and line fishing, displayed as number of occurrences within a 4km² grid.

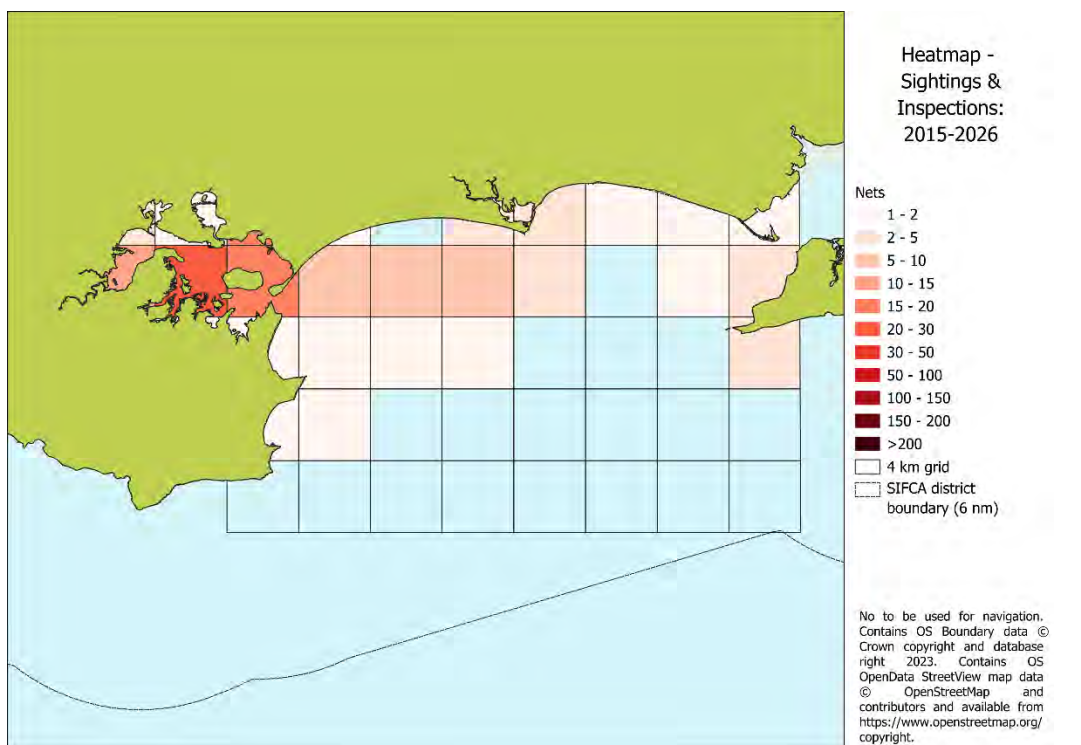


Figure A1-3: Map of sightings and inspections data held by Southern IFCA for 2015-2026 (to March) for commercial net fishing, displayed as number of occurrences within a 4km² grid.

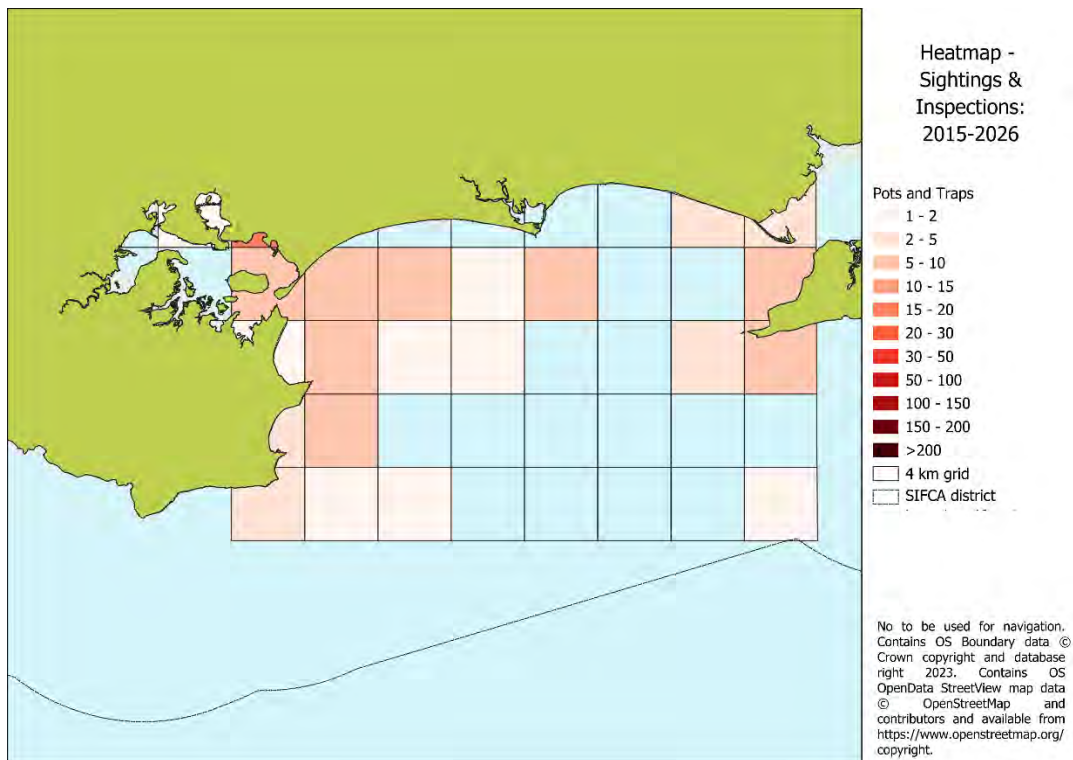


Figure A1-4: Map of sightings and inspections data held by Southern IFCA for 2015-2026 (to March) for commercial pot and trap fishing, displayed as number of occurrences within a 4km² grid.

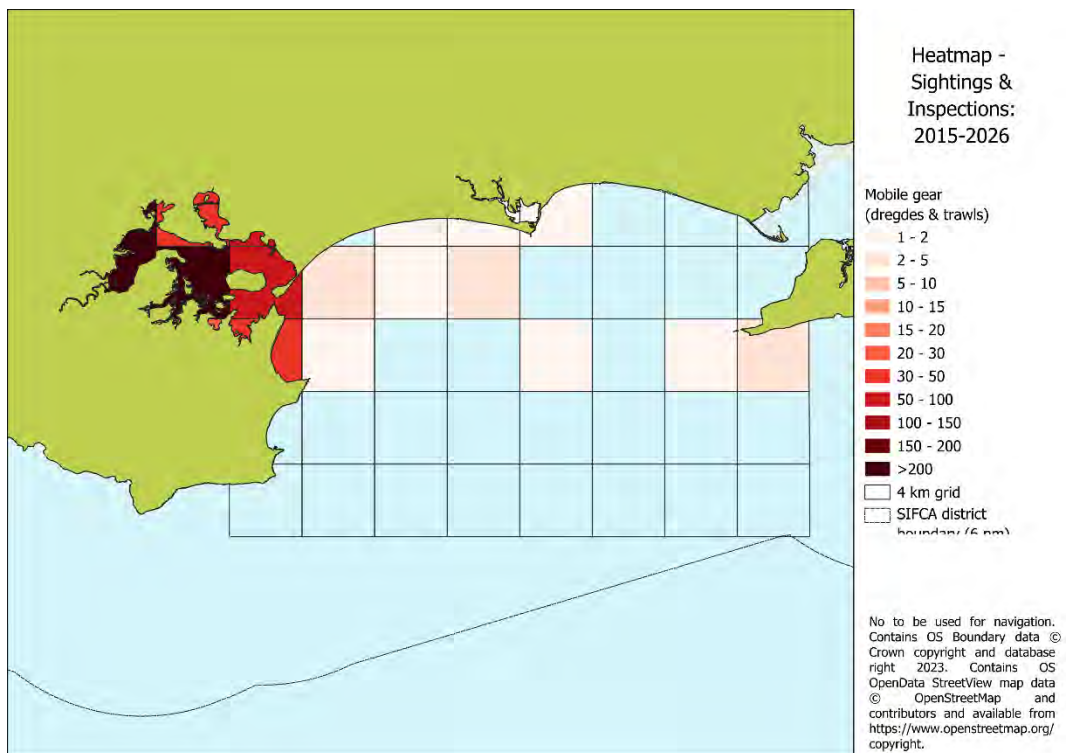


Figure A1-5: Map of sightings and inspections data held by Southern IFCA for 2015-2026 (to March) for commercial mobile fishing gears (dredges and trawls), displayed as number of occurrences within a 4km² grid.

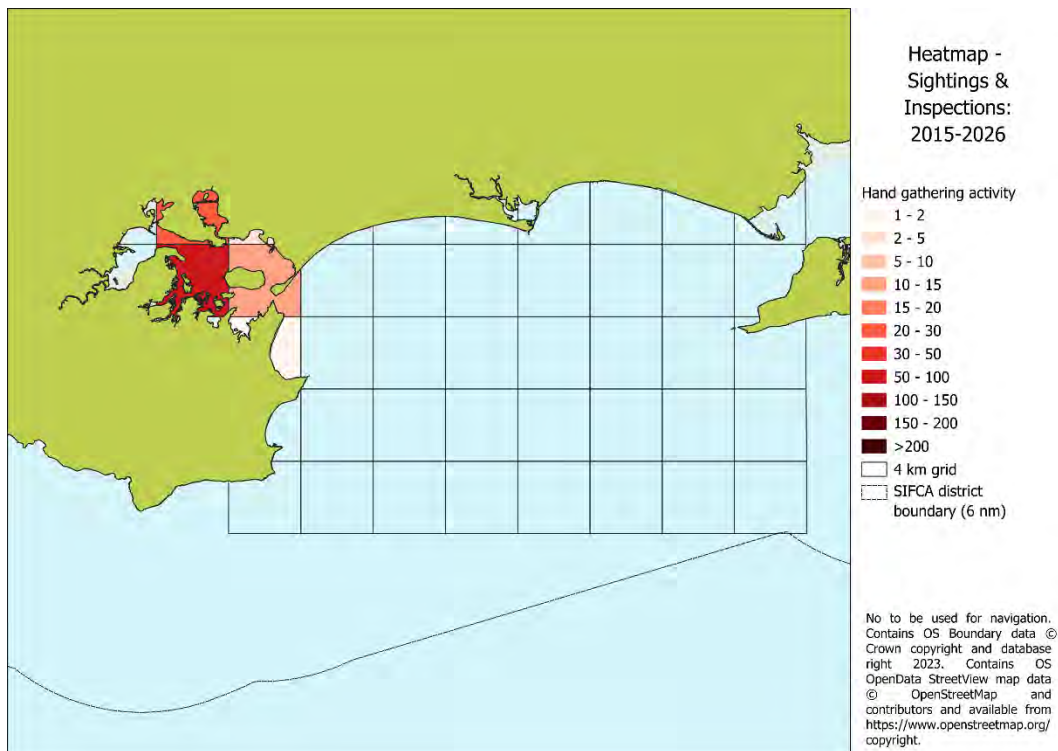


Figure A1-6: Map of sightings and inspections data held by Southern IFCA for 2015-2026 (to March) for hand gathering activity, displayed as number of occurrences within a 4km² grid.

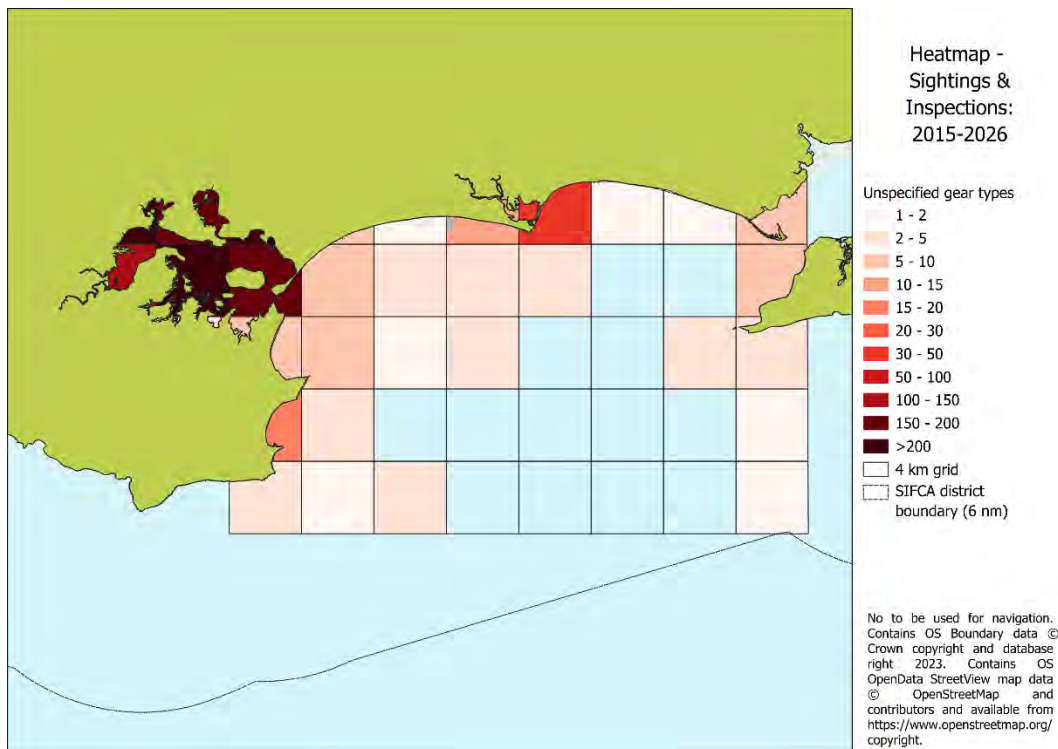


Figure A1-7: Map of sightings and inspections data held by Southern IFCA for 2015-2026 (to March) for unspecified fishing gears, displayed as number of occurrences within a 4km² grid.

**Black Seabream Co-Developed Principles: Engagement, Raising Awareness & Seeking Compliance: Month 1, Season 1
Paper For Information**

Report by DCO Birchenough and PDCO Dell

A. Purpose

To provide Members with an update on the implementation of the Black Seabream Co-Developed Principles in the Purbeck Coast MCZ, Poole Rocks MCZ and Southbourne Rough MCZ ahead of and following the start of Year 1 for the Co-Developed Principles on 1st April 2026.

1.0 Introduction

- At an Extraordinary Meeting of the TAC on 4th December 2025, Members resolved to apply the Black Seabream Co-Developed Principles, developed with the Dorset Community, across the Purbeck Coast MCZ, Poole Rocks MCZ and Southbourne Rough MCZ from 2026 onwards as an additional management opportunity to complement statutory protections and to satisfy the Secondary Policy Objective of the Black Seabream Review, to advance understandings of black seabream (BSB) fisheries over time.

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

- The focus of the Year 1 implementation of the Co-Developed Principles is **engagement, raising awareness and seeking compliance**, with full details of how Southern intend to deliver this detailed in Policy Document: [Process Document 3 – Management Tools, Application & Review](#).

