

SOUTHERN INSHORE FISHERIES & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE – 6th November 2025

Minutes of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), held virtually via Microsoft Teams at 14:00 on Thursday 6th November 2025.

Present

Dr Antony Jensen	Chairman, MMO Appointee
Mr Richard Stride	Vice Chairman, MMO Appointee
Dr Simon Cripps	MMO Appointee
Ms Elisabeth Bussey-Jones	MMO Appointee
Dr Heidi Guille	MMO Appointee
Mr Colin Francis	MMO Appointee
Mr Stuart Kingston-Turner	Environment Agency
Dr Richard Morgan	Natural England

Principal Deputy Chief Officer (PDCO) Sam Dell, Deputy Chief Officer (DCO) Dr Sarah Birchenough, IFCO's Ms Hester Churchouse, Ms Celie Mullen, Ms Chelsea Perrins, Mr William Meredith-Davies and Project Officer Ms Imogen Wright were also present. Cllr Paul Fuller, Chairman of the Authority also attended.

Election of Chairman and Vice Chairman for 2025-2026

1. That Dr Jensen be elected as Chairman for the year 2025-2026. This motion was proposed by Dr S Cripps and seconded by Ms E Bussey-Jones. All Members were in favour.
2. That Mr R Stride be elected as Vice-Chairman for the year 2025-2026. This motion was proposed by Ms E Bussey-Jones and seconded by Dr S Cripps. All Members were in favour.

Apologies

3. Apologies for absence were received from CEO Pia Bateman, Mr Neil Hornby (MMO Appointee), Mr Mark Cornwell (MMO Appointee), Mr Gary Wordsworth (MMO Appointee) and Ms Rachel Irish (MMO).

Declarations of interest

4. The following non-pecuniary interests were declared: Dr Simon Cripps (Agenda Item 5b).

Minutes

5. Members considered the Minutes of the meeting held on the 21st August 2025 (Marked A). DCO Birchenough provided an update on Recommendation 45, stating that the Working Group of interested TAC Members to discuss data gathering and analysis in the Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Fishery would be explored in 2026 after all the data had been gathered from the 2025-26 fishing season.

Dr A Jensen noted that under item 58, with reference to the Community Drop-In Surgery to be held on the Isle of Wight, that the date had been required to be changed and would now be held on 13th November 2025.

The minutes were approved by mutual consent.

6. Members considered the Minutes of the Extraordinary meeting of the Technical Advisory Sub-Committee held on the 20th October 2025 (Marked B).

The minutes were approved by mutual consent.

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PROGRESS REPORTS

7. Emergent Updates

DCO Birchenough updated Members that an Extraordinary TAC Meeting would take place on Thursday 4th December at 10:00 at the Southern IFCA Office to progress the Black Seabream workstream and that, following receipt of the agenda, any Members who are unable to attend are welcome to feed in with any comments or feedback that they wish to provide which will be read out at the meeting.

DCO Birchenough updated Members in relation to the Solent Scallop Fishery, specifically relating to an article published in that week's edition of the Fishing News, noting that Agenda Item 5c provided a specific update on the process undertaken with regard to a recent review of permit conditions. DCO Birchenough provided a copy of the article for Members to view and emphasised that, from the perspective of Southern IFCA, the review had been successful, being achieved in a short-time frame with significant engagement from permit holders and support for the approach taken, enabling a co-developed proposal to be agreed for additional management intervention in the Solent SCE Fishery ahead of the 2025/26 season to support a sustainable fishery. DCO Birchenough outlined that this process is however, not without its challenges, some of which are illustrated in the article by a minority of stakeholders.

PDCO Dell informed Members that Officers have been carrying out boarding and landing inspections in the fishery and noted that within the SCE fishery one vessel had landed approximately 1 tonne from a single fishing trip and inspected vessels had been landing up to 200kg of Manila clam from a day's fishing. PDCO Dell outlined that the majority of industry have been pleased with the fishery outputs so far and the team will continue to engage and monitor the fishery, including through the monitoring of landings data submitted by permit holders, as the season progresses.

