



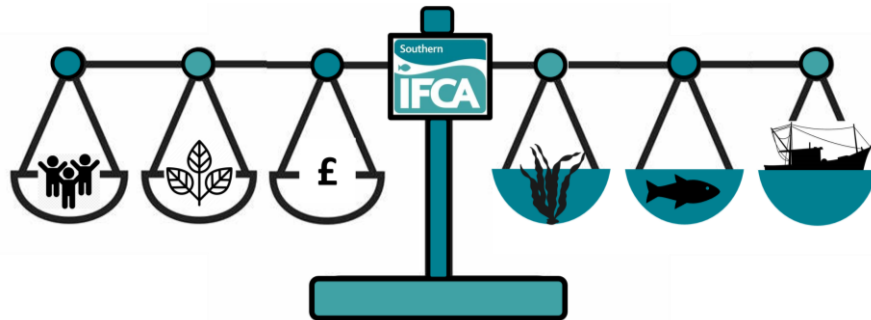
# Research & Policy Team Plan

## April 2026 to March 2027



## Section 1: Introduction

The Research & Policy Team Plan (RPT Plan) sets out the priorities for the RPT for the period April 2026 to March 2027, creating a golden thread from the Southern IFCA Annual Strategy 2026-2027 to deliver against the **National IFCA Vision, Southern IFCA Vision & Key Themes, Strategic Anchors** and **2026-2027 Mission**, shaping inshore fisheries and conservation management in line with statutory duties and in support of the Government's Vision.



In order to deliver the RPT Plan and fulfil Southern IFCA's function as a competent regulator, the need to align work to a strategic direction is recognised. With many competing and evolving objectives, it is important that a considered overview is maintained in this delivery. This proactive way of working, with the recognition of the need to maintain a capacity for reactive and emerging work and oncoming challenges, will provide a template for the RPT and District stakeholders moving through 2026 and beyond.








Further details regarding the RPT and their work can be found at

<https://www.southern-ifca.gov.uk/district-fisheries-research>.



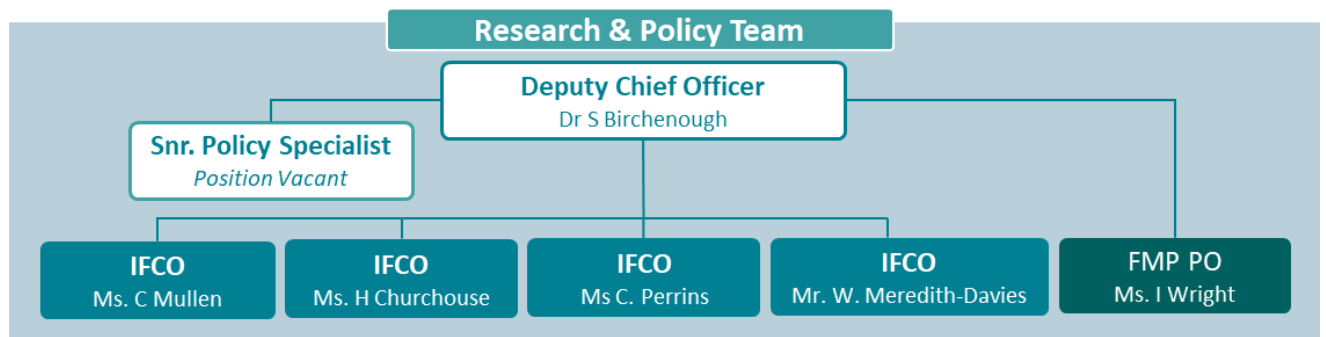
## 1.1 Research & Policy Team Function

The Southern IFCA Research and Policy Team (RPT) delivers 5 main functions, 3 of which form the RPT's core functions (shaded blue).

RPT Functions	
Developing Fisheries Management Interventions	
Reviewing Fisheries Management Interventions	
Monitoring Inshore Fisheries	
Projects and Emerging Work	
Engagement	

## 1.2 The Research & Policy Team

Working under the Chief Officer, the RPT is led by a Deputy Chief Officer who oversees the work of the RPT. The RPT are further supported by the Business Services Team (BST) and work closely with the Compliance & Enforcement Team (CET).