2.0 Engagement

- Southern IFCA have produced engagement materials to support the implementation of the Co-Developed Principles, utilising both electronic and paper formats to support wider engagement.

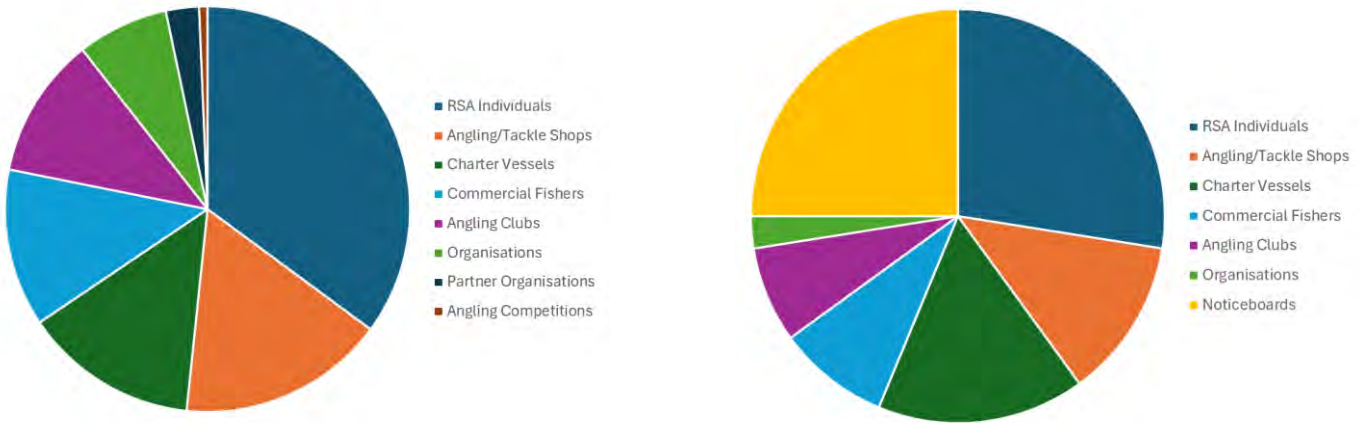
- Information Leaflet (in two formats)
- Poster
- Data Collection Programme Leaflet
- Guidance



- All fishers and charter businesses who are engaged with black seabream fisheries in the three Dorset MCZs have also been invited to become **Black Seabream Custodians** via displaying a sticker on their vessel, and/or adding information to their business website. Any organisation, business or community group who would like to promote their support for the initiative are also invited to have their logo displayed on the Southern IFCA [Black Seabream webpage](#) under the **Dorset Community** section.



- Engagement materials have been disseminated through email and in-person engagement with all relevant sectors, supported by attendance at the **Professional Boatman’s Association AGM** and the **Poole & District Sea Angling Association** meetings. The charts below show the breakdown of engagement across nine categories; **recreational sea anglers**, **charter vessels**, **commercial fishers**, **angling/tackle shops**, **angling clubs**, **organisations** (PBA, PDSAA, PDFA, FMC, DWT etc.), **partner organisations** (IFCA, MMO, EA), **angling competition organisers** and **noticeboards** (clubs, harbours, marinas etc.).
- Southern IFCA have engaged via **email with 151 recipients** and **in-person with 80 recipients** (*noting some in-person engagement was subsequent to an email*).

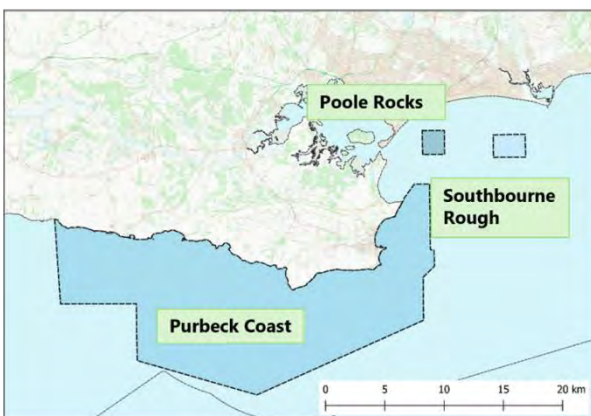


- A new webpage has been developed to host all information relating to the management of BSB across the three MCZs: **Black Seabream Fisheries : Southern IFCA** and a new **Google Maps Interactive Tool** has been made live, to be used by all stakeholders to understand the location of spatial regulations within the District that are applicable to multiple sectors, including the BSB Co-Developed Principles.

2.1 Patrols & Coastal Engagement

- Work on the coast to engage, raise awareness and seek compliance with the Co-Developed Principles has been carried out through **shore patrols**, **port visits** and **sea patrols**. Sea patrols have been carried out both within and outside of the three MCZs, and patrol work within the MCZs has included the collection of fisher-independent data to support analysis and quality assurance of fisher-dependent data through the Data Collection Programme.
- During patrols **56%** of stakeholders engaged through at-sea inspections were aware of the Co-Developed Principles, all stakeholders who were unaware were provided with information materials.
- During patrols, data has been collected by Officers for **16 vessels** as part of the Data Collection Programme, this is across all sectors with fishing for BSB to date taking place in the Poole Rocks and Purbeck Coast MCZs.

Category	Metric	Total	
Shore-based work	Shore patrols	5	
	Port visits	12	
	Engagement	Commercial	2
		Recreational	3
		Charter	2
		Angling Shops	11
Marinas/Noticeboards	16		



Category	MCZ	Metric	Total	
Sea-based work	Poole Rocks	Sea Patrols	3	
		Boardings	Charter	2
			Recreational	4
		Engagement	Charter	6
			Recreational	5
		Southbourne Rough	Sea Patrols	3
	Boardings		Charter	0
			Recreational	0
	Engagement		Charter	0
			Recreational	0
	Purbeck Coast		Sea Patrols	2
		Boardings	Charter	0
Recreational			1	
Engagement		Charter	2	
		Recreational	1	
Outside MCZs		Boardings	Charter	0
	Recreational		3	
	Engagement	Charter	3	
		Recreational	18	

3.0 Dorset Community Insights

- During coastal engagement in the BSB fisheries, Officers have been seeking feedback from all sectors on the Co-Developed Principles. During month 1, the following points have been raised:
 - *Stakeholders across all sectors are generally in favour of the Co-Developed Principles and have found the engagement materials useful.*
 - *Rod & line fishers are using a mixture of circle and J hooks, those using circle hooks site reasons which are similar to those underpinning the recommended use of circle hooks in the Guidance. Those using J hooks are finding no difference in the impact to the fish or the ability to return it undamaged, therefore are continuing to use J hooks with an awareness of what to look for in terms of impacts.*
 - *Feedback from the Charter vessel sector is that the increase in MCRS is welcomed.*
 - *The RSA community are commenting that they have received information on the Co-Developed Principles through their angling clubs which have been a good conduit for providing information.*
 - *The majority of RSA are operating catch and release for BSB.*
 - *Feedback from a charter skipper is that the information on the Co-Developed Principles is being provided to customers but the decision to operate in accordance with the Principles rests with them as individuals.*

4.0 Next Steps

- Southern IFCA will continue to work closely with the Dorset Community through the recognised breeding season (Apr-Jul) to implement the Co-Developed Principles, continuing to explore opportunities for engagement, raising awareness and seeking compliance.
- The first Annual Review of the Co-Developed Principles will follow the conclusion of the breeding season in Year 1, and will incorporate community feedback, analysis of data collected, compliance & enforcement metrics, data from external sources, Seabream FMP outcomes and any emerging evidence on BSB populations or fisheries.

END OF SEASON SPOTLIGHT: Scallop Fishing in the Solent (November 2025 – March 2026)

A. Purpose

For Members to consider the performance of the Solent Scallop (SCE) Fishery post the end of the 2025/26 season, following the introduction of additional effort management through Category A Permit Conditions pre-season, to support a sustainable fishery.

B. Annexes

- **Annex 1** – New Permit Conditions: November 2025
- **Annex 2** – Fishery Performance Indicators

1.0 Introduction

- The Solent Scallop (SCE) Fishery is primarily managed under The Solent Dredge Permit Byelaw (SDPB) through the issuing of Category A Permits for dredging for bivalve species (excluding Native oyster)¹.
- Ahead of the 2025/26 fishing season (1st November 2025 to 31st March 2026), additional effort management for the Solent SCE Fishery was applied through the Category A Permit, in the form of a **reduction in daily fishing hours from 08:00-16:00 to 08:00-14:00**, in response to Members' consideration of data from the Solent SCE Survey and the identified need to explore additional effort controls to support a sustainable fishery.
- Following the conclusion of the SCE fishing season on 31st March 2026, the performance of the fishery following the introduction of the additional effort management can be considered, informed by information on compliance & enforcement, Fishery Performance Indicators and insights from a Permit Holder who was active in the SCE fishery.
- Southern IFCA will continue to deliver the Solent SCE Survey during 2026 with the autumn (pre-season) survey in September providing an indication as to the performance of the stock during the fishery closed period. This will provide one source of evidence that will indicate if any further considerations regarding management are required ahead of the 2026/27 season.
- This agenda item covers the following aspects of the fishery to help inform discussion:
 - **Background on the Fishery**
 - **New permit Conditions: November 2025**
 - **In-season Compliance with Additional Effort Management**
 - **Fishery Performance Indicators**
 - **Insight from a Permit Holder**
 - **Looking Ahead**

2.0 Background on the Fishery

- The Solent SCE Fishery emerged in 2019 and from March 2021 was subject to the Solent Scallop Fishery Code of Conduct. Following a subsequent review of management of SCE in the Solent in 2022, driven by observed non-compliance with the CoC, management of SCE was integrated into the Category A Solent Dredge Permit.
- A further review of measures took place ahead of the 2023/24 season on the basis of best available evidence including Solent SCE Survey data, communications from industry, catch data provided by Permit Holders and MMO landings data, which indicated that the SCE stock may not be sustainable. Seasonal and temporal restrictions were introduced through this review.
- The Solent SCE fishery is accessible by all Category A Permit holders although not all Permit Holders actively fish for SCE. The fleet is comprised of all <12m vessels, with the majority <10m and in addition to regulations under The Solent Dredge Permit Byelaw and Category A Permit Conditions, is subject to regulations under the Scallop Fishing Byelaw 2019, The Scallop Fishing (England) Order 2012 and the Minimum Conservation Reference Size (MCRS) Byelaw.
- A verbal presentation will be given as part of this agenda item giving an overview of fleet dynamics, regulatory tools and fishing gear used in the fishery.

¹ Additional regulations apply to the fishing for SCE in The Solent including the Scallop Fishing Byelaw 2019, the Minimum Conservation Reference Size Byelaw and The Scallop Fishing (England) Order 2012.

3.0 New Permit Conditions: November 2025

- The Autumn Post-Season Solent SCE Survey in September 2025 and a full analysis of Solent SCE Survey data for 2024-2025 formed a driver for actioning a review of permit conditions, permit fees and limitations on the number of permits under a Category A Solent Dredge Permit for the 2025/26 season in order to explore ways to reduce effort and support a sustainable SCE fishery.
- The key points from Fishery Performance Indicators and the review process are detailed in **Annex 1** to this paper.
- The outcome of the review was **a reduction in fishing effort in the Solent SCE Fishery for the 2025/26 season, achieved by a reduction in daily fishing hours from 08:00-16:00 to 08:00-14:00.**
- This was implemented through Category A Permit Conditions from 1st November 2025.

4.0 In-Season Compliance with Additional Effort Management

- Southern IFCA have undertaken the following patrols specific to the Solent SCE fishery between 1st November 2025 and 31st March 2026:

	Shore	Sea	Drone	Port Visits	Total
2025-2026	14	14	3	28	59

- The following inspections have been carried out for 1st November 2025 to 31st March 2026:

	Boarding Inspections	Premises Inspections	Landing Inspections	Vehicle Inspections	Total
2025-2026	25	2	9	2	38

- For the detection of non-compliance within the SCE Fleet and associated enforcement actions, the following table lists the offences detected against the relevant enforcement action. Through the season Officers recorded **77 sightings** of fishing in the SCE fishery and submitted **10 intelligence reports**, there were **5 Offence Reports** resulting from instances of non-compliance (these relate to FAPs and Ongoing Investigations).

Offence Detected & Enforcement Outcome	2025/26 Season	Detail
Verbal Warnings	2	2x MCRS
Fixed Administrative Penalty	2	1x BTFG Byelaw 23, Prohibited Area 28 breach 1x Fishing outside of daily fishing hours 08:00-14:00
Ongoing Investigations	3	1x BTFG Byelaw 23, Prohibited Area 32 breach 1x BTFG Byelaw 23, Prohibited Area 28 breach 1x BTFG Byelaw 23, Prohibited Area 28 breach & MCRS Breach

- During the season, non-compliance in the SCE fishery was identified across **4 vessels**, with **3 vessels** identified as demonstrating non-compliance on 2 occasions.
- All enforcement actions are undertaken in accordance with the Southern IFCA Compliance & Enforcement Framework, which ensures a fair, effective and proportionate approach to compliance.

5.0 Fishery Performance Indicators

- Management of the Solent SCE Fishery enables Southern IFCA to review a number of **Fishery Performance Indicators (FPIs)** for each fishing season.
- These FPIs include both **Fisher-Dependent** and **Fisher-Independent** data collection to support understandings of sustainability within the Solent SCE Fishery. All FPIs are comparable between seasons and enable an understanding of **Fishery Participation** and **SCE Catch Levels & LPUE** for each season overall and on a monthly basis during the season.
- Annex 2** to this report provides details of the FPIs used to inform understandings of the Solent SCE Fishery and an analysis of Fisher-Dependent SCE data analysis for the 2025/26 season. Early indications from Southern IFCA's Fisher-Independent data analysis will be provided verbally at the meeting.

6.0 Insights from a Permit Holder

- Southern IFCA works closely with Permit Holders in the Solent SCE Fishery to maintain an understanding of industry insights and feedback, both through specific consultation and on-the-coast engagement during patrol and survey work. Ensuring there are avenues for direct and ongoing communications is key to supporting a sustainable fishery and ensuring that Permit Holders feel seen and heard with an opportunity to provide their expert input into the management of this fishery.
- Members will hear at the meeting from one of the Permit Holders who is active in the Solent SCE Fishery, who will provide an insight into reflections on the 2025/26 season and expert observations on potential gear management solutions which could further support the ongoing sustainability of the fishery.

