

SOUTHERN INSHORE FISHERIES & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE – 4th December 2025

Minutes of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), held in the meeting room at the Southern IFCA office in Poole at **14:00 on Thursday 4th December 2025**.

Present

Dr Antony Jensen	Chairman, MMO Appointee
Mr Richard Stride	Vice Chairman, MMO Appointee
Mr Gary Wordsworth	MMO Appointee
Dr Heidi Guille	MMO Appointee
Mr Colin Francis	MMO Appointee
Mr Stuart Kingston-Turner	Environment Agency
Dr Richard Morgan	Natural England
Mr Gordon Chittenden	Marine Management Organisation
Ms Pia Bateman	Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

Principal Deputy Chief Officer (PDCO) Sam Dell, Deputy Chief Officer (DCO) Dr Sarah Birchenough, IFCA's Ms Hester Churchouse, Ms Celie Mullen, Ms Chelsea Perrins, Mr William Meredith-Davies and Project Officer Ms Imogen Wright were also present.

Ms Hannah Rudd (Angling Trust) attended virtually in the public gallery.

Apologies

1. Apologies for absence were received from Ms E Bussey-Jones (MMO Appointee), Dr S Cripps (MMO Appointee), Mr N Hornby (MMO Appointee), Mr M Cornwell (MMO Appointee) and Mr Stuart Kingston-Turner (Environment Agency).

Declarations of interest

2. The following non-pecuniary interests were declared: Mr R Stride (Agenda Items 4 & 5), Mr G Wordsworth (Agenda Items 4 & 5), Dr Richard Morgan (Agenda Items 4 & 5).

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

4. The BSB Management Package: Policy & Supporting Documents

DCO Birchenough informed Members that the Policy and Supporting Documents provided were intended to be read together, providing transparency and clarity of process to deliver and implement the management intentions for black seabream (BSB) within three Dorset MCZs. DCO Birchenough outlined that the documents reflected a holistic delivery of two parallel policy objectives which allows for the achievement of Southern IFCA's legal duties under section 154 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 ('MaCAA') and to work with the Dorset community to facilitate improved understandings of BSB across the three MCZs.

DCO Birchenough provided a brief summary of each of the three policy documents and outlined that the supporting documents, the Black Seabream Literature Review and the Black Seabream Site Specific Evidence Packages, also formed part of the management package, underpinning the conservation assessments. DCO Birchenough outlined that the policy and supporting documents would be made available as part of the BSB management package and that Southern IFCA would deliver management for fisheries across the three Dorset MCZs in line with the outlined intention of process and delivery.

The CEO thanked Members for attending the meeting and emphasised the importance of the work on BSB within Dorset MCZs, highlighting its complexity and uniqueness. The CEO reflected on how the workstream had be re-routed based on improved understandings of the

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fishery, the species, risk and gear/feature interactions, the route of designation of the species, the Conservation Objectives and the Southern IFCA's legal duties. The CEO outlined the need to resolve a large amount of work over several years into concise policy documents which are more accessible to a wider audience.

Reflecting on the uniqueness of the workstream, the CEO detailed that this stemmed from the need to consider management for a designated feature within an MCZ where the designation has been through a less familiar route, namely that BSB are neither rare nor threatened by the presence of fishing activity but that they are of ecological significance. In addition, the designation of the species in 2019 for the three Dorset MCZs was not based on a condition assessment and both the species and relevant fisheries remain data poor, with no metrics available to aid understandings of the health of BSB fisheries across those MCZs, both before designation and to date. The CEO also noted that predominantly, to date, Southern IFCA's management within MPAs has considered the commercial sector, and that, for this workstream there was a need to consider a wider range of sectors, with less familiarity in the application of management to the recreational sea angling and charter sectors. The CEO reflected that in learning more about these sectors through this work, the intrinsic importance of BSB beyond their designated status had become apparent, stretching into the community as a whole across Dorset and beyond, as well as being nationally important socioeconomically alongside designated status.

The CEO stated that the development of management presented at the meeting is a success story, aligned with the national IFCA Vision and the Southern IFCA Vision as well as being aligned with other legal duties. The CEO reflected that the Authority are working hard in the co-development of management in fisheries across the District, part of the BSB workstream being a good example of turning this from theory into practice and providing a blueprint for future work in other fisheries across the organisation.