Members discussed whether, in the face of high landings, permit holders would feel that the additional management was not required. PDCO Dell outlined that he did not think this would be the case and the reduced fishing hours had been well received, with no feedback to Officers along those lines to date. Dr S Cripps stated that if vessels are achieving the same catch per vessel as previous seasons but achieving this over a shorter time period then there is a benefit in having reduced hours. Mr R Stride agreed, stating that if catch rates over a shorter timeframe mean that the fishery sustains permit holders for a longer overall period and that there doesn't appear to be a socio-economic impact from the reduced hours then this is positive for the industry.

Members discussed the article, one query relating to whether there was feedback from industry regarding the alternative industry proposal put forward at the Extraordinary TAC Meeting, it was recognised that there was support by the majority of permit holders for the actions taken in the fishery and PDCO Dell reflected that there was also not feedback on this being received on the coast to date. Members discussed the review, supporting the level of consultation and the subsequent process which was undertaken.

PDCO Dell provided an update to Members that on 22nd October 2025, on behalf of Southern IFCA, he and Pia attended an award ceremony in Edinburgh where Southern IFCA were presented with the MSC Ocean Leadership Award, recognising Southern IFCA's outstanding commitment to sustainable fishing and exemplary leadership in advancing the future of our oceans.

PDCO Dell outlined that the select group of judges were particularly impressed by the innovative use of drone technology in Monitoring, Control and Surveillance activities, which has transformed enforcement across Poole Harbour's complex estuarine system and

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demonstrates how cutting-edge technology can be responsibly applied in small-scale fisheries to achieve world-class outcomes. By integrating drones into fisheries management, Southern IFCA has delivered a modern, innovative and highly effective approach that ensures the Poole Harbour Clam & Cockle Fishery continues to meet the highest sustainability standards. The judges said that this initiative is a model of leadership, a blueprint for fisheries worldwide, and well deserving of the MSC Ocean Leadership Award. PDCO Dell reflected that this was and continues to be a team effort including Officers and Members and thanked all for their ongoing support.

Members stated their appreciation for the award and thanked all those involved for their hard work.

8. Marine Stewardship Council, Audit of the Poole Clam & Cockle Fishery 2025

IFCO Celie Mullen informed Members that the annual audit of the Poole Clam & Cockle Fishery against the MSC Standard had taken place on 26th September 2025. IFCO Mullen outlined that, as part of the audit, data had been provided to the auditors on stock analysis, compliance & enforcement within the fishery and any updated documents relating to management. IFCO Mullen also outlined that this was the first audit to consider the new Monitoring & Control Plan for Manila clam in the fishery, implemented in 2025, which had given the potential for increased scores for the fishery under the relevant Principle. IFCO Mullen stated that the audit had gone well with no issues identified by the auditors which required further input, the draft report is currently being reviewed by Southern IFCA with the opportunity to provide any comment ahead of its publication.

Dr A Jensen thanked the Officers for their work in this fishery and the level of preparation which is put into the audit each year.

Dr H Guille queried whether the new MSC Standard v.3 was in place yet and whether the fishery would need to do any additional work to meet the new standard. Dr S Cripps commented that the Standard v.3 has been withdrawn at present with a reworked version currently in development, any new version will have a lead in period. DCO Birchenough informed Members that she attends working groups held by MSC on updates to the certifying standard and that it was likely that any new version of the Standard would be applied to the fishery at the point of its next certification in 2028. Dr S Cripps added that the introduction of a new standard would not undermine the current certification of the fishery.

9. Solent Dredge Permit Byelaw, 2025/26 Season

DCO Birchenough outlined to Members the process that had been followed regarding the introduction of additional effort management in the Solent Scallop Fishery ahead of the 2025/26 season to support sustainable fisheries, and that this was reflected in the agenda paperwork for the Extraordinary TAC Meeting on 20th October 2025. DCO Birchenough informed Members that, based on best available evidence, two initial proposals were developed by the Authority which were taken to public consultation, the public consultation receiving input from 80% of applicants for the 2025/26 season across individual responses, group responses and in-person engagement at consultation meetings. DCO Birchenough outlined that through this process there had been a lot of support from industry for the approach being taken by Southern IFCA to support a sustainable scallop fishery.