## 1.3 RPT Core Functions



### 1.3.1 Developing and Reviewing Fisheries Management Interventions

#### Legislative Functions Specific to Developing Management

When developing or reviewing management interventions in inshore fisheries, the legislative framework which Southern IFCA must operate within is determined by the location of the fishery subject to management considerations, specifically whether the fishery occurs within, adjacent or outside of a Marine Protected Area (MPA).

#### Legal duties relevant to different types of MPA

- **Outside of an MPA:** Under Section (153) of the MaCAA, Southern IFCA must (a) ensure that fishing is carried out sustainably, (b) seek to balance the social and economic benefits of fishing with the protection and recovery of the marine environment, (c) contribute to sustainable development and (d) seek to balance the different needs of persons engaged in fishing.
- **Within an MCZ:** Under Section (154) of the MaCAA, Southern IFCA must ensure that the Conservation Objectives of Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs) within the District are furthered. Once the Authority are satisfied that this has been achieved, consideration can then be given to our wider duties under 153 of MaCAA.
- **Within or adjacent to an SAC or SPA:** Under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, as amended by the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019, Southern IFCA must ensure that fishing activity does not damage, disturb or have an adverse effect on the wildlife or habitats for which a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) or Special Protection Area (SPA) within the National Site Network is legally protected. Once the Authority are satisfied that this has been achieved, consideration can then be given to our wider duties under 153 of MaCAA.
- **Within a SSSI:** In accordance with The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, when carrying out our duties, Southern IFCA must consider any marine component of a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), which provides protection to species, and/or habitat of national importance. Consideration of SSSI marine components is often encompassed under overlapping SAC, SPA or MCZ designations, consideration of SSSI marine components without an overlapping SAC, SPA or MCZ is in line with wider duties under 153 of MaCAA.

## Overarching R&P Policy Principles

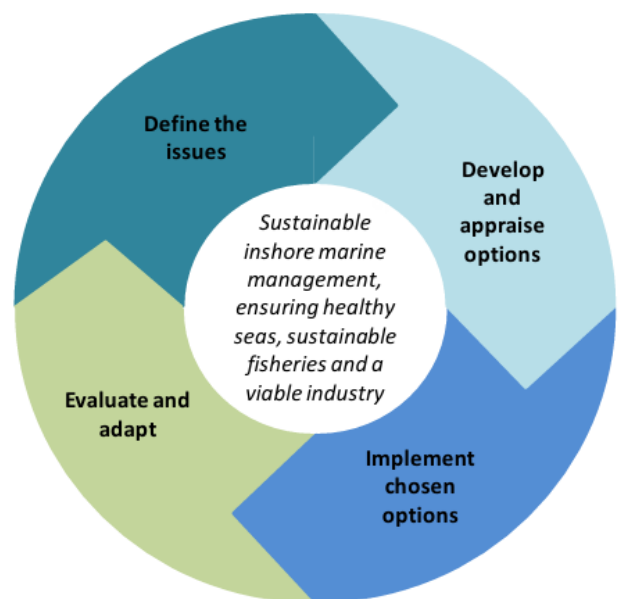
With the overarching context provided by legislative function, Southern IFCA must also adhere to policy principles, which includes Defra’s best practice guidance when developing, reviewing and implementing inshore management.

- **The use of best available evidence**
- **Where appropriate and within legislative remit, undertake a risk-based approach to assess the potential risks that fishing activity may present to the marine environment, providing an evidence base for prioritising the development of management measures, which will enable delivery of duties in an evidence based, strategic and proportionate way**
- **The use of the precautionary principle in the absence of evidence**
- **Transparent & consistent decision making**

Developing fisheries management interventions involves the identification of the requirement for intervention, which may arise as a result of working to meet the IFCA’s legislative functions, supporting the Government Vision, identification of an emerging issue, availability of new evidence or another factor. The IFCA has the ability to develop both statutory and non-statutory management interventions, operating in accordance with Statutory Guidance provided by Defra<sup>1</sup> which sets out best practice for IFCAs in making byelaws.