The CEO stated that the workstream applies a dual legal approach with two legal functions applied in parallel. The resulting management solutions, with the support of the Dorset community, champions proportionate, holistic management which collectively seeks to improve understandings of BSB populations and meets two defined objectives while remaining true to the IFCA function. The CEO highlighted that there is a consensus across all sectors as a unified collective to protect BSB for the common good with the proposed management providing a solution to beginning this process.

Dr A Jensen thanked Officers for the coherence and conciseness of the documentation included in the agenda. Mr G Wordsworth commented on the quality of the workstream outputs and the development of a coherent solution which achieved community support whilst meeting all the relevant objectives.

Dr Richard Morgan set out the current position from Natural England (NE). Dr Morgan stated that NE had reviewed earlier drafts of the relevant conservation assessments and supporting documents and felt that there were some areas where further clarity and rationale was required, which was subsequently provided by Southern IFCA. Dr Morgan reflected on the uniqueness and complexity of the workstream and that Southern IFCA had done as much as possible in providing documentation to support the management proposed. NE aims to be consistent in their provision of advice, considering that advice has been provided on BSB elsewhere, for example for Kingmere MCZ. Dr Morgan commented specifically on the defined breeding season for BSB and that, notwithstanding agreements made previously by the Authority, NE's advice is that March to July should be used as the breeding season to account for the early aggregation stage, which would be consistent with NE Advice on Operations for the three MCZs. NE support that the management for bottom towed fishing gear (BTFG) will further Conservation Objectives with respect to protecting the supporting habitat from damage

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and avoiding disturbance, but feel that for recreational sea angling seasonal spatial closures should be included to address the impact of disturbance from this gear type due to the data gaps which exist on the effort levels and the potential impact at a level 'likely significantly' to affect BSB. Dr Morgan stated that the word 'significantly' in the Conservation Objectives is important as it acknowledges that there can be a level of disturbance but when that becomes significant there can be impacts, however this is complex as NE are not able to state at what level impacts would be considered significant and it may not be possible to reach a point where this is known. On this basis NE advise that there needs to be precaution applied through the application of seasonal spatial closures, consistent with advice provided to other authorities. Dr Morgan stated that the IFCA's need to balance environmental protection with the socioeconomics of the industry is understood by NE and that it is recognised why, following the consultation and the impact assessment, the use of seasonal spatial closures is not a preferred approach by the Authority. Dr Morgan stated that in terms of the relevant conservation assessments, NE are not able to agree that the measures in place for recreational sea angling are sufficient to further the Conservation Objectives but, because of existing evidence gaps, support the commitment to further the evidence base and recognise that the additional measures proposed or already in place do contribute to furthering the Conservation Objectives. NE also recognise the commitment to evidence gathering which they would welcome being part of, and the commitment to review management with the ability to be adaptive if required. Dr Morgan stated that NE would abstain in voting but noted that NE are not objecting.

Dr A Jensen thanked Dr Morgan for NE's considered and positive input.

ITEMS FOR DECISION

5. Primary Policy Objective: Satisfying Section 154 of the MaCAA

DCO Birchenough outlined the Primary Policy Objective, namely to satisfy section 154 of the MaCAA by furthering the Conservation Objectives within each of the three Dorset MCZs. DCO Birchenough stated that the furthering of the Conservation Objectives was from a baseline position of no management and in this case related to a quantification of existing management measures in place in the Southern IFCA District.

DCO Birchenough informed Members that the recommendation is supported by the Black Seabream Marine Conservation Zone Assessment Package, which goes through a staged process from screening through to Part A and Part B assessments with the addition of a gear risk assessment, determined as appropriate for determining the level of risk posed by different gear types to designated features. The conclusion of the Assessment Package is that appropriate mitigation measures are in place through existing management under the BTFG Byelaw 2023, the Southern IFCA Minimum Conservation Reference Size (MCRS) Byelaw and external spatial restrictions in place for the Lulworth Ranges, providing a range of spatial and technical tools which are collectively furthering the Conservation Objectives for the MCZs.

