

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 Mudeford 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 Mudeford 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:

7/5/26