### Evidence Based Marine Management Cycle

Operating under this guidance, the Evidence Based Marine Management Cycle is used to inform the management process with the ability for management to be **evaluated and adaptive** recognised as a key element to ensure that management remains appropriate and proportionate in relation to overarching objectives and goals.



<sup>1</sup> [Defra. IFCA Byelaw Making Guidance, 2011](#)

## Management Development Process

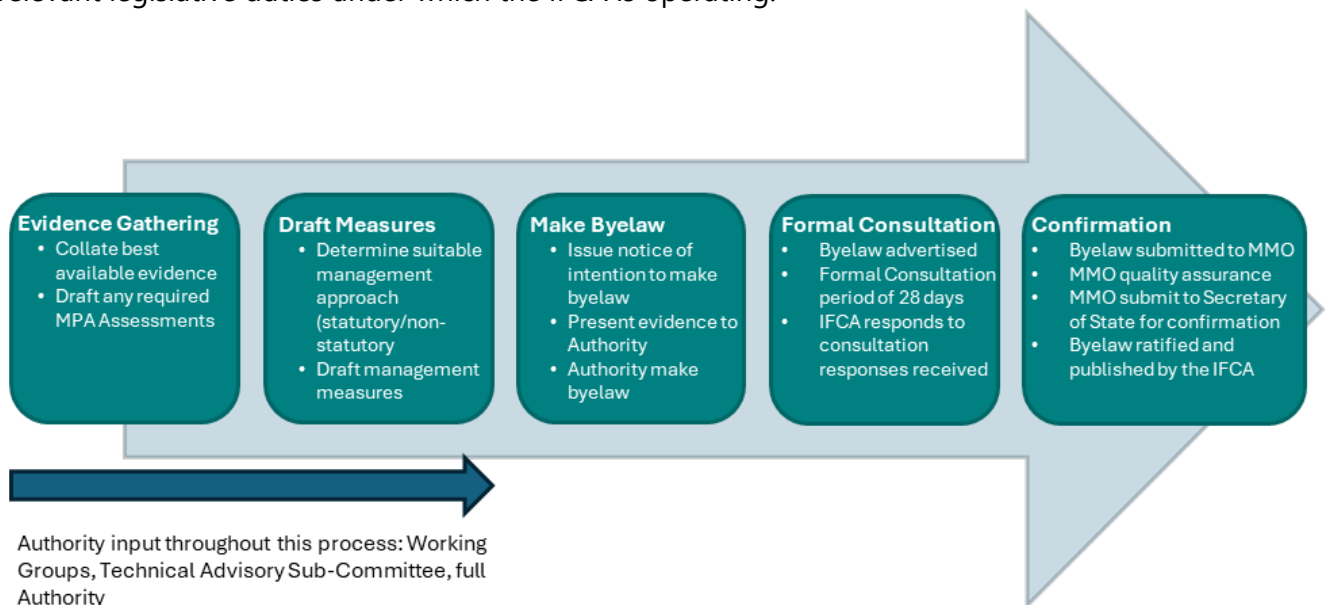
In developing management interventions, IFCAs can explore both statutory and non-statutory interventions. Statutory interventions commonly are in the form of byelaws, non-statutory interventions may be codes of conduct or practice or fishery guidance measures.

### Byelaws

Section 155 of the MaCAA describes how IFCAs have the power to make byelaws:

- (1) *For the purposes of performing the duty imposed by section 153 or the duty imposed by section 154, the authority for an IFC District may make byelaws for that District.*
- (2) *Byelaws made under this section must be observed within the District for which they are made.*
- (3) *A byelaw made under this section does not have effect until it is confirmed by the Secretary of State.*
- (4) *The Secretary of State may confirm a byelaw without modification or with such modifications as are agreed to by the IFC authority that made the byelaw.*
- (5) *Before confirming a byelaw, the Secretary of State may cause a local inquiry to be held.*

Byelaws must be compatible with and cannot be less stringent or inconsistent with National or Community legislation. The Defra Guidance outlines best practice for the delivery and implementation of byelaws which must be based on sound evidence, follow particular decision-making routes and ensure undertaking of appropriate stakeholder consultations. The stages of the process which are followed in working under this Guidance are outlined below, noting that there may be additional elements dependent on the requirements of the management intervention being developed and the relevant legislative duties under which the IFCA is operating.