DCO Birchenough provided specifics on the existing management measures outlining that the highest risk gear type, BTFG, had been eliminated from 100% of two of the MCZs, Poole Rocks and Southbourne Rough, and across 93% of the Purbeck Coast MCZ, noting that the remaining area does not contain habitat relevant to the BSB designated feature, which is supported by NE. This is complemented by the enforcement of the MCRS for BSB of 23cm, applicable to all commercial and recreational fishers across all gear types and the entirety of the supply chain. The external spatial closures in place periodically for the Lulworth ranges equates to 32% of the relevant breeding season across 33% of the footprint largest MCZ, Purbeck Coast, this can be extended to 54% when the outer ranges area is also closed. These closures apply to all sea users encompassing all commercial and recreational fishing activity.

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DCO Birchenough outlined that these measures are providing protections to BSB over and above the breeding season as all measures apply year-round and also, for the MCRS regulation, more widely than the footprint of the MCZs, applying District-wide. Therefore, this combination of management tools allows the Conservation Objectives for the three MCZs to be furthered and accordingly there is no risk to hindering the achievement of the Conservation Objectives, thus satisfying the Primary Policy Objective.

DCO Birchenough informed Members that Formal Advice had been sought from NE on the Conservation Assessment Package and that further information had been sent by Southern IFCA on two matters raised by NE relating to the breeding season and recreational sea angling. DCO Birchenough outlined that the NE Formal Advice letter and the Southern IFCA response had been provided to Members as part of the agenda item. DCO Birchenough informed Members that a subsequent meeting had been held with NE where these points were discussed in more detail and NE then provided a summary position which Dr Morgan has set out verbally at this meeting. DCO Birchenough outlined that the Conservation Assessment Package had been updated to reflect additional clarity around the two points raised by NE, relating to the District-specific best available evidence on BSB breeding season which had informed the decision to proceed with April to July, and newly emerging evidence from tagging work in the Sussex IFCA District which also supported this as being an appropriate seasonal window. DCO Birchenough also referenced recreational sea angling, and that more context and clarity had been added to the Conservation Assessment Package on how the gear risk assessment was carried out.

Mr G Wordsworth discussed that the statutory MCRS of 23cm under the Southern IFCA MCRS Byelaw is small and queried when Southern IFCA may be in a position to review the regulated MCRS applied within the District. The CEO outlined that the Southern IFCA can take action to review a regulation at any point, if underpinned by the appropriate evidence, and that the direction of management for BSB will provide evidence to help guide that process. The CEO outlined that the current development and implementation of Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs) will also inform this process and that further understandings of national direction on MCRS will help support appropriate resource allocation within Southern IFCA to District-specific reviews.

Dr H Guille discussed the potential uncertainty over the spawning season and asked Dr Morgan for clarity on the evidence supporting the inclusion of March. Dr Morgan responded that there is some published evidence that includes reference to March, including that relevant to the District, and that it is related to the aggregation of the species not necessarily observations of direct breeding. Dr Guille asked what the rationale had been for the Authority not to include March on a precautionary basis. DCO Birchenough responded that the Authority had considered March to July as an option alongside April to July in conjunction with the best available evidence and had resolved to take forward April to July based on that evidence. The CEO added that, in making this determination Members had considered the evidence alongside considering proportion and precaution in the context of furthering the Conservation Objectives.

Dr Guille queried whether the evidence gathering through the Co-Developed Principles would facilitate an evidence base on which any future determinations to consider including March could be made. DCO Birchenough outlined that the data collection programme, as one of the Co-Developed Principles, is designed to run year-round allowing for data collection both within and outside of the breeding season to facilitate comprehensive understandings of BSB within the MCZs underpinning an adaptive management approach. Dr A Jensen commented that there was also still evidence to come from the Angling for Sustainability Fishing Industry Science Partnership (FISP) Project which will also aid understandings of BSB movements in and around the MCZs. Dr Guille suggested that wording could be made clearer in the

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documentation as to the intention for year-round data collection to support an evidence base and an adaptive management approach.