7.0 Looking Ahead

- Southern IFCA seeks to continue exploring ways in which the Solent SCE Fishery can be developed to ensure a sustainable fishery is maintained and to explore where improvements to this fishery can be made to support both the marine environment and the socio-economics of the SCE fishers, recognising the intrinsic links between this fishery and local coastal communities.
- Southern IFCA are committed to commencing a wider review of the management of dredge fishing in The Solent under The Solent Dredge Permit Byelaw in the 2026/27 FY, taking account of changes in species composition and the development of the fishery since the introduction of the Byelaw in 2021. This review will utilise best available evidence, including from the Southern IFCA Monitoring Programme and stakeholder engagement, and will inform and deliver a long-term management plan to achieve sustainable management of the fishery alongside the marine environment.
- Southern IFCA will also be delivering the Solent SCE Research Programme in 2026/27, including additions to the current Solent SCE Survey, a Gear Trial Research Project and a desk-based study on identification of key fishing areas in the Solent to identify areas of importance and the relationship between the Solent dredge fisheries and other elements.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Solent Scallop Fishery 25/26 New Permit Conditions: November 2025

Report by DCO Birchenough

A. Purpose

To provide Members with an overview of the drivers & process for introducing additional effort controls in the Solent Scallop Fishery, under Solent Dredge Permit Byelaw Category A Permit Conditions, to support a sustainable fishery.

1.0 Introduction

- The Solent Scallop (SCE) Fishery is managed primarily¹ under the Solent Dredge Permit Byelaw (SDPB) through the issuing of a Category A Permit. Data collected for this fishery through the Solent SCE Survey, carried out three times per year (pre-season, mid-season, post-season) under the Southern IFCA Monitoring Programme helps inform management to ensure that fishing activity remains sustainable.
- The Management Intentions Document² which supports the SDPB states that “*unsustainable will be determined by the Authority based on a number of considerations which may include Catch Per Unit Effort (CPUE)...and any other evidence the Authority deems to be relevant*”. CPUE is a recognised measure for the long-term monitoring of a fishery, providing a measure of target species abundance. A decreasing CPUE would suggest that the target species are unable to support current levels of harvesting.

2.0 Driver for Action – Permit Condition Review

- Following the Autumn Post-Season Solent SCE Survey in September 2025 and a full analysis of Solent SCE Survey data for 2024-2025, the following key points formed a driver for actioning a review of permit conditions, permit fees and limitations on the number of permits under a Category A Solent Dredge Permit for the 2025/26 season:

- That for **Total SCE CPUE** and **SCE CPUE over MCRS**, the autumn (post-season) values were **statistically significantly lower** than the autumn surveys in 2022, 2023 and 2024.
- That for **SCE CPUE under MCRS**, the autumn (post-season) value was **statistically significantly lower** than the autumn surveys in 2022 and 2024.
- That the **number of individual sampling sites which saw a decline** in CPUE between successive Autumn surveys **was the highest** between 2024 to 2025, compared to 2023/24 and 2022/23.
- That whilst numerical increases were seen in **CPUE between the Spring 2025 and Autumn 2025 season (fishery closed period)**, these **changes were smaller than the changes seen during the closed seasons** in 2024 and 2023, and **only one change was statistically significant** (for SCE CPUE over MCRS).
- The CPUE data from the surveys was in the context of **landings of SCE being lower for the 2024/25 season than the 2023/24 season**, noting that lower prices for SCE did contribute to the lower landings recorded.

- Based on a consideration of the Solent SCE Survey data at a Member Working Group in October 2025, Members determined that there was a need to explore ways to reduce effort in the SCE fishery through the permit review process, as stipulated in the SDPB.

¹ Additional regulations apply to the fishing for SCE in The Solent including the Scallop Fishing Byelaw 2019, the Minimum Conservation Reference Size Byelaw and The Scallop Fishing (England) Order 2012.

² [Management-Intentions-Document-SDPB.pdf](#)



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

3.0 Review Process

- The review of permit conditions, permit fees and limitations on the number of permits was delivered through a staged approach during October 2025.

1

Public Consultation: 10th to 15th October

Two draft proposals were taken to public consultation, engagement included in-person Community Forum Meetings, stakeholder requested meetings & submission of written responses. 80% of applicants for a 2025/26 permit were engaged, 28 individual responses & 3 group responses received. Stakeholders were supportive of Southern IFCA seeking applicant input to the process.

Draft Proposal 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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) 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)
Draft Proposal 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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) 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

Summary of Consultation Feedback

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. Information was provided on applicants' intention to fish for SCE and socio-economic impacts including contextual information on economical, social and wellbeing impacts.



3

Analysis of Feedback & Feasibility Checks

A staged process was carried out on alternative management options to 1) identify alternative options, 2) review alternative options, 3) develop Co-Developed Proposals & 4) application of material considerations. Through each stage any elements put forward which were not carried to the next stage were detailed with the corresponding rationale.

Co-Developed Proposal 1	SCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fishing season: 1st Dec 25 to 31st March 26 (<i>reduction in season from 1st Nov to 31st Mar</i>) Fishing hours: 08:00 – 15:00 (<i>reduction in hours from 08:00-16:00</i>) 	Effort reduction c.44%
	Other Bivalves	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fishing season start: 1st Dec 25 (<i>reduction in season from 1st Nov to 31st Oct, harbour closures from 28th Feb</i>) 	Effort reduction c.24%
Co-Developed Proposal 2	SCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fishing season: 1st Dec 25 to 31st March 26 (<i>Reduction in season from 1st Nov to 31st Mar</i>) Fishing hours: 08:00 – 14:00 (<i>Reduction in hours from 08:00-16:00</i>) 	Effort reduction c.52%
	Other Bivalves	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fishing season start: 1st Dec 25 (<i>reduction in season from 1st Nov to 31st Oct, harbour closures from 28th Feb</i>) 	Effort reduction c.24%

From 14 alternative proposals, two new Co-Developed Proposals consolidated both Member & industry inputs, recognising potential unintended consequences for other bivalves.

4

Extraordinary Meeting of the TAC: 20th October 2025

Members reviewed all best available evidence for the Co-Developed Proposals and were addressed by a representative of the SPDB fishery who put forward an alternative proposal on behalf of a majority of applicants who intended to fish for SCE.



- At the Extraordinary Meeting of the TAC, upon reviewing all the available evidence, Members put forward a new proposal, **Co-Developed Proposal 3**. Members resolved to introduce Co-Developed Proposal 3 as follows:

Co-Developed Proposal 3

A reduction in fishing effort in the Solent SCE Fishery for the forthcoming season (2025/26), as achieved via the following measure:

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

4.0 2025/26 Solent SCE Fishing Season

- 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 and notified of the status of their application.
- 49 eligible applicants were invited to take out their Category A Permit ahead of the start of the fishing season on 1st November 2025.
- Throughout the season, 40 applicants paid for and took out their Category A Permit.
- Southern IFCA monitored and engaged in the fishery for its duration (1st November 2025 to 31st March 2026), reviewing Fishery Performance Indicators (**see Agenda Item Marked D – Annex 2**) and Compliance & Enforcement statistics (**see Executive Summary**), reporting periodically to Members of the TAC during the season.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Solent Scallop Fishery 25/26 Fishery Performance Indicators

Report by IFCO Churchouse

A. Purpose

To provide Members with an overview of Fishery Performance Indicators for the Solent Scallop (SCE) Fishery in the 2025/26 season in relation to participation in the fishery and catch levels of King scallop.

1.0 Introduction

- Management of the Solent Scallop (SCE) Fishery under the Solent Dredge Permit Byelaw enables Southern IFCA to review a number of Fishery Performance Indicators (FPIs) for each fishing season.
- These FPIs include both fisher-dependent and fisher-independent data collection:
 - **Fisher-dependent data:** Permit Holder submitted catch returns, required for each month of the season detailing the species caught, quantity (kg), location of fishing, number of tows and the buyer(s).
 - **FPIs: SCE Catch Levels & LPUE** (kg SCE/hr/vessel) and **Fishery Participation** (no. of fishers engaged in fishing for SCE)
 - **Fisher-independent data:** outputs from Southern IFCA Monitoring Programme through the Solent SCE Survey, carried out three times per year (Sept – Pre-season, Feb – Mid-season, Apr – Post-season), and through a Mid-Season Observer Programme, implemented for the first time in 2026.
 - **FPIs: CPUE** (kg SCE/metre of dredge/hour) and **length frequency**
- An analysis of **Fisher-dependent data FPIs** for the 2025/26 SCE fishing season (1st November 2025 to 31st March 2026) is presented in this paper. A verbal overview of early reflections on **Fisher-independent data FPIs** for the Feb & Apr Solent SCE Surveys and the Mid-Season Observer Programme will be provided at the meeting. Data from the September 2025, post-season Solent SCE Survey, which informed a review of permit conditions prior to the 2025/26 season is included in the [2025 Solent SCE Survey Report](#).

2.0 Fisher-Dependent SCE Data Analysis 2025/26

2.1 Fishery Participation

- There were 49 eligible applicants to hold a Category A Solent Dredge Permit for the 2025/26 season. Of these, **40 applicants** paid for and took out their Cat A Permit. This is a **17% decrease** in the number of active fishers compared to the 2024/25 season where there were 52 eligible applicants and 48 applicants paid for and took out their Cat A Permit.
- In total, **26** Permit Holders were active within the SCE fishery during the 2025/26 season, with **20** working consistently throughout the season (defined as a presence in the fishery for 3 or more months), and **10** vessels working for 5 days or more in each of 3 or more months during the season. This was lower than the 38 Permit Holders identified as having the potential to fish for SCE through the pre-season permit condition review.
- November 2025 saw the highest number of Permit Holders working within the SCE fishery in a single month at **25**, which also represented the highest participation rate for a single month for any season to date, however the following four months saw participation numbers at similar levels to previous seasons, varying between **19** (December 2025) and **13** (March 2026), with the lowest participation level in March since the 2022/23 season (Table 1).

2.2 SCE Catch Levels & LPUE

- During the 2025/26 season, a total of **241,778 kg (241.8 T)** of King scallop was landed from the Solent fishery, a **39.5% decrease** compared to 2024/25 (400.1 T) and a **56.9% decrease** compared to 2023/24 (560.9 T). The total caught was **lower than all previous seasons except 2022/23** (Table 1).



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- **99%** of the SCE landed was removed from **Bivalve Management Area 3 – Eastern Solent**, with the majority of fishing taking place in **Subzone 3b and 3c (Osbourne Bay & Ryde)**.
- For each month, the overall quantity of King scallop landed varied between **113.5T (November 2025)** and **13.2T (March 2026)**, for all months the quantity landed was lower than that for the 2024/25 and 2023/24 seasons.
- The LPUE (kg/hr/vessel) for each month varied from **3.91 kg/hr/vessel (March)** to **3.18 kg/hr/vessel (November)**. For each month LPUE was **below** values seen for the 2023/24 season. For Dec to Mar, LPUE values are **similar to** values seen for the 2021/22, 2022/23 and 2024/25 seasons, for Nov the LPUE for 2025/26 (3.18 kg/hr/vessel) **is the lower than all previous seasons except 2022/23** (Figure 1 & Table 1).

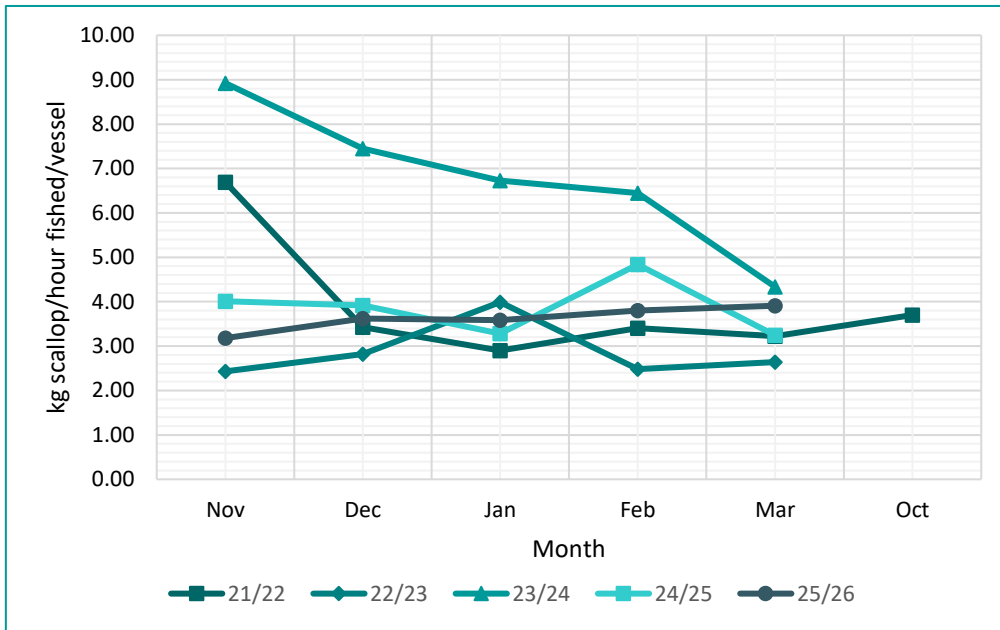


Figure 1: Average Kg of scallop landed per hour fished per vessel by month for each season Southern IFCA holds data on.

	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Oct	Total
2021/22							
SCE landed (T)	43.2	26.8	43.9	16.9	30.8	136.0	297.6
No. Vessels	10	14	17	14	13	17	18
Kg/hr/vessel	6.69	3.43	2.9	3.4	3.23	3.7	3.09
2022/23							
SCE landed (T)	60.5	29.9	24.1	26.4	12.1		153.3
No. Vessels	18	14	11	13	12		22
Kg/hr/vessel	2.43	2.82	3.99	2.48	2.64		1.79
2023/24							
SCE landed (T)	186.5	94.2	132.7	86.8	60.6		560.9
No. Vessels	16	16	17	14	16		21
Kg/hr/vessel	8.92	7.45	6.73	7.45	4.33		5.24
2024/25							
SCE landed (T)	172.7	79.5	68.3	36.8	42.8		400.1
No. Vessels	23	19	19	12	20		29
Kg/hr/vessel	4.01	3.91	3.28	4.84	3.24		2.59
2025/26							
SCE landed (T)	113.5	58.3	36.4	20.4	13.2		241.8
No. Vessels	25	19	16	14	13		26
Kg/hr/vessel	3.18	3.62	3.58	3.8	3.91		2.62

Table 1: Landings information for the Solent scallop fishery for the five seasons data has been collected via SDPB catch returns.

Annual Review of the Poole Harbour Several Order 2015 Management Plan: 2025 Revision (2026 Update)

Decision Paper

Report by IFCO W. Meredith-Davies.

A. Purpose

Under Section (4) of The Poole Harbour Fishery Order 2015, the Authority are required to undertake an annual review of the Poole Harbour Several Order Management Plan.