**Development of Management process map, based on Defra byelaw making guidance**

## Management Review Process

Following the implementation of a management intervention within the District, Southern IFCA are committed to reviewing the performance of statutory and non-statutory measures to ensure that inshore fisheries management continues to be effective and is underpinned by best available evidence.

The decision to review a particular management intervention may be based on a number of different factors, including but not limited to:

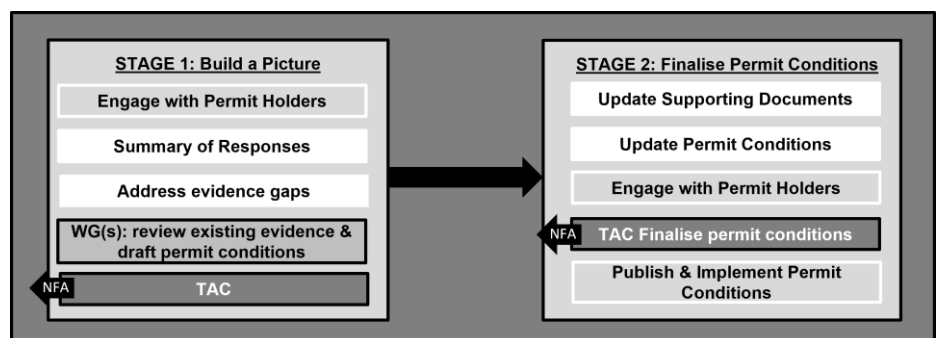
- Review periods stipulated in a byelaw, Management Intentions Document or Monitoring & Control Plan (M&CP)
- Trigger points or thresholds being reached under a M&CP
- Review of permit conditions
- Newly emerging evidence, new MPA designations, changes to legislative duties or Government targets
- Requirements under a Fisheries Management Plan (FMP)
- Input from the stakeholder community identifying common themes and through community engagement, e.g. Community Drop-In Surgeries, Permit Byelaw Community Forums

Supporting documents for a management intervention (including **Monitoring and Control Plans** and **Management Intentions Documents**) are designed to analyse the current situation within a particular fishery and identify objectives to help that fishery develop sustainably. Timelines and milestones for monitoring the effectiveness of current management can be set within these documents, along with an outline of evidence sources that may feed into this monitoring and a system for the collation of best available evidence for the fishery to inform any reviews, including identifying where further evidence gathering may need to be undertaken. For more established fisheries, the plan may set out a framework for feedback and a process for the Authority to follow to ensure that the objectives of the fishery continue to be met.

## Permit Condition Reviews

A Permit Byelaw provides a mechanism under which the introduction of specific measures can be introduced via permit conditions in accordance with the procedure set out in the Permit Byelaw and supporting documents. This offers a flexible approach to managing fishing activities, enabling the Authority to adapt more easily to new and improved evidence. Reviews of permit conditions are carried out in consultation with permit holders and any interested parties, and considers the current best available evidence base. A guide process for undertaking a Permit Condition Review is outlined below.

This process map is not intended to be binding, rather it seeks to provide a useful guide upon which Permit Condition Reviews can be delivered, noting that specific byelaws may have detailed processes for reviewing management.



**Permit Condition Review Process Map**



### 1.3.2 Monitoring Inshore Fisheries

The RPT conduct stock assessments and surveys in order to contribute to the IFCA's understanding of the marine environment and fisheries resources. This data is used to provide a sound evidence base to aid the Authority in its decision-making process to achieve successful and sustainable management, whilst protecting the marine environment.