Dr A Jensen read out a comment which had been provided by Member Mr S Kingston-Turner, who was unable to attend the meeting. Mr Kingston-Turner discussed that he was supportive of the Policy Objectives but sought further clarity on how recreational sea angling was assessed as a medium risk over commercial net and rod & line fishing which was assessed as low risk under the gear risk assessment. Mr Kingston-Turner referenced the management measures already employed by the charter sector in relation to bag limits and increased MCRS, and ongoing studies indicating that released rod & line caught fish have the potential to return to their nests. It was queried whether retention of BSB by the recreational angling sector, currently reported in supporting documentation by number, could be reported by weight to compare to the commercial rod & line fishery. Mr Kingston-Turner stated that showing a heightened risk by recreational rod & line fishing may lead to increased management of the sector over commercial fishing activities and may influence NE opposition to this activity occurring within the MCZs.

DCO Birchenough responded that the classification of recreational rod & line as medium risk and commercial rod & line as low risk is related to observed levels of activity which currently take place within the MCZs. Levels of commercial rod & line activity are very low in both observations of the activity and catch levels for BSB as a target species based on best available evidence. The levels of activity observed for recreational activity, across both private and charter operators, are at a higher level and this forms the basis for the increased risk level from low to medium. It is recognised and captured in the Conservation Assessment Package, that there are mitigative measures already employed by the recreational sector and it is recognised that the overall impact, including the understanding of newer best available evidence on potential resumption of nesting activity following catch and release, is applicable to rod & line across all sectors and has been considered as such. The risk exercise is aimed to consider all relevant elements; however, the outcome is based on levels of activity rather than there being a greater impact. The development of management under the secondary policy objective does not seek to impact the recreational sector over the commercial sector with all measures, excepting the recreational bag limit, applying to all sectors. DCO Birchenough also outlined that weight data for recreational fisheries may be possible to collect through the proposed data collection programme, at present it is difficult for recreational fishers to record data in this way as it is not a standard reporting metric.

The recommendation was proposed by Dr H Guille, seconded by Mr G Wordsworth. 5 Members voted in favour, Mr R Stride and Dr R Morgan abstained.

Resolved

6. That, in combination, existing statutory spatial and technical measures applicable across the 3 Dorset MCZs are collectively 'furthering' the Conservation Objectives of the sites.

7. Secondary Policy Objective: Co-Developed Principles

DCO Birchenough outlined that through this process Members had considered whether there were additional management opportunities relevant to the BSB fishery which could both complement the protections afforded by the existing management as well as support increased understandings of BSB fisheries over time. DCO Birchenough stated that in the absence of a condition assessment for the three Dorset MCZs at the point of designation and to the present day, and the concurrent development of a Seabreams FMP, Members

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committed to the development of a shared principles model with the Dorset Community to explore additional opportunities.

DCO Birchenough outlined that, as duties under section 154 have been deemed to be met through existing management, the consideration of any additional management is underpinned by the Southern IFCA's duties under section 153 of the MaCAA. The process and development of the shared principles model is underpinned by Policy Drivers and Headline Objectives, to ensure clarity and transparency in the rationale for the Secondary Policy Objective. DCO Birchenough detailed the five-stage process undertaken to develop the Co-Developed Principles and the multiple opportunities provided during this process for engagement and consultation with the Dorset Community, including a large-scale informal consultation which saw the greatest level of participation by stakeholders in any informal consultation run by Southern IFCA to date. DCO Birchenough thanked the community both in Dorset and more widely for their engagement, responses and constructive inputs through the process and reflected on the benefits and positive dialogue that had come from this.

DCO Birchenough outlined that, considering the outputs of the informal consultation, Members of the TAC resolved at the meeting in August 2025 to take forward the Co-Developed Principles with no amendments. DCO Birchenough outlined the Co-Developed Principles and their application as being voluntary, applying during the period 1st April to 31st July and applying within the three Dorset MCZs, with the introduction of an MCRS of 28cm a Maximum Conservation Reference Size (MaxCRS) of 38cm, a 6 fish per person per day recreational bag limit, fishing and handling guidance and a data collection programme which would extend to being run year-round and apply to all sectors as well as including elements of fisher-independent data.

DCO Birchenough outlined that the implementation of the Co-Developed Principles across all three MCZs is a suitable management mechanism to both satisfy and facilitate progress towards achieve the Secondary Policy Objective, to advance understandings of BSB fisheries over time, satisfying both the Policy Drivers and the Headline Objectives.