B. Recommendation(s)

1. That Members agree that no updates are required to the Poole Harbour Several Order 2015 Management Plan: 2025 Revision (2026 Update).
 2. That Members approve that the Management Plan: 2025 Revision (2026 Update) is published on the Southern IFCA website.
-

1.0 Introduction

- The objective of the Poole Harbour Several Order Management Plan ('Management Plan') is to demonstrate how Southern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (IFCA) manage aquaculture activity within a defined area of Poole Harbour under The Poole Harbour Fishery Order 2015 ('The Order').
- Under Section (3) of the Order, the Authority must manage the aquaculture in Poole Harbour in line with the Management Plan.
- Under Section (4) of The Order, the Authority is required to undertake an annual review of the Management Plan and publish an updated version of the Management Plan on the Southern IFCA website.
- If, during a review any significant changes are made to the Management Plan, then the Authority must notify, in writing any interested parties. The Authority must, prior to publication of the updated Management Plan, take account of any representations it receives in writing from any interested party on the proposed changes.
- The management of aquaculture within Poole Harbour must have specific regard to Southern IFCA's responsibilities, as defined in sections (153), (154) and (166) of the Marine and Coastal Access Act (MaCAA) 2009. In addition, Southern IFCA is a Relevant Authority in the management of sites which are within the National Site Network, designated under the Habitats Directive and/or Birds Directive, and has a statutory responsibility to ensure that fishing activity does not damage, disturb or have an adverse effect on the wildlife or habitats for which a site has been designated. This includes the governance of the conservation interests of the Poole Harbour Special Protection Area (SPA).
- Under sections (28G) and (28I) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981, IFCA's are required to consider any Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) with marine components giving protection to species and habitats of national importance when carrying out its duties. This includes the governance of the conservation interests of the Poole Harbour SSSI. The Management Plan also has regard to the Poole Harbour Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention.

2.0 Key Considerations: 2026 Update

- For the 2026 review, the following inconsequential amendments have been made to the Management Plan:
 1. Amendments to grammar and sentence structure where required.

The 2026 review provides inconsequential updates or clarification of information in relation to the existing management of Lease Beds under The Order. As such, the 2026 review has not introduced any significant changes to the Management Plan.

- The Management Plan is available on the Southern IFCA website here - [PHFO-2015-Management-Plan-2025-Revision.pdf](#). If Members agree the Recommendations, the 2026 Update will be referenced on the title page and the **Tranche 3 2025-2030 Annual Review table** on p.3 updated to reflect no significant changes through this annual update.

3.0 Next Steps

- Should Members agree the Recommendations, the Poole Harbour Several Order 2015 Management Plan: 2025 Revision (2026 Review) will be published on the Southern IFCA website ahead of 1st July 2026.

Update on Several & Regulating Order (SRO) Cost Recovery Paper For Information

A. Purpose

For Members to note a letter of response received from the Defra Aquaculture Policy Team following the outcomes of a period of Defra engagement on SRO cost recovery for new SRO applications in England.

For Members to note the potential implications for future management of aquaculture within Poole Harbour, a fishery which is currently managed by Southern IFCA as a grantee for a period of 20 years under the Poole Harbour Fishery Order 2015.

B. Annex

- Annex 1: Defra Notification of SRO Cost Recovery & Request for Input (12 Dec 24)
 - Annex 2: Southern IFCA Response to Defra Notification of SRO Cost Recovery (7 Feb 25)
 - Annex 3: Defra Update on SRO Cost Recovery (1 Apr 26)
-

1.0 Background

- The Aquaculture and Policy Team at Defra contacted Southern IFCA (Annex 1) as the grantee of The Poole Harbour Fishery Order 2015 (“The Order”), to inform of upcoming changes to the way Defra process all future Several and Regulating Order applications, Specifically relating to **Defra’s cost recovery for expenses incurred in relation to new applications for SROs in England**.
 - Schedule 1 of The Sea Fisheries (Shellfish) Act 1967¹ (under which SROs are made) sets out ‘Provisions with Respect to Making of Orders’ which includes a requirement for the applicant to defray all expenses incurred by Defra in relation to an application for an Order. Defra have outlined that given the current challenging fiscal and budgetary environment, Defra will, going forward, require applicants to comply with this statutory requirement, having not sought to recover those expenses to date.
 - Defra estimated costs to applicants could be £30,000 - £60,000 to meet the costs associated with legal expenses, drafting associated admin.
- Southern IFCA formally responded to this consultation (Annex 2) in February 2025. In summary this response covered:
 - The importance of aquaculture in Poole Harbour, its history and the ecosystem benefits provided by the sector.
 - Detail of The Order, its management and the delivery functions which are met by Southern IFCA currently, including the cost recovery employed by the Authority for this management through annual lease fees.
 - Concerns over implications for cost recovery on the Authority and the leaseholders who operate under The Order, including how this relates to consideration of the timing of cost recovery on the part of Defra and the different levels of businesses who operate under The Order.
 - The risk of a loss of aquaculture activity, and the beneficial services the sector provides, in the event that cost recovery cannot be managed in a way which minimises impact to operators and regulators.
 - Suggested considerations regarding the timescale of cost recovery, the need to avoid creating barriers to entry to this sector and whether funding could be explored to support the sector in this regard, including whether cross-organisational working could offer additional funding opportunities and sector support.

¹ [Sea Fisheries \(Shellfish\) Act 1967](#)

2.0 Outcome of Defra Engagement & Future Cost Recovery Mechanism

- Five responses were received (AIFCA, Southern IFCA, Devon & Severn IFCA, and industry representatives of shellfish aquaculture and Several Order grantees)
- Defra have confirmed arrangements for payment schedules of associated costs at approx. £35,000 per Order at 2026 rates.

3.0 Implications for IFCAs

- Where SROs are held by IFCAs, Defra expect IFCAs to recover the costs from the beneficiaries of the Order.
- An alternative route for IFCAs would be the use of Flexible Permitting Byelaws.

4.0 Implications for Southern IFCA:

Under The Poole Harbour Fishery Order 2015:

- **No change during the life of the current SRO which expires on 1st July 2035.**

Post 1st July 2035:

- If Southern IFCA continue to manage this fishery under a new SRO from 1st July 2035 then associated costs (estimated to be c.≥35k) will need to be paid to Defra.
 - Further clarification from Defra will be required regarding the role of Southern IFCA in the development, drafting and management of an SRO - as to date this work and associated costs have been incurred by the IFCA rather than Defra.
- If Southern IFCA determine to manage this fishery under a Byelaw from the 1st July 2035, then associated costs will need to be considered. In this instance this fishery would be managed under the provisions of the MaCAA 2009.

5.0 Next Steps

- The AIFCA intends to raise concerns regarding this matter with the SAGB.
- It is recommended that the preferred future route of management (SRO or Byelaw) be **considered by the Authority in conjunction with stakeholders during FY 2028-2029**, to ensure adequate planning time leading up to the expiration of the current SRO in 2035.



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Dear Pia and Sarah,

Notification of Several and Regulating Order (SRO) cost recovery and request for input into payment system design

As the grantee of The Poole Harbour Fishery Order 2015, I am writing to inform you that Defra is going to implement cost recovery for expenses incurred in relation to new applications for SROs in England.

SROs are made under [The Sea Fisheries \(Shellfish\) Act 1967](#) (the Act). [Schedule 1](#) of the Act sets out "Provisions with Respect to Making of Orders". Within this Schedule, Paragraph 8 requires the applicant to defray all expenses incurred by Defra in relation to an application for an Order:

"All expenses incurred by the appropriate Minister in relation to any application for an order under section 1 of this Act or to any order made in consequence thereof shall be defrayed by the applicants [...]"

To date, Defra has not sought to recover those expenses. However, given the challenging fiscal and budgetary environment, going forward, Defra will require applicants to comply with the statutory requirement. Defra will recover expenses associated with the review of SRO applications and, where the minister decides that an application should proceed, the preparation of a new SRO.

Based on recent experience, we estimate that the cost to applicants could be around £30,000 - £60,000, to meet the cost of the resource required to draft and manage the Order making process. However, the exact figure will vary from case to case and will depend on the nature and complexity of the Order being developed and the quality of the information provided on application. The system through which Defra intends to recover these expenses

is under development. The Act permits Defra to seek expenses on account or to request security for expenses and, in appropriate cases, Defra may seek to do so.

In the case where the Minister considers it appropriate to appoint an inspector to hear and inquire into any objections or representations (in accordance with paragraph 4 of Schedule 1 to the Act), there may be significant additional costs, which would fall solely to the applicant.

It is important to note that Several Orders are not a pre-requisite for conducting aquaculture. Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (IFCA) byelaws can also fulfil the role of Regulating Orders.

We understand that under your Several Order you sub-lease plots to individuals/businesses. If you decide to apply for a new Order, in due course, you may wish to explore whether lease fees could be used to pass the cost of Several Order development onto lease holders.

Defra is keen to implement cost recovery in a practical way. To help us do so, please provide any suggestions you have on the implementation, including the timing and frequency of invoices.

Defra is currently reviewing its guidance relating to SROs with a view to updating, improving and simplifying the online guidance¹ and application forms². The new guidance will clarify that Defra expects applicants to comply with the requirement to defray all expenses it incurs. We welcome any suggestions on how to further improve these documents.

We kindly request that you submit all of the requested information and feedback via email to SRO@defra.gov.uk by 7 February 2025.

We will consider your feedback when designing our SRO payment system. We will write to you again to share details of the payment system, and guidance updates, once these have been finalised.

If you would like to discuss the contents of this letter further, please email SRO@defra.gov.uk to organise a meeting with the aquaculture policy team.

Yours sincerely,

Rowena Bailey

Policy Advisor - Aquaculture policy team

¹ [FIS 3, Shellfisheries: Several Orders and Regulating Orders - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\), Get fishing or management rights for a shellfishery - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

² [FIS 3A \(publishing.service.gov.uk\), ukSI 19870217 en 001 \(564x888\) \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

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7th February 2025

Ms Rowena Bailey
Policy Advisor – Aquaculture Policy Team
Defra
Horizon House,
Deanery Rd,
Bristol
BS1 5TL

Dear Ms Bailey,

Re: Notification of Several and Regulating Order (SRO) cost recovery and request for input into payment system design

Thank you for the notification to Southern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (IFCA) of the implementation of cost recovery for expenses incurred in relation to new applications for SROs in England.

As the managing Authority for The Poole Harbour Fishery Order 2015 (“2015 Order”), Southern IFCA appreciates the opportunity to comment on the notification, specifically relevant to the implementation of the cost recovery process. The 2015 Order replaced The Poole Fishery Order 1985, a hybrid several/regulating Order which, prior to 2015 regulated both aquaculture and the wild shellfish fishery in Poole Harbour, however fishing and production of shellfish within the Harbour has existed over the course of history with strong links between shellfish production and the local coastal community.

The 2015 Order, valid for a period of 20 years, allows Southern IFCA to lease areas of the seabed within Poole Harbour to aquaculture operators for the purposes of shellfish production. Currently there are 12 lease beds within the extent of the 2015 Order operated by 7 companies and 1 individual, with the main species being Pacific oyster (*Magallana gigas*), edible mussel (*Mytilus edulis*), Manila clam (*Ruditapes philippinarum*) and common cockle (*Cerastoderma edule*). The 2015 Order is linked to the wild fishery for shellfish which also operates in Poole Harbour, as operators within the wild fishery provide a supply of clam and cockle species for relaying onto lease beds.

In order to provide a bit of context, on an annual basis Southern IFCA recover costs from the lease holders amounting to c.30k in total. This remuneration is directly related to the hectares leased. This cost recovery enables Southern IFCA to fulfil our duties under the 2015 Order. This amount considers not only the annual costs associated with the review of the Management Plan, but also any interim consideration of updates to leaseholder business plans which, dependent on the nature of the update, can require a review of the HRA for the issuing of leases (which in turn requires the seeking of formal advice from Natural England) to ensure that the ongoing aquaculture operations remain compatible with all relevant MPA designations (specifically in the case of Poole Harbour SPA, SSSI and Ramsar designations), in addition to the costs associated with the 5 year renewal of the lease beds which also

includes a full review of the HRA, Management Plan and Biosecurity Plan. Currently Southern IFCA employ on a fixed term basis, a Project Officer to meet the demands of the 5 year lease renewal programme.

Southern IFCA do not receive any financial support or funding from central government for the purposes of managing aquaculture under the 2015 Order. Over the last ten years the costs associated with management under the 2015 Order equate to c.250-300k. These costs have been met in full by Southern IFCA in conjunction with the lease holders.

All delivery functions associated with the 2015 Order are met by Southern IFCA, this includes, but is not limited to: the five year drafting of lease conditions, the annual review of the Management Plan, a five year review and potential interim reviews of HRA, SSSI and Ramsar site Assessments, biosecurity costs (relevant to a five year review of the biosecurity plan and any interim updates resulting from any business plan changes, annual audits with CEFAS, collation and provision of shellfish movement data and input of this into FHI Online and biosecurity inspections of leaseholders), annual engagement and formal consultation (with stakeholders, Natural England), ongoing engagement throughout the year with CEFAS FHI, and any costs associated with independent legal support. Southern IFCA also ensure compliance with the lease conditions via delivery of a compliance & enforcement function in Poole Harbour, utilising both a Fisheries Protection Vessel and drone to support this function and providing operational support for biosecurity inspections and the annual CEFAS audit. Prior to and leading up to the ratification of the 2015 Order, all work associated with the development, preparation and drafting of the 2015 Order were met by Southern IFCA.

The ability to maintain aquaculture within Poole Harbour is of utmost importance. The industry is intrinsically linked to the local community providing product for use in local hospitality businesses, supporting local business such as depuration and transportation services, providing employment and, particularly with the location of the UK's largest Pacific oyster farm within the 2015 Order, helps promote Poole as an important provider of shellfish, maintaining the historic lineage which the town holds in this regard. Aquaculture in the Harbour also provides a number of ecosystem services and benefits, such as contributing to improving water quality by the filtration action of the shellfish, providing additional habitat for utilisation by other species, providing a food source for bird species designated under the Poole Harbour Special Protection Area (SPA) and in the potential for carbon capture.

It has been recognised by Defra that aquaculture has a vital role to play in meeting the needs of consumers for a sustainable supply of seafood and there has historically been support for the aquaculture industry to be able to develop its potential to become an efficient, competitive and sustainable provider of high quality seafood¹. The regulation of shellfish aquaculture under a Several Order, particularly where that Order is then overseen by a regulatory body, such as Southern IFCA, provides a solid framework for management of the activity that enables sustainable production alongside realising the socioeconomic benefits offered by the sector. In developing the 2015 Order, Southern IFCA invested a significant amount of time to undertaking the correct assessments with relation to the Poole Harbour SPA, SSSI and

¹ 'Planning for sustainable growth in the English Aquaculture Industry' published by Defra on behalf of the England Aquaculture Plan Consultation Group (2012) - [Marine based fin fish aquaculture](#)



Ramsar Site, engaging with stakeholders both of the aquaculture sector and representing local businesses, land owners and the port authority to ensure that all proposed activity was compatible with maintaining the integrity of the protected site and would balance the needs of all Harbour users.