Surveys and stock assessments are either completed on an annual basis to support existing management within the District or may be undertaken on a more ad hoc basis in order to support a particular evidence need. As much as possible Southern IFCA seek **partnership working** and **industry collaboration** to help facilitate the undertaking of the Monitoring Programme.

#### Data Collection

Where additional evidence needs are identified to support future management decisions, or to work in alignment with nationally agreed directions in fisheries management through the publication of Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs), the RPT will explore available opportunities for gathering this data, utilising the ability to work with partners and collaborate with industry. The Authority continues to actively strengthen its relationship with local academic institutions to identify opportunities for integrated research and publication, particularly in assisting with providing additional technical expertise for example in improving understandings of shellfish and fish biology.

#### Marine Assets

To facilitate the delivery of the RPT monitoring program, Southern IFCA seek to work with local fishers through the chartering of fishing vessels. This not only enables the Authority to utilise local industry knowledge but also provides an important opportunity for stakeholders to play a key part in the collection of evidence for their fisheries, aiming to improve understandings of related management.

The Authority also has access to a range of specialist survey equipment including fishing dredges, towed and remotely operated underwater video cameras, a side-scan sonar and sediment grabs. The Authority also has the ability to work with local and national research institutions to facilitate the use of additional survey equipment where necessary.

Southern IFCA has three Fisheries Protection Vessels located across the District. These vessels have a secondary role to assist in the delivery of the RPT Monitoring Programme with the main focus aligned with the role of the Compliance and Enforcement Team.



*Permitted vessel in the Solent Dredge Permit Fishery sampling for the Solent Scallop Survey*



**The Compliance & Enforcement Team Plan for 2026-2027 outlines more detail on the Authority's operational assets.**



### 1.3.3 Projects and Emerging Work

Periodically the Authority may be asked to be involved in external projects for example projects developed through national funding streams. A consideration of the Authority's involvement in these types of projects will be on a case-by-case basis with proposals reviewed in line with the RPT Plan 2026-2027 and the Annual Strategy 2026-2027.



### 1.3.4 Technical Expertise

Underpinning the work undertaken by the RPT is a data management and analysis capability and Geographic Information System (GIS) expertise. This enables the visualisation, analysis and interpretation of data in order to better understand trends and relationships. Both the data management and GIS expertise within the RPT provide a valuable resource to underpin fisheries management interventions, monitoring and engagement. Outputs help to facilitate delivery through the sharing of information/data and the use of visual aids to support understanding of management measures, fishing activity/effort, the location of designated sites, features and wider sensitive habitats. In addition, this expertise benefits the presentation of survey and research outcomes in an accessible manner and allows sharing of outcomes with relevant partners, such as through the FMP process.

Building these skills within the RPT remains an ongoing focus through each of the RPT functions and under the Southern IFCA **Organisation Anchor**, to allow continued development of capabilities.



### 1.3.5 Engagement

Engagement through the RPT is instrumental to the delivery of all other functions. The RPT attend local, regional and national meetings/open days/information events, participate in fisher led forums, consult & engage on management interventions and facilitate the communication of information from other regulatory bodies and government agencies.

Engagement is also achieved through cross-team collaboration with the Compliance & Enforcement Team to utilise land and sea patrols as opportunities to engage with stakeholders. The Authority also has electronic assets which are utilised for engagement including the Southern IFCA website and social media feeds on X (formally Twitter), Facebook and Instagram.



For 2026-2027, the RPT will actively seek to deliver against the **Southern IFCA: 2026-2027 Mission** as set out in the Annual Strategy 2026-2027, identifying opportunities relevant to the **Specific Actions** for the Mission through engagement related to all RPT functions.

## Section 2: Delivery Metrics

Delivery metrics as identified in the Annual Strategy 2026-2027 will appear throughout this Team Plan in order to demonstrate where they underpin the work of the RPT. The graphics will provide a golden thread drawing from the Annual Strategy.