DCO Birchenough detailed that the intention for the year 1 implementation of the Co-Developed Principles is to focus on engagement and awareness, seeking compliance with the Principles. DCO Birchenough referenced the suite of engagement tools that can be used in this regard, including engaging with partner organisations such as the Angling Trust. It is proposed that the first annual review takes place following the conclusion of the breeding season in 2026, seeking to incorporate community feedback on the application of the principles and the overall health of the fishery, analysis of data collected through the data collection programme, compliance & enforcement metrics, data from external sources, outputs from the FMP process and any emerging scientific evidence. DCO Birchenough outlined that an annual review would be carried out each year up to 2029 and a wider review would be carried out in 2030 which would incorporate any necessary revisions to the Conservation Assessment Package, including any updated NE Formal Advice or Condition Assessments which may have been completed for those sites. DCO Birchenough stated that the Authority could act to review management in response to any of the annual reviews if appropriate under defined processes.

Mr R Stride queried whether compliance with the voluntary measures would be considered through the annual reviews, stating views expressed through the consultation on a preference for statutory rather than voluntary measures. DCO Birchenough provided context on the consultation, that only a low number of respondents referenced the need for statutory measures over voluntary measures and explained that the ability is there for the Authority to explore statutory measures if it was felt the evidence supported this, compliance & enforcement outcomes being one source of evidence feeding into annual reviews. Mr C

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Francis commented that recreational sea anglers would prefer measures to be statutory to support enforcement and embedding of measures for example in charter vessels enforcing measures on their vessels. Mr Gordon Chittenden commented that, having been involved in the development of the Seabreams FMP, the guidance from Defra is that they are keen to see the exploration of voluntary measures first to allow for the development of an evidence base to support any further intervention. The CEO reflected that through the co-development approach there is a sense of ownership provided to the community which can help facilitate the achievement of shared goals.

Dr R Morgan asked for clarity on whether the review process could include consideration of the addition of March to the breeding season. DCO Birchenough outlined that best available evidence from all relevant sources would feed into the review process and that it could be explored in the event that the evidence supports that consideration.

Dr A Jensen read out a comment provided by Mr S Kingston-Turner who stated that he was supportive of the proposed fishery and handling guidance which is very comprehensive.

Mr G Wordsworth discussed the resource requirements of annually reviewing the Co-Developed Principles and options for funding. The CEO outlined that management of MPAs falls within the Southern IFCA's duties and therefore funding couldn't be explored in that respect. The CEO recognised the resource requirement and also the extended input from fishers which is hoped to come through data collection in particular, outlining Southern IFCA's intention to work in partnership with other agencies and bodies to achieve collective benefit.

Mr Gordon Chittenden commented on the level of detail which had gone into the process and development of the Co-Developed Principles and that this provided an excellent base on which to build continued understandings of BSB fisheries.

Dr H Guille recommended that reference to the data collection programme being year-round should be added to the data collection forms and queried whether further engagement materials would be available to reflect the wider Co-Developed Principles in addition to the leaflet specific to the fishing and handling guidance. DCO Birchenough outlined that the guidance leaflet reflects one of the Co-Developed Principles and that the wider engagement materials detailed in Policy Document 3 would be utilised to provide information on the Co-Developed Principles as a whole.

Dr Guille discussed the proposed data collection forms, referencing the inclusion of the number of BSB caught under the MCRS and above the MaxCRS which might be retained. This will be added into the reporting form for fisher-dependent data as well as being part of fisher-independent data collection. PDCO Dell discussed the positive abilities for Officers to collect fisher-independent data and the range of mechanisms available to collect information on the relevant fisheries. PDCO Dell also reflected that stakeholders have been positive in working with Officers to collect data and facilitate observations. The CEO emphasised that this work would form a priority workstream into the new financial year.

The recommendation was proposed by Mr G Wordsworth, seconded by Mr Colin Francis. 6 Members voted in favour, Mr R Stride abstained.

Resolved

8. That the Co-Developed Principles are approved for application across the three Dorset MCZs in 2026.

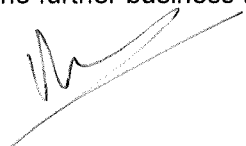
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9. Date of Next Meeting

To confirm the date of the next meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee on the 5th February 2026 at Southern IFCA, Unit 3 Holes Bay Park, Sterte Avenue West, Poole Dorset BH15 2AA.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 11:27.

Chairman:



Date:

12/3/26