In considering the notification for costs associated with reviewing applications and subsequently preparation of a new Order being defrayed by Defra to the applicant it is noted that costs would vary on a case-by-case basis, part of this being dependent on the quality of information provided as part of the application. Where, as in the case of Southern IFCA, the work to produce all relevant documentation and assessments is undertaken by the IFCA in the development of an Order, so that the IFCA can be satisfied it is meeting its legal duties under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 and relevant conservation legislation, it would be beneficial if this could be taken into account when determining Defra costs, as the work required to be undertaken by an established regulatory body, which operates at arm's length to Defra in the performance of routine duties and is thus familiar with the formation and delivery of legislation, will offer great benefit in reducing the resource requirement to review such an application. Additionally, it is important to note that IFCAs must ensure that management within the inshore marine environment remains compatible with conservation objectives, as such, and with consideration of Southern IFCAs direct experience, management under the 2015 Order remains far from static. We must respond to both changes in aquaculture business models in addition to any changes introduced by Natural England, regarding conservation objectives across all relevant MPAs. Again, the costs associated with this are met by the IFCA.

One concern which Southern IFCA wish to highlight in this response is that, as a local authority funded body, the IFCA does not hold the funds to support the proposed cost recovery and would therefore need to seek additional recovery from the businesses and individuals who may wish to hold a lease under any future Order. In reference to the implementation of a cost recovery scheme, it would be suggested that it be more beneficial if any costs could be recovered following the successful ratification of an Order, so that those end users (lease holders) entering into leases under an Order can do so in full knowledge of the cost implications. The risk to Southern IFCA in proceeding with the development of a new Order, for example to replace the 2015 Order after 1st July 2035, where cost recovery would be sought before a new Order is ratified, is that the Order is either not ratified and then no leases would be available so no further cost recovery from leaseholders could be sought, or that once the Order is granted the cost recovery from the IFCA to the leaseholders is prohibitive for some businesses who then determine they are unable to take out a lease leaving the cost recovery to the IFCA.

It is important to note that cost recovery over the term of an SRO will be challenging to fix. At the point of lease bed review and reallocation (which currently sits at 5 yearly intervals), a lease holder may wish to opt out. If there are no new entrants wishing to enter into aquaculture operations, then the cost to manage a dormant lease bed would then have to be met by the IFCA. Additionally, if at the point of the review, NE update their Conservation Objectives/advice, then the recognised footprint of the lease beds may not continue to be viable. Again, the IFCA would have to pick up the costs here (if managing under a similar Order to that of the 2015 model).



It is suggested that cost recovery following the ratification of a new Order would need to be over an agreed time period rather than in a single payment. Examples could be over the course for which the Order is valid (20 years). This would allow the IFCA, for example, to engage with lease holders at the point of application to inform them that lease fees would include a certain amount to cover the cost recovery for the development of an Order which can be factored into business plans and financial forecasts. Defraying the cost over a period of time would also allow the cost involved, which is extensive, to be more likely to be achievable by all types of enterprise that currently engage in aquaculture activity from larger to small operators.

The experience of Southern IFCA under the 2015 Order is a mixture of larger operators down to individuals operating a single lease bed. Whilst the overall cost proposed would be a significant financial commitment for even the larger businesses, if required ahead of an Order being ratified, it would likely prove to be prohibitive for medium to small enterprises resulting in a loss of aquaculture activity and the services it provides and a lack of incentive for new entrants to become involved in aquaculture, which opposes the identified need to develop the aquaculture sector as a sustainable provider of seafood. As the management body for an Order, in applying any cost recovery to leaseholders, it would require consideration of how to equally share such recovery amongst all operators as, although varying in size, all operators receive a benefit from holding a lease and therefore would need to contribute to a cost recovery scheme. Careful consideration is required in the implementation of cost recovery to ensure that it does not form a barrier to the intentions of supporting this sector.

It would be beneficial if Defra were able to explore where funding may exist to support the aquaculture sector, for example through the provision of grants to help establish an Order to achieve development of the sector. The current guidance on applying for an SRO reflects appropriately on the relevant permissions and engagement which would be required to ensure no adverse impacts from resulting activities, however there is currently no guidance for applicants on how to demonstrate the benefits and services offered by proposed operations under an SRO which would provide a balanced picture in consideration of whether an SRO should be granted. More advice and support for applicants on the exploration of the benefits of aquaculture could be built into a grant scheme whereby the benefits offered support a case for financial aid in offsetting Defra cost recovery. The benefits already outlined in this letter provide some examples which are often not promoted through or considered in applications for an SRO but which would assist in demonstrating how the UK is working towards achievement of the Fisheries Objectives under the Fisheries Act 2020, such as the sustainability, ecosystem, national benefit and climate change objectives, and Good Environmental Status under The Marine Strategy Regulations 2010. The linking of the cost recovery process to grant schemes based on the achievement of these could provide an incentive for improved sustainability and best practice in aquaculture enterprises whilst maintaining the potential for all operators, regardless of size, to be able to develop and further their businesses.

Issues in the marine environment such as poor water quality already pose a significant risk to aquaculture operators who must account for the financial losses and costs associated with deteriorations in this regard, often over short time periods. Whilst it is recognised that there is a cost associated with the development of an SRO, there needs to be careful consideration of how this cost can be met without putting further financial burdens onto operators to a point

where business viability is affected. One example of cross-organisational working in this regard could be for water companies responsible for waters where aquaculture takes place working with operators and regulators, where applicable, to help provide financial support to businesses which are demonstrably assisting in helping improve water quality that could then be used to offset the cost recovery required for the establishment of an SRO and thus ensuring the continued realisation of those benefits.

Southern IFCA recognise the importance of promoting the use of SRO in aquaculture management, using Poole Harbour as an excellent case study. When considering the ecosystem benefits provided by aquaculture, which in part offset some of the challenges surrounding water quality and climate change, investment into aquaculture must remain paramount, in particular ensuring that ongoing operations and entry into these fisheries remains viable for small scale businesses. Southern IFCA welcome strategic coordination by Defra on this matter, where the value of local managers to continue to support the growth of aquaculture is recognised, and appropriate financial investment and opportunity recognises the wider benefits that well managed shellfish aquaculture fisheries provide holistically.

Southern IFCA request continued engagement in this process and notification of any outcomes regarding the proposed implementation method and updating of any guidance related to SROs. We welcome all initiatives of Defra to promote and support sustainable aquaculture that can continue to delivery social, economic, community, cultural and environmental benefits.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "PB".

Pia Bateman
Chief Executive Officer
Southern IFCA

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "S. Birchenough".

Dr Sarah Birchenough
Deputy Chief Executive Officer
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Pia Bateman
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Wednesday 1 April 2026

Sarah Birchenough
Deputy Chief Officer
Southern IFCA
sarah.birchenough@southern-ifca.gov.uk

Dear Pia and Sarah,

Update on Several and Regulating Order (SRO) cost recovery

As the grantee of the Poole Harbour Fishery Order 2015, I am writing to inform you of the outcome of the industry engagement on SRO cost recovery for new SRO applications in England and to set out the way forward.

On 12 December 2024, we notified you of Defra's decision to recover the expenses incurred by Defra during the review of new SRO applications and, where the minister decides that an application should proceed, the preparation of a new SRO. This will bring Defra in compliance with its obligation to recover expenses for SRO applications under the Sea Fisheries (Shellfish) Act 1967. We asked for your suggestions for implementing cost recovery, including the timing and frequency of invoices.

Engagement and analysis

We have analysed the five responses that we received from Inshore Fisheries Conservation Authorities (IFCAs) and industry via email and discussions. A summary of the responses can be found in Annex 1. Respondents raised concerns about the affordability of Defra's decision and its impact on the shellfish industry. They also made the following suggestions about how charges should be determined and when they should be made:

1. Cost recovery should be dependent on whether an order is granted.
2. A tiered cost recovery system should be used.
3. Costs should be recovered over an agreed time period.

Alongside this feedback, we considered the requirements of the legislation under which Defra will recover the costs (the [Sea Fisheries \(Shellfish\) Act 1967](#)), the requirements of

Treasury guidance on the responsible use of public money, [Managing Public Money](#) and Defra's current financial and resourcing situation.

Cost recovery mechanism

Having assessed all the information we concluded that Defra is unable to partially or temporarily absorb SRO expenses, so the mechanism of SRO cost recovery will be as follows:

- The applicant will be invoiced quarterly for the expenses incurred for that period.
- The applicant will have 28 days after each invoice to complete payment. In the case where payment is defaulted, work on the order application will cease until payment is made.
- The Defra policy team will provide the applicant with monthly updates on the costs incurred.
- The applicant will be able to withdraw their application at any time.

What the charges will cover

We will recover the expenses that Defra incurs while providing the order. These include, but may not be limited to, all legal expenses including for advice provision and to draft, review, and finalise the wording of the order, the expenses to create and issue invoices, and the expenses to register and lay the order in Parliament. We expect this work to cost approximately £35,000 per order, at 2026 rates, but this will vary, depending on the quality of the application and the complexity of the order.

Where SROs are held by IFCA's, we expect IFCA's to recover the costs from the ultimate beneficiaries of the order. Where Several Orders are granted to private companies they will need to fund the development of their order.

The requirements remain unchanged for applicants to fund the cost of environmental assessments, advertisements, and an inquiry, if one is required.

How we're mitigating industry's concerns

We note that IFCA's and the shellfish industry place a great deal of value on SROs. This charging scheme will allow Defra to continue to accept new SRO applications.

As an alternative to Regulating Orders, IFCA's can use flexible permitting byelaws under the [Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009](#) to regulate shellfisheries. Such byelaws are tertiary, not secondary, legislation so do not need to be drafted by Defra lawyers and are not laid in parliament.

An SRO is made in-line with the process set out in Schedule 1 of the Sea Fisheries (Shellfish) Act 1967, which includes public consultation and laying in the Houses of Parliament, for MPs and Lords to consider. An SRO being granted is subject to the outcome of the consultation, the inquiry (if an inquiry is required) and the Parliamentary process. Defra seeks to ensure that applicants have all the information necessary to make a strong

application that is likely to succeed. Noting this we have updated the SRO guidance on the GOV.UK website to clarify the process and set out what is required of the applicant at each stage: [Shellfisheries: get exclusive fishing or management rights - GOV.UK](#).

Next steps

Defra will now implement cost recovery for all SRO applications received.

If you would like to discuss the contents of this letter further, please email SRO@defra.gov.uk to organise a meeting with the aquaculture policy team.

Yours sincerely,

Ruth Allin
Policy Team Leader – Aquaculture policy team

Annex 1: Summary of responses

Number of responses

Five responses were received, via email and discussions.

The type of respondents include:

- Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities (IFCAs)
- Industry representatives of shellfish aquaculture
- Several Order grantees

All responses related to Several Orders (SOs). No responses were received specifically in relation to Regulating Orders (ROs).

Overall approach

The consultation letter outlined the reasons for implementing a charging regime for SOs and ROs. It said:

“SROs are made under The Sea Fisheries (Shellfish) Act 1967 (the Act). Schedule 1 of the Act sets out “Provisions with Respect to Making of Orders”. Within this Schedule, Paragraph 8 requires the applicant to defray all expenses incurred by Defra in relation to an application for an order:

“All expenses incurred by the appropriate Minister in relation to any application for an order under section 1 of this Act or to any order made in consequence thereof shall be defrayed by the applicants [...]”

To date, Defra has not sought to recover those expenses. However, given the challenging fiscal and budgetary environment, going forward, Defra will require applicants to comply with the statutory requirement. Defra will recover expenses associated with the review of SRO applications and, where the minister decides that an application should proceed, the preparation of a new SRO.”

The consultation letter asked respondents to **please provide any suggestions you have on the implementation of SRO charging, including the timing and frequency of invoices.**

Suggestions on the design of the charging framework

Several suggestions were provided by the respondents, as follows.

1. Cost recovery should be dependent on whether an order is granted.

Costs should either:

- Only be recovered if an order is granted; or
- Be shared between Defra and the applicant until the order is granted.

2. A tiered cost recovery system should be used.

The cost recovery system could be tiered to take into account the ability of the applicant to pay for the order and, where applicable, the ability of the applicant to recover the costs associated with the order from leaseholders. The system could also consider the costs incurred by the applicant in preparing an application, when determining the costs to be recovered.

3. Costs should be recovered over an agreed time period.

Agree a clear timescale over which costs will be recovered, rather than charging as costs are incurred. Respondents suggested this timescale should be as long as possible.

Concerns raised by respondents

Respondents also raised concerns about the introduction of a charging regime for SROs.

Most set out concerns about the impact on industry growth and parity with wild capture fisheries. The most common themes were:

1. Concerns that charging would disproportionately affect small and medium sized businesses and deter new entrants to the industry, restricting industry growth.
2. Concerns of differential treatment between shellfish aquaculture and wild capture fisheries, on the basis of costs.
3. Concerns that charges will make shellfish aquaculture unviable for businesses and IFCAs. For the latter, due to concerns that costs would be un-recoverable if the order is not granted
4. Concerns that there are no equivalent protections to SOs that can be relied upon and that operating without a SO increases the risks involved in shellfish aquaculture, including the impact of shellfish theft.

The following views were shared in smaller numbers:

5. Concerns by IFCAs about their ability to ensure cost recovery from leaseholders, over the lifetime of a RO.
6. That a potential reduction in shellfish aquaculture would mean the loss of important ecosystem services and an environmentally positive protein.
7. Concerns that stolen shellfish would be put on the market without due consideration of shellfish hygiene requirements.
8. Concerns that charging is a new burden on IFCAs under the New Burdens Doctrine.

One respondent also made a wider suggestion:

9. Defra should explore the powers held by the minister to make grants and loans for the restoration of fisheries, enabling the applicant to offset the cost of the SRO charges.

**Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Fishery Monitoring and Control Plan
Paper For Information**

Report by IFCO C. Mullen

A. Purpose

To provide Members with the outputs of the On-Site Monitoring Programme under the Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Fishery Monitoring and Control Plan in relation to Threshold Trigger Levels for Poole Harbour Bivalve Survey Data (2026) and Landings Data (2025/26).

B. Recommendation

1. That Members note the report.

C. Annexes

- **Annex 1** – Poole Harbour Dredge Permit CPUE and LPUE data

1.0 Introduction

- The Poole Harbour Dredge Permit (PHDP) fishery is managed under the Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Byelaw. The Byelaw regulates the use of the pump-scoop dredge through a permitting system, with up to 45 permits issued each year.
- The **PHDP Fishery Monitoring and Control Plan (M&CP)** is a comprehensive framework for monitoring feedback within the fishery¹, ensuring that the Authority utilises the best available evidence in understanding the operation of the fishery in relation to target stocks for Manila clam, environmental designations and in any determinations of changes to management.
- The M&CP considers an On-Site Monitoring Programme, an In-Season Monitoring Programme, and a SPA monitoring programme. The On-Site Monitoring Programme is linked to Control Mechanisms activated by Threshold Trigger levels (TTLs) for two Monitoring Variables: Poole Harbour Bivalve Survey Data and Landings Data from monthly catch returns submitted by Permit Holders. The M&CP was first introduced ahead of the 2025/26 fishing season and considers catch data for the previous fishing season and the current year's survey data in determining stock levels relevant to the control mechanism TTLs.
- In the case that a Monitoring Variable TTL is triggered, information is collated relating to any circumstances which may have led to a TTL being reached and provided to the TAC at the annual May TAC meeting for a decision on the requirement for any additional management to support a sustainable fishery.