IFCA Strategic Anchors		IFCA Key Themes		IFCA 2026-27 Mission		
Economic Growth	1	Employing proportionality when considering best available evidence	6	Industry Collaboration	Give a voice	
Food Security	2	Supporting Nature's Recovery	7	Co-development	Build confidence	
Resilient Communities	3	Building awareness of Climate Change implications	8	Working in partnership	Drive meaningful action	
Fishers as Custodians	4	Managing fisheries which co-exist & thrive alongside conservation protections	9	IFCA Organisations Anchor	Create Ownership	
Evolving Research Methodologies	5	Inform national discussions on robust inshore fisheries & conservation management	10		Facilitating a flourishing culture	
Fisheries Objectives	Sustainability 1	Ecosystem 3	Bycatch 5	National Benefit 7	Supporting Defra	
	Precautionary 2	Scientific Evidence 4	Equal Access 6	Climate Change 8		
						Fisheries Management Plans*
						Marine Protected Areas*
					Marine Consents*	
					Net Zero/Blue Carbon*	

## Section 3: RPT Focus Areas

In addition to the delivery of business as usual, the following two **RPT Focus Areas** have been identified for the RPT.

### Review of management of dredge fisheries in The Solent

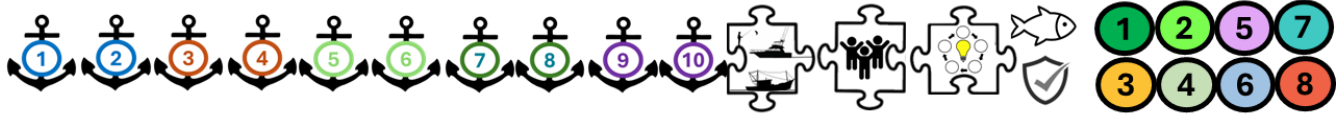
To undertake a wider review of the management for dredge fishing in The Solent, regulated under The Solent Dredge Permit Byelaw (SDPB), taking account of changes in species composition and the development of the fishery since the introduction of the SDPB in 2021. Utilising best available evidence, including from monitoring and stakeholder engagement, the review will inform & deliver a long-term management plan to achieve sustainable management of the fishery alongside the marine environment.

### Permit Condition Review for the Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Fishery

To ensure the continued delivery of sustainable management for the dredge fishery in Poole Harbour, a review of permit conditions will be undertaken in line with the process in the Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Byelaw, taking particular account of fishing gear management & application within the fishery in the context of Poole Harbour as an MPA, and seeking to further develop the Monitoring & Control Plan to support sustainable stock management for key commercial species.

## Review of Management of Dredge Fisheries in The Solent

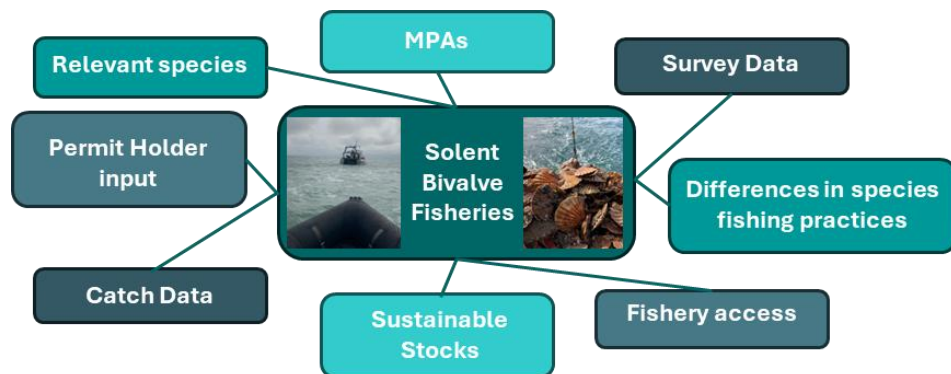
### Delivery Metrics:



The [Solent Dredge Permit Byelaw](#) (SDPB) regulates fishing with dredges for shellfish species within The Solent through the annual allocation of permits.





Following reviews during 2023 and 2025 specific to management of the fishery for King scallop under a Category A Solent Dredge Permit, a wider review of the management for dredge fishing in The Solent will be undertaken, taking account of changes in species composition within the fishery, such as the emergence of the King scallop fishery in 2021, and the development of the fishery and fishing methods since the introduction of the SDPB.