DCO Birchenough outlined that consultation feedback had been reviewed and summarised, with a lack of support for the two initial proposals and alternative proposals put forward. The consultation also provided information on applicants' intentions to fish during the 2025/26 season which helped inform understandings of potential levels of activity, and socio-economic

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information based on potential management options. DCO Birchenough stated that a staged process was subsequently carried out to; 1) identify alternative management options from the consultation, 2) review those options, resulting in the identification of 14 alternative proposals, 3) conduct an Officer feasibility exercise on the 14 alternative proposals, 4) develop co-developed proposals, combining Authority and stakeholder input as well as recognising unintended consequences, and 5) applying a series of material considerations to those options. It was identified that the two co-developed proposals achieved a greater number of material considerations than the original two proposals taken to consultation.

DCO Birchenough outlined that, at each stage, any alternative proposals or elements of proposals which were not taken forward to the next stage were highlighted with a rationale provided as to why these proposals could not be taken forward. DCO Birchenough also outlined that longer-term proposals, although not suitable for incorporation into the current review, were noted including further understandings of SCE populations, for example in relation to predation and larval transport, working with other fisheries including international fisheries to share expertise, and the separating out of SCE into a separate permit from the current Category A Permit.

DCO Birchenough outlined that the two co-developed proposals were taken to the Extraordinary Meeting of the TAC on 20th October 2025, where they were considered by the Authority in conjunction with all best available evidence. The Authority also received representation from an applicant in the SDPB fishery, who put forward an alternative proposal stated as being supported by the majority of applicants who intended to fish for SCE in the coming season. The Authority, on the basis of all available information, proposed a new co-developed proposal which proposed to reduce daily fishing hours in the Solent SCE fishery from 08:00-16:00 to 08:00-14:00, this was agreed by Members at the Extraordinary TAC Meeting.

Applicants for the 2025/26 season were notified of the outcome of the review following the Extraordinary TAC Meeting and the status of their applications. DCO Birchenough stated that the 2025/26 season had started on 1st November and that the majority of Category A Permits had been issued. DCO Birchenough informed Members that Southern IFCA would continue to engage in and monitor the fishery through the 2025/26 season and that a wider review looking at longer-term management of the Solent bivalve fisheries would take place in 2026.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

10. Whelk Population Survey Report 2025

IFCO Mullen presented to Members the outcomes of the 2025 Whelk Population Survey which took place from March-July 2025 involving local commercial fishing vessels operating within key whelk fishing areas in the District: Lyme Bay, Weymouth Bay, Poole Bay and The Solent. IFCO Mullen outlined the purpose of the survey is to identify potential whelk stocks across the District and develop a timeseries dataset to monitor trends in abundance and size frequency between different areas, aiming to establish a robust evidence base to inform and support future management both at a local and national scale.

IFCO Mullen presented the key findings from the 2025 survey, highlighting differences between areas for 2025 and also an analysis of the data against the previous two survey years (2023 and 2024). IFCO Mullen informed Members that there are notable differences observed between areas surveyed which suggesting the potential presence of sub-populations and highlights the complexity around whelk populations in the District, supporting the continued gathering of evidence by this survey to support the development of a timeseries dataset.

Dr S Cripps commented that the report was very good and clearly set out. Dr Cripps raised a

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question in relation to length frequency data and whether the data for Weymouth Bay, showing a greater number of larger individuals was indicative of a difference in fishing pressure compared to other areas or whether it was a function of the fishery removing the peak of individuals between 50-65mm which is seen in other areas. It was discussed that as the timeseries dataset develops, patterns and any changes between years will become more evident. DCO Birchenough commented that, at present, there is not enough understanding of variations in fishing effort within the whelk fishery to attribute patterns in effort to the survey outputs but that there are multiple data sources for fishing effort in these fisheries that could be interrogated in the future to help develop this understanding. Members also discussed whether slight differences in fishing gear may be contributing to variations between different areas.

Mr R Stride asked whether any observations had been made of differing results from differences in soak time and whether this had been accounted for. IFCO Mullen outlined that differences in soak times are being seen within the fishery and that the CPUE aims to counteract the soak time by including a time standardisation. It was noted that different soak times may affect the quantity of whelk caught due to changes in the tide, availability of bait and the capacity of the pot.