2.0 Key Considerations

Monitoring Variable: Landings Data

- Landings data from monthly catch returns submitted by Permit Holders for the 2025/26 season (25th May to 23rd Dec 2025) was analysed to determine **an annual average of Manila clam Landings per Unit Effort (LPUE)**.
- The annual average LPUE value for the 2025/26 season was **83.52 kg/day**, which is above the **LPUE TTL of 78.25kg/day** (Annex 1 – Figure 1). The **LPUE TTL has not been reached**.
- The 2025/26 season average LPUE is below the current lowest rolling 5-year average within the period of 2016-2023 (96.3kg/day) by 12.78kg/day (13.27% decrease), although average LPUE has shown a 15.34% increase since the previous fishing season (72.41kg/day in 2024).
- Reviewing the data, the pattern of monthly catch return data showed that while average catch rates for kg/day, as reported to Permit Holders during the season, were lower each month than in the period 2020-2023, the 2025/26 fishing season showed an increase in kg/day in each month compared to the previous year's fishing season (2024/25). Catch rates (kg/day) for each month

¹ Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Fishery Monitoring and Control Plan 2025

also showed consistency and in some cases an increase compared with catch rates from the 2016-2019 period (Annex 2 – Figure 2).

- Statistical analysis shows that the average monthly LPUE (kg/day) in 2025 was significantly lower than that seen in 2020, 2021 and 2023 ($p < 0.05$), although similar to all other years from 2016 to present ($p > 0.05$).

Monitoring Variable: Poole Harbour Bivalve Survey

- The annual Poole Harbour Bivalve Survey was carried out over three days between 17th - 22th April 2026. First, introduced in 2025, survey dates in April are 2 weeks later than surveys undertaken in 2015-2024, to ensure that any incidence of spring mortality could be captured in survey data.
- Data from the survey was used to determine **an annual average of Manila clam Catch Per Unit Effort (CPUE)**.
- The annual average CPUE value for the 2026 survey was **43.79 kg/m of dredge/hr** which is above the **CPUE TTL of 34.60 kg/m of dredge/hr** (Annex 2 – Figure 3). The **CPUE TTL has not been reached**.
- The annual average CPUE value for the 2026 survey is below the current lowest rolling 5-year average for the period 2016-2024 (53.09kg/m of dredge/hr) by 9.3kg/m of dredge/hr (17.52% decrease). The 2026 annual CPUE was 0.31kg/m of dredge/hr (0.7%) higher than the recorded annual average for the previous year's survey (43.48kg/m of dredge/hr in 2025).
- Reviewing the data there was no statistical difference ($p > 0.05$) between the survey data for 2026 and any other year surveyed (2016-2025²) (Annex 2 - Figure 4). In addition, the survey data for 2026 showed no statistical difference between years when comparing at the level of individual Catch Zones (Annex 2 - Figures 5 & 6).

Control Mechanism Outcome

- Based on the data obtained under the two Monitoring Variables:
 - The **LPUE TTL** was not reached.
 - The **CPUE TTL** was not reached.

This indicates that the stock of Manila clam in Poole Harbour at the pre-season point has not reached a level to initiate a control mechanism. **Based on analysis of the data for the LPUE TTL and CPUE TTL, it is recommended that no additional management is required to support a sustainable fishery for the 2026/27 season.**

The M&CP allows Southern IFCA to take a proactive approach to in-season monitoring as well as annual monitoring and provides for a monthly understanding of how catch rates may be varying and how they compare to previous seasons. Alongside this, the introduction of mid-season CPUE monitoring through an observer program in the 2025 fishing season provides further understanding as to any stock changes following the annual survey point.

3.0 Next Steps

- Permits for 2026/27 will be issued to successful applicants ahead of the start of the season on 25th May 2026. The season will run until 23rd December 2026.
- The In-Season Monitoring Programme under the M&CP will be carried out during the 2026/27 season, comprising of monthly analysis of LPUE data and the mid-season stock observer programme.
- A review of permit conditions, fees and limitations on number of permits will take place during the 2026-27 year with any outcomes delivered ahead of the 2027/28 fishing season. This will include a review of Monitoring Variables under the M&CP, the inclusion of cockle as a monitored species and any required updates to the M&CP to ensure Trigger Threshold Levels continue to reflect robust, evidence from the fishery that reflects annual changes.

² No survey was carried out in 2020 due to the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Fishery Monitoring and Control Plan - On-Site Monitoring Programme Data

This annex presents data related to the two Monitoring Variables under the On-Site Monitoring Programme in the Poole Harbour Dredge Fishery Monitoring and Control Plan¹: Landings Data from monthly catch returns submitted by Permit Holders and Poole Harbour Bivalve Survey Data which has informed a determination of whether Threshold Trigger Levels (TTLs) have been reached during the 2025 fishing season and 2026 survey. This document should be read in conjunction with the information provided in the Executive Summary Marked E.

Monitoring Variable: Landings Data

This Monitoring Variable is based on data from monthly catch returns submitted by Permit Holders, the most recent data set is for 2025 (25th May to 23rd December). Data is used to determine Landings Per Unit Effort as kg/day = LPUE TTL.

The annual average LPUE value for the 2025 fishing season was **83.52kg/day**, above the LPUE TTL of **78.25kg/day** (Figure 1), the **LPUE TTL has not been reached**.

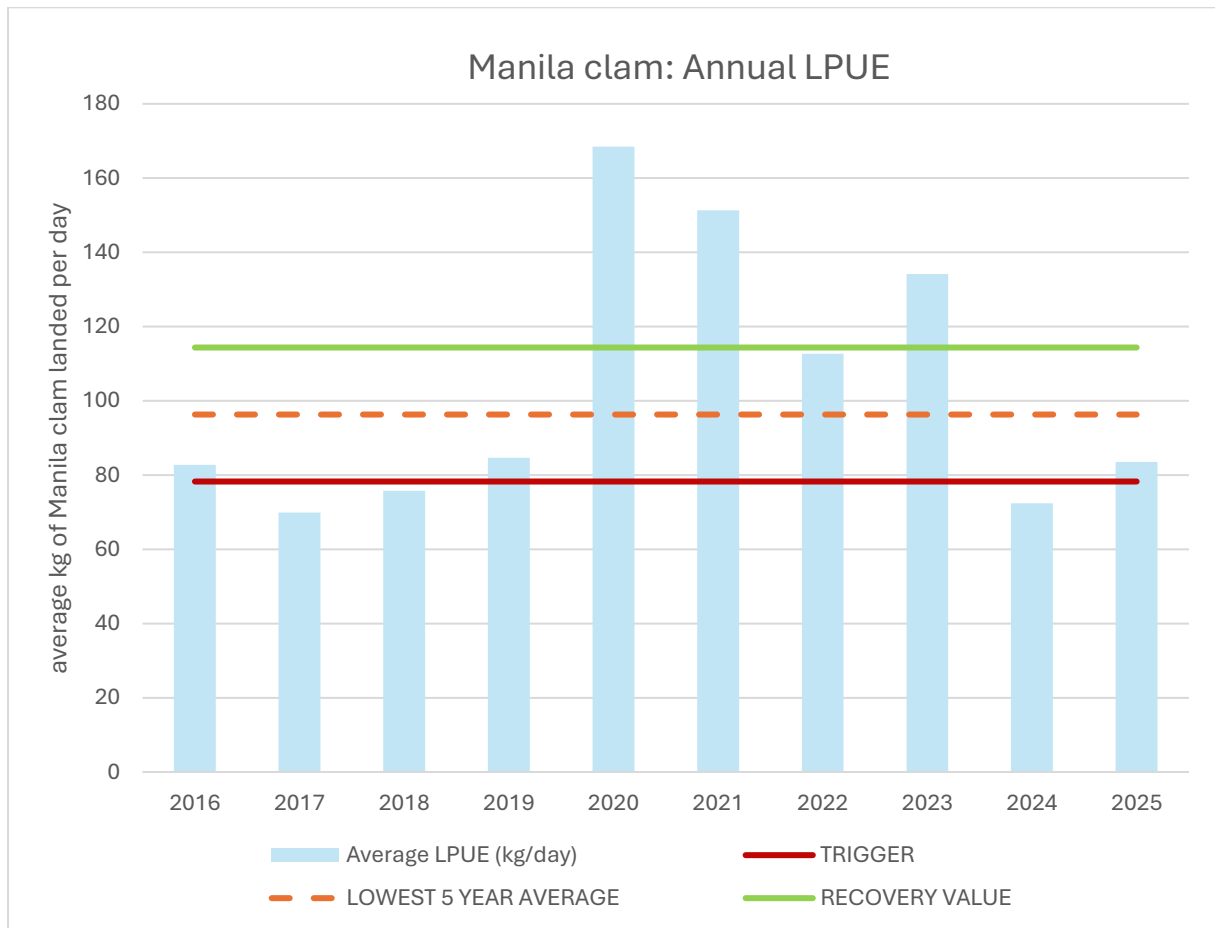


Figure 1: Graph shows the average LPUE (kg/day) from the 2016 to 2025 fishing seasons (blue bars), the LPUE TTL (red line), the LPUE RT (green line) and the lowest five-year rolling average used to calculate the TTL and RT values (orange dashed line).

¹ [Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Fishery Monitoring and Control Plan 2025](#)

Monthly analysis

Under the In-Season Monitoring Programme of the Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Fishery Monitoring and Control Plan, monthly analysis of Manila clam catch data was undertaken using catch return data supplied by Permit Holders. Landings per unit effort (LPUE), expressed as kilograms of clams landed per day (kg/day) for the period 2016–2025, are presented for each month of the season in Figure 2 below.

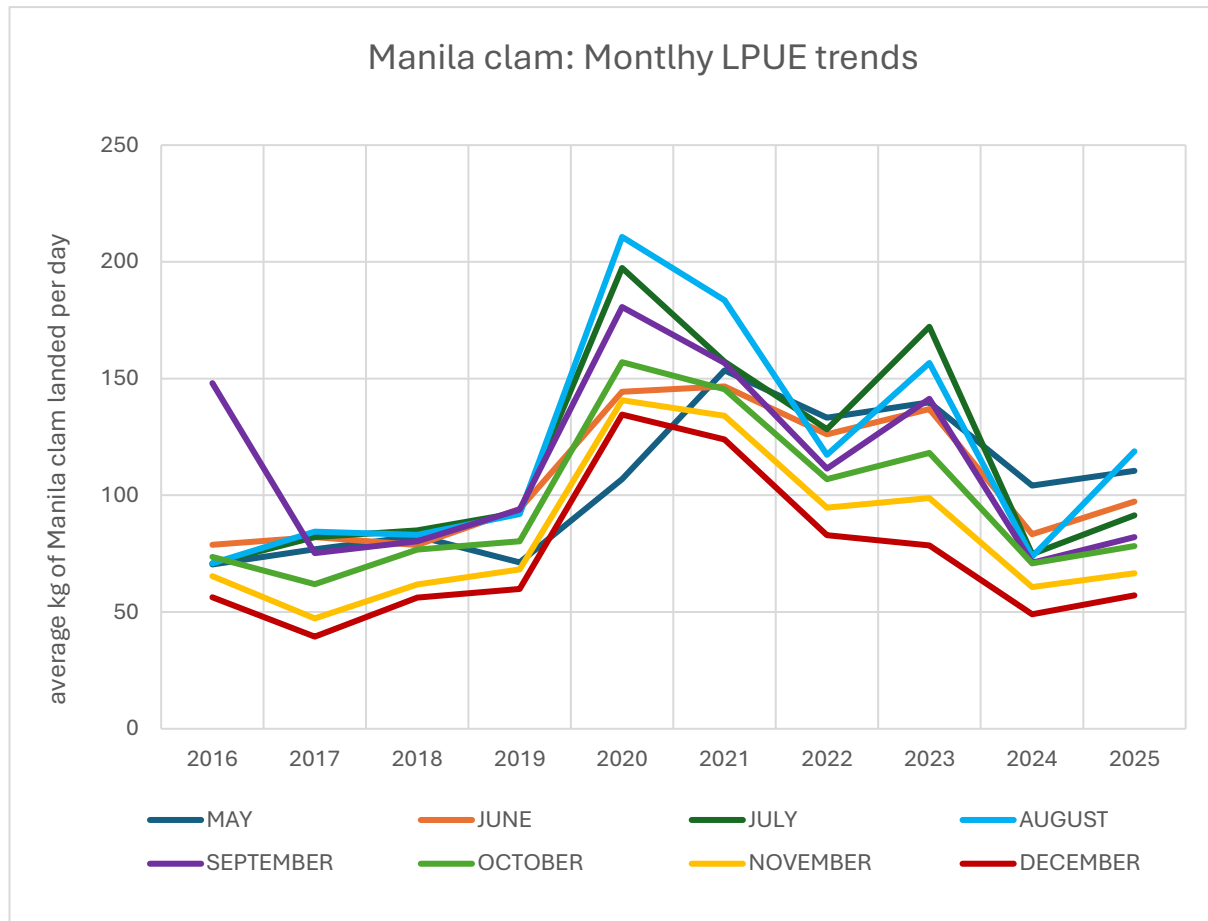


Figure 2: Average kg of Manila clam per day for the months of May-December for 2016-2025 based on data supplied by Permit Holders in the PHDP fishery through monthly catch return submissions. Note that May data covers from the 25th, while December data runs to the 23rd, reflecting the fishery's annual opening and closing dates.

Monitoring Variable: Poole Harbour Bivalve Survey Data

This Monitoring Variable is based on data from the annual Poole Harbour Bivalve Survey, the most recent data is from the 2026 survey (17th – 22nd April 2026). Data is used to determine Catch Per Unit Effort as kg/m of dredge/hr.