The review will seek to utilise best available evidence including that from monitoring and scientific data collection within the fishery, compliance & enforcement data and from stakeholder engagement both carried out to date and carried out as part of this review. The aim of this process will be to deliver a long-term management plan to achieve sustainable management of the fishery alongside the marine environment. Elements which will need to be considered as part of the review include:



Dependent on the determined scope and scale of the review, it is likely that delivery of outcomes may be **phased between the 2026-2027 fishing season** which is due to commence on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2026 **and the 2027-2028 fishing season**.

Through the delivery of this RPT Focus Area there are opportunities to contribute to the specific actions identified for the Southern IFCA: 2026-2027 Mission:

- 
**Give a voice** – meeting permit holders in their everyday environment through related monitoring & survey work, and during compliance patrols will help to inform the shape and progress of the review.
- 
**Build confidence** – incorporating views through the local 2025-2026 Community Drop-In Surgeries into the review, to understand common themes raised around the SDPB fishery.
- 
**Drive meaningful action** – through the process, ensuring that permit holders understand the decision-making process relevant to their fishery and where they can input through consultation and wider engagement. Ensure that feedback loops are in place through the review and afterwards to facilitate continued discussion.
- 
**Create ownership** – provide clear feedback on where engagement and input from permit holders has been used to inform the review and defined where outcomes have reflected or not reflected that input. Through the process encourage stewardship of the fishery by permit holders and increase levels of co-development to support accountability and ownership.

## Permit Condition Review for the Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Fishery

### Delivery Metrics:



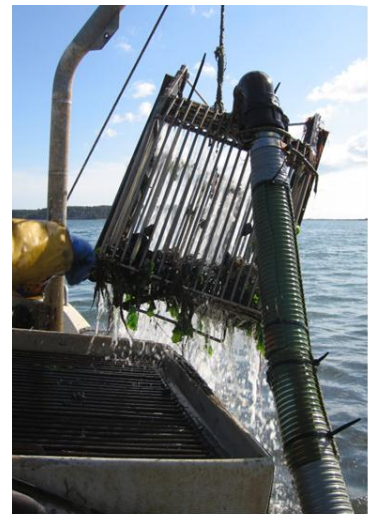
The **Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Fishery** is regulated under the Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Byelaw (PHDBP), with the allocation of a limited number of permits on an annual basis for dredge fishing for bivalve species within Poole Harbour.

Under the Byelaw, the Authority has the ability to review the suitability of permit conditions, permit fees, and limitations on the number of permits every three years or sooner in accordance with a set process. The last review was carried out in 2024. Permit conditions can be used to manage:

- Catch restrictions and reporting
- Gear types
- Gear construction and restrictions
- Spatial and temporal restrictions
- The fitting of specified equipment to vessels

In order to ensure the continued delivery of sustainable management for the dredge fishery in Poole Harbour, a review of permit conditions will be undertaken, taking particular account of fishing gear management & application within the fishery in the context of Poole Harbour as an MPA. The review may also encompass other considerations related to permit conditions; the full scope of the review will be based on best available evidence as defined in Paragraph 11 of the PHDPB.

The review will be carried out during the 2026-2027 year, with a final determination of any outcomes made **prior to the start of the 2027-2028 season on 25<sup>th</sup> May 2027**. The process will utilise Authority Member Working Groups and the Technical Advisory Sub-Committee with opportunities for consultation and stakeholder input identified and communicated to Permit Holders and any other relevant stakeholders throughout the process.



*Permitted dredge fishing vessel operating within the PHDPB fishery.*

Through the delivery of this RPT Focus Area there are opportunities to contribute to the specific actions identified for the Southern IFCA: 2026-2027 Mission:



**Give a voice** – encouraging discussions with permit holders at pre-season meetings and during the 2026-27 fishing season. Provision of engagement materials to support understanding and therefore facilitate discussion will also enable permit holders to engage with Southern IFCA in their everyday environment to help inform the review.