Dr H Guille commented that differences in results are likely to be related to differences in gear type and operation, noting that this was reflected in the report, but that there needed to be caution in attributing results to influencing factors rather than bias in the data. DCO Birchenough outlined that the survey was based on fishers collecting samples as part of normal fishing practice and that there will be variation in operations, which is recognised, but it is determined that this is partially offset by fishers using pots which are adapted to the conditions of each site and optimised to maximise catch potential in line with specific environmental conditions. The repeatability of the methodology allows for comparisons to be made over time recognising the caveats that exist within that methodology.

Members also discussed other related whelk survey work including genetic surveys from other areas which showed differences over small spatial scales and size at sexual maturity research from the District, which showed a larger SOM in Weymouth Bay than The Solent and potential implications for management. Dr A Jensen queried whether the survey work could be expanded to look at SOM, IFCO Mullen responded that engagement was taking place with academic institutions to explore beneficial further uses for the samples following the Southern IFCA analysis.

11. Fisheries Management Plans

Project Officer Wright provided an overview of the matters captured in the Executive Summary, outlining newly published documents and Defra blog posts which provide further detail to the updates provided.

Dr A Jensen commented that the Crab and Lobster Implementation Group were starting to think about publishing potential management options for crab and lobster under the relevant FMPs. Dr Jensen stated that the Crab and Lobster Science Group had expressed their wish to see any potential options ahead of publication so they could be reviewed with respect to available scientific evidence. Members discussed that Defra were exploring implementation of an increase in Minimum Conservation Reference Size (MCRS) for lobster and a prohibition on soft-shell crab either during late 2025 or early 2026 with discussion on the mechanism which may be used for this including licence variations or a Statutory Instrument. Members discussed that communication and engagement will be key for any new measures proposed to be introduced at a national level.

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12. Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Byelaw Pilot Mid-Season Stock Observer Program

IFCO Mullen provided an overview of the outcomes of the pilot Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Fishery Mid-Season Stock Observer Programme, introduced in 2025 under the In-Season Monitoring Programme of the Monitoring & Control Plan for Manila clam in the Poole Harbour dredge fishery.

IFCO Mullen outlined that 36 tows were completed across 12 permitted vessels which had enabled the collection of samples to provide CPUE and length frequency data. The data from the survey indicated that the increase in the availability of over MCRS Manila clam in the fishery, potentially driven by warmer waters and increased growth during the summer, does not appear to be being impacted by fishing activity to a point where the increase in the proportion of the population cannot be seen, even in the area showing the highest levels of fishing activity. It was noted that it may be that additional growth has resulted in individuals reaching a size where they are more likely to be captured by a dredge but remain below the MCRS, with further data collection required to explore this further. Overall, the levels of Manila clam seen in the pilot mid-season survey showed a positive picture and indicated that, at current levels of fishing, the population seems sustainable by the midway point of the season.

IFCO Mullen noted that the Mid-Season Observer Programme provided a valuable opportunity for collaboration between Southern IFCA and permit holders of the PHDPB Fishery and thanked all those who participated in and supported the data collection efforts.

Dr A Jensen commented that the report was very good and clearly articulated the outcomes of the Pilot Program. Dr Jensen queried how fishers had responded to the Program, IFCO Mullen stated that fishers had been happy to be involved and had voiced their support for being able to contribute to data collection for the fishery to support a wider evidence base.

Dr S Cripps asked what the resource requirement was for carrying out the Program. DCO Birchenough outlined that the Program was delivered over 2 days using FPV Endeavour and that other deliverables were completed at the same time, for example monitoring of compliance within the fishery. Members discussed whether the resource input from Officers had been offset by the benefits of conducting the Program. It was outlined that the resource input had been beneficial, with the ability to collect data that complemented the annual data from the Poole Harbour Bivalve Survey, allowing for comparisons between the pre-season and mid-season point, and data which indicated differences in the fishery both spatially and between vessels. In addition, the additional engagement opportunity created with permit holders in the fishery and the ability to share expertise in fishing practice and data collection was very positive. It was outlined that it is Southern IFCA's intention to continue the Program in subsequent years.

13. 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 15:40.

Chairman:



Date:

12/3/26.