The annual average CPUE value for the 2026 survey was **43.79 kg/m of dredge/hr** which is above the CPUE TTL of **34.60 kg/m of dredge/hr** (Figure 3). The **CPUE TTL has not been reached.**

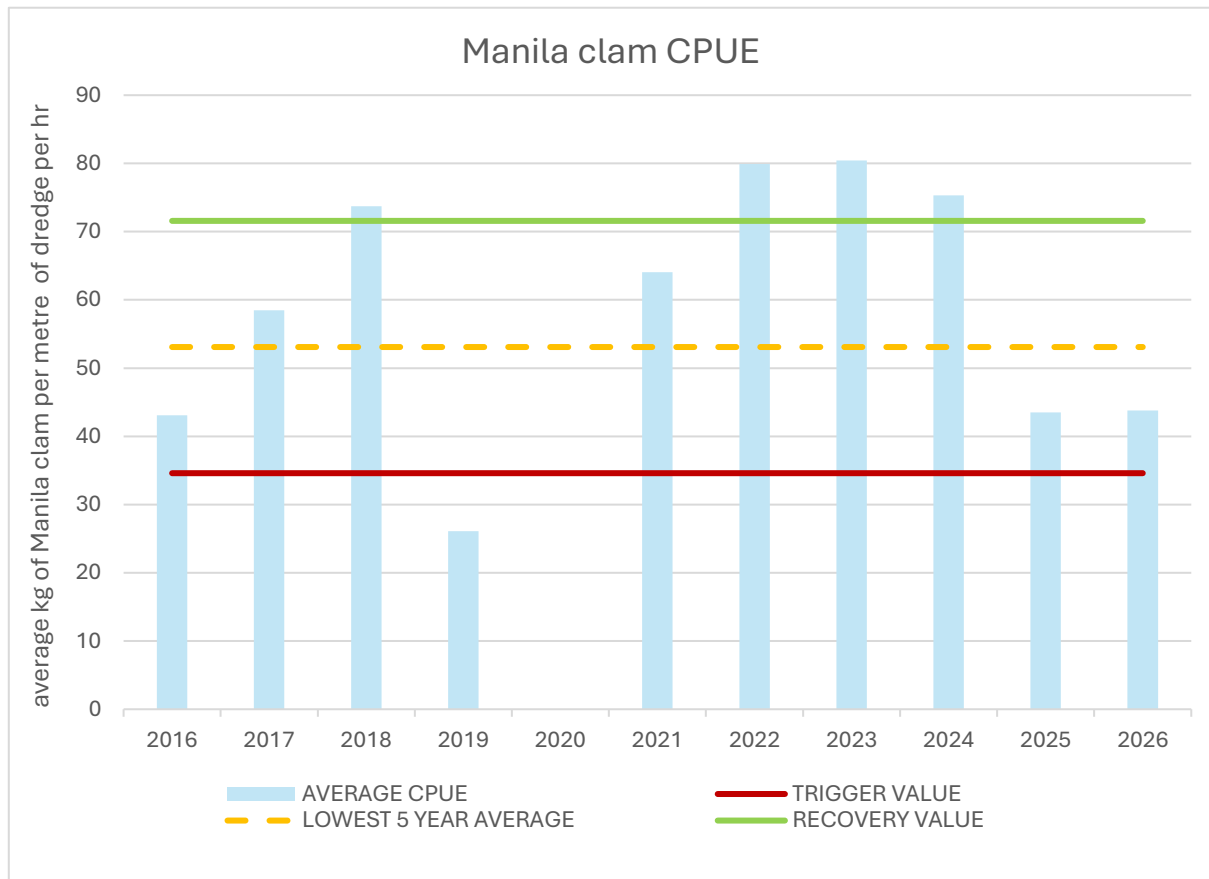


Figure 3: Graph shows the average CPUE (kg/m of dredge/hr) (n=27 survey sites) for Manila Clam species from 2016-2026 surveys (blue bars), the CPUE TTL (red line), the CPUE RT (green line) and the lowest five-year rolling average used to calculate the TTL and RT values (orange dashed line). Note there is no survey data for 2020 due to the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Statistical analysis of total CPUE by year

To assess how the survey compares year on year, a Kruskal-Wallis and Dunns Test post-hoc test were used to identify any statistical significance for Manila clam CPUE across Poole Harbour as a whole between survey years to date (note there is no survey data for 2020 due to the Covid-19 Pandemic). **There were no statistical differences between the 2026 data and any other survey year (Figure 4).** Significant differences were found between other survey years and are indicated in Figure 4.

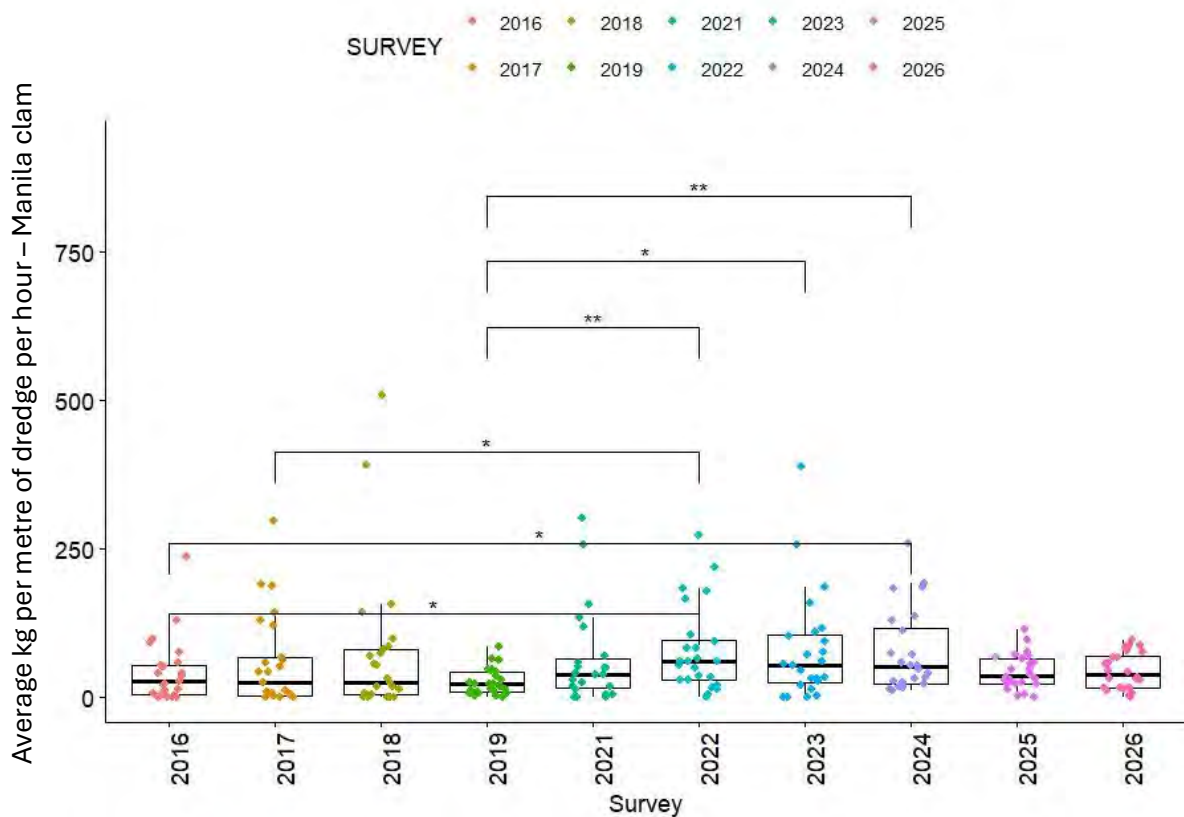


Figure 4: Box and whisker plots of the Poole Harbour Bivalve Survey data for the years 2016 to 2026. Statistical differences ($P < 0.05$) between years are shown by the brackets above using a Dunn's Test with a 'holm' adjustment and are as follows: 2016 and 2022 $p = 0.0171$ (*), 2016 and 2024 $p = 0.0327$ (*), 2017 and 2022 $p = 0.0373$ (*), 2019 and 2024 $p = 0.00519$ (**), 2019 and 2023 $p = 0.0133$ (*) and 2019 and 2022 $p = 0.00234$ (**). Note there is no survey data for 2020 due to the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Statistical analysis of total CPUE by zone

To assess how the survey compares year on year at a finer spatial scale, a Kruskal-Wallis test was used to identify any statistical significance between data grouped by catch zones each year (1-11 are accessible by the fishery, Holes Bay [HB] is a permanent prohibited area [Figure 6]). **There were no statistical differences between years for any catch zone ($p>0.05$)**

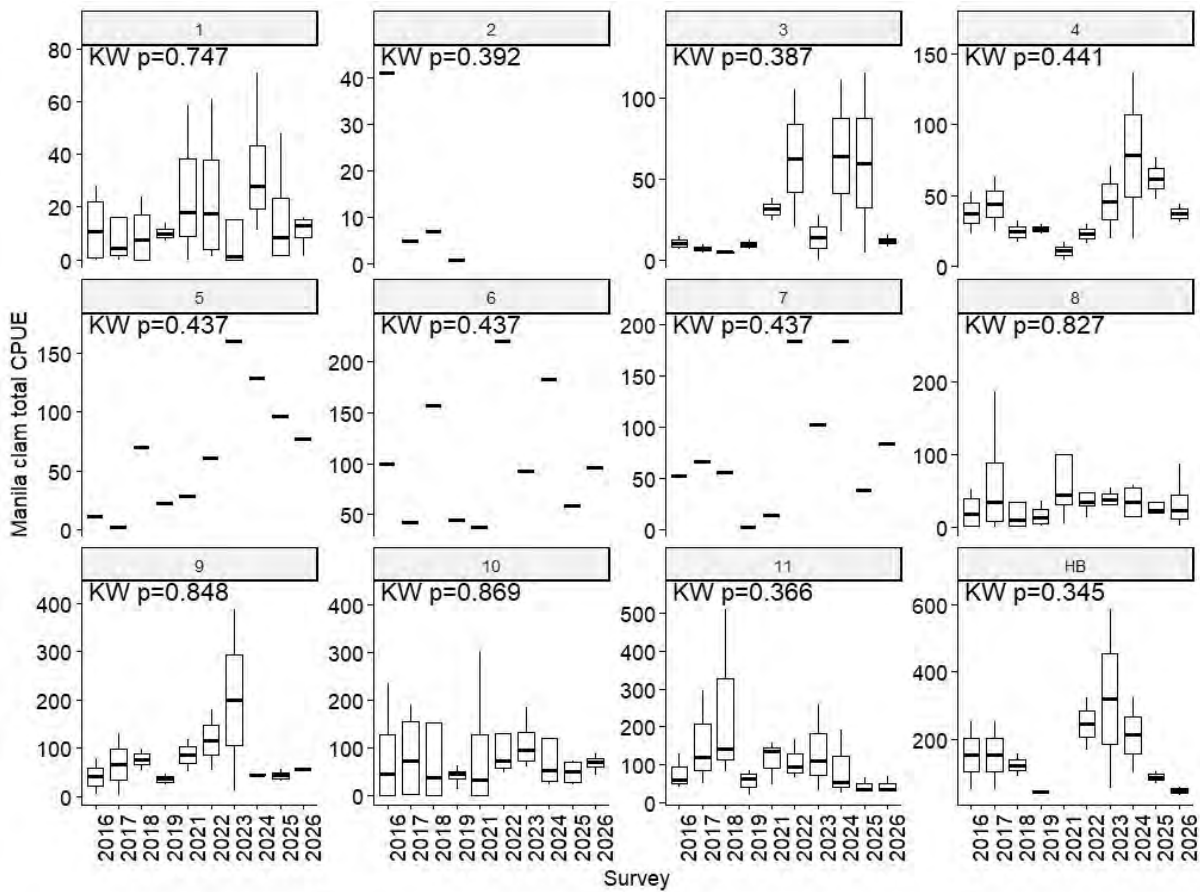


Figure 5: Box and whisker plots of the 12 Catch Zones (1-11 are accessible by the fishery, Holes Bay [HB] is a permanent prohibited area), showing CPUE data (kg/m of dredge/hr) of Manila clam for the years 2016 to 2026. There were no statistically significant differences detected between data from 2026 and any other survey year for any Catch Zone. Note there is no survey data for 2020 due to the Covid-19 Pandemic.

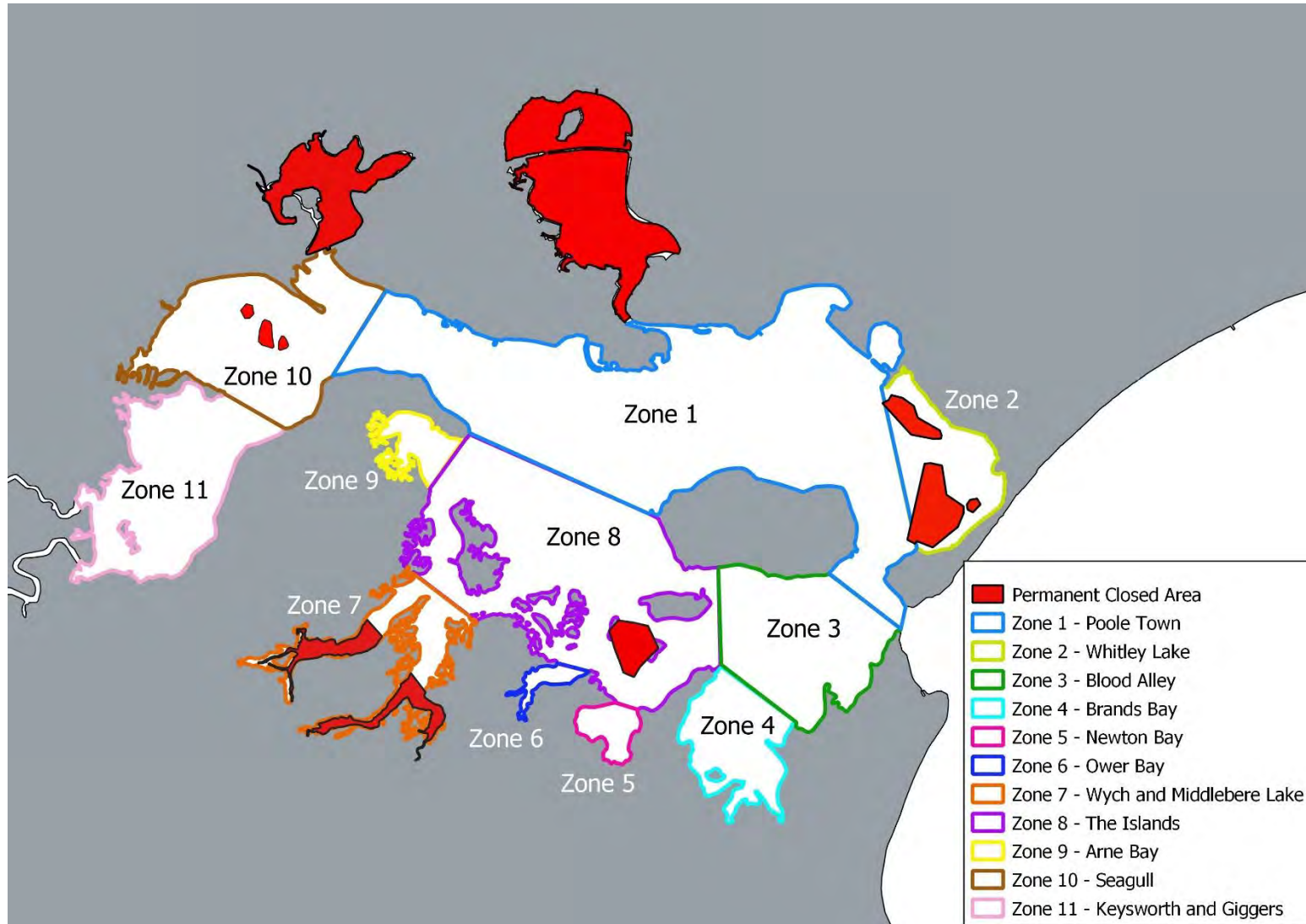


Figure 6: Catch Zones for Poole Harbour. Permit Holders are required to report the Catch Zone within which fishing took place on monthly catch return forms, and data from the annual Poole Harbour Bivalve Survey is grouped by Catch Zones for spatial analysis.

**Fisheries Management Plans Updates
Paper For Information**

Report by PO Wright

A. Purpose

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

B. Annexes

- **Annex 1:** Southern IFCA Response to Scottish Led Demersal FMPs Consultation

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 (*)	Dec 2025	Intended 2026
Implementation:	2024 - ongoing	2025 - ongoing	Intended 2026

(*) Mixed Flatfish FMP published in October 2024

2.0 Summary of Key Updates

Tranche 1 and Tranche 2 FMPs

• **Bass FMP**

- The Bass Management Group (BMG) met in February, the following summarises the main points of relevance to the IFCA from the meeting notes:
 - Meetings between Marine Management Organisation (MMO) and Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) on cross-warranting are scheduled; MMO and Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (IFCA) will engage on enforcement linked to dual-hatting.
 - The AIFCA member on the group is working to bring together relevant IFCA bylaws relevant to bass to support consistent management across IFCA districts. This stands as a short-term measure of the Bass FMP.
 - Members noted challenges for small vessels, the importance of scientific netting and gear trials, funding considerations, the need for better discard reporting and the importance of reporting findings to industry to build trust.

- There was strong stakeholder interest in understanding compliance levels across sectors. Views were raised on future research and the development of easier-to-enforce measures.
 - Work on both closed areas and spatial management is ongoing.
 - Members highlighted the need to revisit the earlier Cefas Bass Nursery Area review and understand its recommendations.
 - Members were asked to promote the recreational handling survey; Defra are to progress commercial handling guidance alongside IFCA.
- **Whelk and NQS FMP**
 - Whelk and cuttlefish informal coastal drop-in sessions were held, in the District Officers attended the four events held in Lyme Regis, Weymouth, Poole and Portsmouth. For the Whelk FMP, the MMO were focusing on stakeholder input to the potential introduction of a whelk permit scheme and insights into pot number reporting. For Cuttlefish, under the NQS FMP, the MMO were looking for insight into stakeholder thoughts on the Action Plan and how current actions are progressing, the results of the market sampling project and how the voluntary code of practice is working.

Tranche 3 FMPs

- There is no update on the 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 public consultation for the Tranche 4 FMPs opened on 11th January and closes on 5th May 2026.
- **Wrasses Complex**
 - The goals and actions of this FMP are related to increasing or maintaining stocks, furthering our understanding of the fishery, identifying ecosystem based management approaches and realising the social and economic benefits of wrasse.
- **Seabream**
 - The goals and actions of this FMP are related to increasing or maintaining stocks, furthering our understanding of the fishery, identifying ecosystem based management approaches and realising the social and economic benefits of seabream.
- **Celtic Sea and Western Channel Demersal**
 - The goals and actions of this FMP are related to the multi-year recovery of gadoid species, harvesting the stocks sustainably and maintaining biomass above MSY of flatfish and anglerfish, harvesting nephrops and elasmobranchs sustainably and managing bycatch, building an evidence base for red seabream, understanding current management and looking to join up and align management for FMP species, building ecosystem based management, supporting fisheries adaption and resilience while reducing the contribution and impacts of climate change.
- **Celtic Sea and Western Channel Pelagic**
 - The goals and actions of this FMP are related to harvest stocks sustainable maintaining or increasing stock levels, improving the evidence base for all stocks, building ecosystem based management while facilitating a collaborative and adaptive management approach with fair, effective and transparent decision making for sustainable and resilient fisheries, understand and reduce the impacts of the fisheries, reduce the impact of climate change by the fisheries and support them in adapting to climate change, improve the understanding of the economic, social and cultural benefits of the fisheries.
- **Southern IFCA are developing consultation responses for all four T4 FMPs. Due to the closing date of the consultation, these responses, once finalised, will be provided to Members after the publication of this agenda.**
- As part of the consultation, Southern IFCA have attended a number of online meetings and consultation events including a Defra led webinar for IFCAs and the MMO, a Working Group meeting for the Seabream

and Wrasses Complex FMPs, online consultation events for the CSWC Pelagic and Demersal FMPs and two online consultation events for the Wrasses Complex and Seabream FMPs.

- Two Member Workshops were held on 23rd and 26th March to provide TAC Members with summaries of each of the T4 FMPs, covering the goals and main actions, focusing on actions that would have direct relevance to the District's fisheries and/or the work of Southern IFCA. Feedback from Members at these two sessions has been considered in the development of the consultation responses.

Scottish lead demersal FMPs

- The public consultation for the Scottish led demersal FMPs concluded on the 11th March 2026.
- Three of these FMPs are relevant to the District:
 - **Northern Shelf Cod FMP** – covering ICES Area 7d which includes the eastern part of the District.
 - **Northern Shelf Hake FMP** – covering ICES Areas 7d-7h which includes the whole of the District.
 - **North Sea and Eastern Channel Whiting FMP** – covering ICES Area 7d which includes the eastern part of the District.
- Southern IFCA submitted a formal response to the consultation which covered all three relevant FMPs, a copy of this response is provided as **Annex 1** to this report.

Scottish lead pelagic FMPs

- There are also three relevant Scottish led pelagic FMPs currently in development which are relevant to the Southern IFCA District.
 - **Northern Shelf Mackerel FMP** - covering ICES Area 2a, 4, 5b, 6, 7a, 7d-7h, 7j and UK waters of 12b – ICES Areas 7d & 7e cover the whole of the District.
 - **North Sea Herring FMP** – covering ICES Area 4 and 7d which includes the eastern part of the District.
 - **Northern Shelf Blue Whiting FMP** – covering ICES Area 2a, 4, 5b, 6, 7a, 7d-7h, 7j and UK waters of 12b - ICES Areas 7d & 7e cover the whole of the District.
- Two pre-consultation workshop have been run to date, one for industry and one for eNGOs. Southern IFCA attended the online industry workshop where an overview of the FMPs and timelines were provided. Public consultation is timetabled for the summer with the aim to publish the plans by the end of the year.

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 \(southern-ifca.gov.uk\)](https://www.southern-ifca.gov.uk/fisheries-management-plans).

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6th March 2026

FMPs Team
Scottish Government Victoria Quay
Area 1B North
The Shore
Edinburgh
EH6 6QQ

Dear Fisheries Management Plans Team,

RE: Southern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority consultation response to the consultation on the proposed Joint UK Fisheries Management Plans for Demersal Fish Stocks

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the consultation on the proposed Joint UK Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs) for Demersal Fish Stocks. The Southern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (IFCA) have identified that three of the proposed FMPs have an overlap with part or all of our District waters, these are:

- **Northern Shelf Cod FMP** – covering ICES Area 7d which includes the eastern part of the Southern IFCA District
- **Northern Shelf Hake FMP** – covering ICES Areas 7d-7h which includes the whole of the Southern IFCA District
- **North Sea and Eastern Channel Whiting FMP** – covering ICES Area 7d which includes the eastern part of the Southern IFCA District

Southern IFCA District Application

The species cod and whiting are subject to fishing activity within the Southern IFCA District (“the District”) by both the commercial and recreational fishing sectors at low levels. Fishing for hake within the District is more limited and Southern IFCA currently do not know of any hake landings for District ports, however data is not collected specifically on this fish (or for cod and whiting) therefore landings into relevant ports from commercial fisheries would be best obtained from landings data held by the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) for both >10m and <10m fishing vessels.

Considering relevant fishing gear types, for cod and whiting, these would be commercial fishing using static or drift nets and trawls, and for the recreational sector rod & line, with the potential for limited commercial activity also using this gear type.

The number of charter vessels and private recreational sea anglers operating in the District cannot be quantified, however there are significant ports for charter vessels including Weymouth, Swanage, Poole, Christchurch, Southampton, Portsmouth and ports on the Isle of Wight.

Southern IFCA Management

Under the Southern IFCA **Minimum Conservation Reference Size (MCRS) Byelaw**¹, the removal from a fishery, retention on board, transshipping or landing of cod and whiting under the national MCRS (350mm and 270mm respectively) is applied to any method of capture other than under the authority of a fishing vessel licence issued by the MMO or other devolved UK fishery administration. This regulation therefore applies the MCRS for those species to the recreational sector. The Southern IFCA also has powers to enforce the MCRS for these species for commercial fishers under Regulation (EU)

¹ [SIFCA-MCRS-Byelaw.pdf](#)

2019/1241 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on the conservation of fisheries resources and the protection of marine ecosystems through technical measures.

Southern IFCA also has other measures in place which would apply to the gear types that may potentially fish for cod and whiting in the District:

- **Bottom Towed Fishing Gear (BTFG) Byelaw 2023²** – creates prohibition areas for all forms of BTFG
- **Net Fishing Byelaw³** – creates net prohibition, restriction and permit areas for net fishing within harbours and estuaries
- **Vessels Used in Fishing Byelaw 2012⁴** – limits the overall length of commercial vessels within the District to 12m

Response Points

Southern IFCA would like to raise the following response points as part of this consultation. Having reviewed the three relevant FMPs to the Southern IFCA District, it is identified that the Policies and associated actions are similar for all three FMPs, these comments have been provided below which are applicable to all three FMPs.

- Southern IFCA is supportive of the general approach across the Policies for all three FMPs for sustainable harvesting and the use of best available scientific evidence to support management decisions for sustainable fisheries. In addition, it is welcomed that, through the range of Policies, consideration is given to sustainable fisheries, the marine environment and socio-economic and cultural benefits of fisheries, looking at all of these as important factors in informing appropriate management.
- Reference to the need to consider mixed fishery interactions is welcomed, as these species will most often not be targeted in isolation but will be part of mixed catches or fishing trips targeting multiple species. For the commercial inshore sector in particular, it is key that fishers are able to access multiple fisheries to allow for diversification, both on a seasonal basis and in response to changes in fisheries over time. The implementation of management to account for mixed fisheries will need to consider how management in relation to one particular gear type may impact fishers targeting both the relevant FMP species and other species to prevent disproportionate impacts. This consideration is also required for charter and recreational anglers who will often target multiple species during a season or single fishing trip.
- At present, there is a lack of clarity in the FMPs as to how the identified policies might be delivered outside of Scottish waters, including any management associated with the delivery of those policies. The advice from Natural England and JNCC is noted in relation to MPAs, in that no additional action is suggested for the FMPs within English MPA site boundaries due to relevant assessments and resulting management being implemented by IFCA's or the MMO. However, it would be beneficial to understand how the implementation of the FMP may be delivered in English waters outside of MPAs, noting that IFCA's are currently not referenced with other 'fisheries enforcement authorities' which makes reference to the Marine Directorate of the Scottish Government and the Marine Management Organisation for England. IFCA's will

² [BTFG-Byelaw-2023-signed.pdf](#)

³ [Southern-IFCA-Net-Fishing-Byelaw.pdf](#)

⁴ [Vessel-Used-In-Fishing-Byelaw.pdf](#)

also carry out enforcement that is intelligence-led and risk-based for their respective Districts, enforcing relevant legislation, utilising a range of assets to support this process. There are also a number of ongoing Scottish programmes referenced, for example in relation to discards under the Future Catching Policy programme of work, or the Good Food Nation Plan, but no reference to any similar programmes or approaches within English waters and how the FMP may integrate with these. For example, Policies in each of the three FMPs reference, as a short term action, under the delivery of wider sustainable management by minimising impact on the marine ecosystem the introduction of additional voluntary and mandatory bycatch avoidance measures where needed. However, reference is only made to how this would be taken forward in Scotland. It would be helpful if further clarity on this point could be provided within each FMP and more detail of potential mechanisms for delivery within English waters.

- The above point is also relevant to evidence gathering, for example reference is made within each of the three FMPs, under the Policies to deliver wider sustainable management by minimising impact on the marine ecosystem, to a medium to long term action to continue to collect data through the Scottish Demersal Observer Programme to improve understanding of risk and frequency of sensitive species interactions, and the effectiveness of existing management measures. It would be beneficial to understand how data collection for these species may be achieved in English waters and the relevant programmes that could contribute data to informing these FMPs.
- With regard to using the best available scientific evidence to support management decisions, the reference to the use of REM is noted under the medium to long term actions for the three FMPs and under the Policies for discards with the proposed development of a roadmap for the roll out of REM in priority fisheries around the UK. Southern IFCA are currently delivering a REM Project within the District and are also part of the National REM and AI Strategy which sets out a national pathway for integration REM and AI technologies across England's inshore fleet to help fill data gaps and strengthen the delivery of FMPs and the Joint Fisheries Statement. A copy of the National Strategy can be accessed online here - [IFCA REM and AI Strategy](#).
- When considering the gathering and use of evidence on economic aspects of the fisheries to ensure management decisions are informed by best available evidence, detailed as a short term action for all three FMPs under the Policies to support fishing businesses to deliver socio-economic and cultural benefits for communities, it will be important to ensure that this is a process for gathering this data from all relevant fisheries across the entire geographic scope of the FMP and from all sectors, including both the inshore and offshore commercial sectors, recreational sector and the charter vessel sector. This will ensure that the best available evidence on socio-economics accounts for the variations in potential impacts and the scale of those impacts from different management measures on different sectors.
- Regarding timescales for delivery, currently medium to long term actions and standalone long term actions are given the same timescale of 3-5 years. It would be beneficial to understand the separation between these two classifications of timescale.



Defra Led FMPs

The current consultation on Defra Led FMPs includes the Celtic Seas and Western Channel Demersal FMP, applicable to English and Welsh waters within ICES Areas 7e-h. This FMP includes cod and whiting as named species. It would be beneficial if it could be identified where common policies, actions and evidence gathering objectives exist across the relevant Scottish Led FMPs and this Defra Led FMP. As previously outlined, within inshore fisheries the need for diversification is very important to the success of business and individual operators and in allowing fishers to operate year-round.

Fishing using similar gear types for species across a range of FMPs will occur within the inshore area and therefore outputs based on a single species or a species in relation to a specific geographic area which is next to a separately managed area risks disproportionately affecting the ability for fishers to diversify. Where there is overlap, potential impacts and evidence needs should be considered on this basis, identifying any required evidence gathering or potential management measures in recognition of the potential for a cumulative impact. An example of joined up evidence gathering is under The Benthic Impact Group which is referenced in Defra Led FMPs including Queen Scallop and King Scallop, providing a good example of a proposal to combine efforts where similar gear types are involved, the additional benefit being to promote collaboration and most efficient use of resources to address multiple evidence gaps through a single process.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment on the Scottish Led FMPs.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S. Birchenough". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Dr Sarah Birchenough
Deputy Chief Executive Officer – Research & Policy Team
Southern IFCA