**Build confidence** – incorporating views from the 2025-2026 Poole Community Drop-In Surgery on fishing gear use and application, and the populations of key target species, into the review, to understand common themes raised around this element of the PHDP fishery.



**Drive meaningful action** – through the process, ensuring that permit holders understand the decision-making process relevant to their fishery and where they can input through consultation and wider engagement. Ensure that feedback loops are in place through the review and afterwards to facilitate continued discussion.



**Create ownership** – provide clear feedback on where engagement and input from permit holders has been used to inform the review and define where outcomes have reflected or not reflected that input. Through the process further promote stewardship of the fishery by permit holders and increase levels of co-development to support accountability and ownership.

## Section 4: Delivering the Southern IFCA: 2026-2027 Mission




Through 2026-2027, the RPT will seek to develop communications and engagement to support the **Southern IFCA: 2026-2027 Mission**.

Seeking new and improved methods of communication and engagement, and tailoring this to the needs of the community, ensures that Southern IFCA remain committed to maintaining transparency and accessibility in management development, monitoring and review, and the integration of stakeholder feedback into policy and workstreams.



Southern IFCA are continually evolving methods of engagement and communication with stakeholders, seeking new and improved ways of working with the community. Southern IFCA remain committed to maintaining transparency and accessibility in delivering RPT functions and will continue to work to provide opportunities for communication and collaboration across all stakeholders.

Specific opportunities to contribute to the Southern IFCA: 2026-2027 Mission, which will be implemented by the RPT during 2026-2027 are:

<p><b>Technical Advisory Sub-Committee Reports</b></p>	<p>To explore integration of public-facing summary sections for each technical report cover sheet to provide an overview of the report contents and key points utilising non-technical language.</p> 
<p><b>Community Engagement Outputs</b></p>	<p>To develop factsheet style, public-facing documents reflecting outputs of community engagement events led by Southern IFCA, providing detail on feedback provided and, where relevant, how this is reflected or how it couldn't be reflected in any resulting management development or reviews. These can then be made available by Southern IFCA and support ongoing coastal engagement.</p> 
<p><b>Survey Outputs</b></p>	<p>To develop summary documents for survey reports in an easily accessible format, providing a concise overview of the key findings from the survey and how the data is used by Southern IFCA to inform management. This would provide an additional opportunity to outline where monitoring work feeds into wider workstreams like the FMP programme and encourage engagement with stakeholders on the coast both as part of surveys and more widely to facilitate discussion on data collection &amp; how the community can get involved.</p> 

## Section 5: Workstream Delivery

In addition to the RPT Focus Areas, there is ongoing work within the RPT relating to reviewing management interventions, supporting Defra's delivery of Fisheries Act Objectives, and monitoring which will be delivered during the 2026-2027 year. Details of workstreams are provided under relevant headings in this section.

### 5.1 Supporting Defra Delivery of Fisheries Act Objectives

The Fisheries Act 2020 was introduced to make provisions relating to fisheries, fishing, aquaculture and marine conservation following the departure of the UK from Europe. The Act creates a legal commitment to sustainable fishing and supporting future generations of fishers whilst allowing the marine environment to thrive. The Act sets out the eight Fisheries Objectives, developed to underpin this commitment, and sets down the requirement for a Joint Fisheries Statement (JFS) and Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs). Under the JFS, IFCAs are required to have regard to the Fisheries Act 2020, the JFS and FMPs when undertaking relevant functions.

There are three programs support the delivery of the Fisheries Act Objectives by Defra.

#### Fisheries Management Plans



The Fisheries Act 2020 requires the UK fisheries policy authorities (Defra in England) to publish Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs) to help deliver the ambition for sustainable fisheries.

Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs) are evidence-based action plans, developed in collaboration with the fishing sector and other stakeholders with the purpose of delivering sustainable fisheries for current and future generations in line with the Fisheries Act Objectives. Each FMP specifies a stock, type of fishing and a geographic area covered, as well as the relevant responsible authorities and indicators for monitoring the effectiveness of the plan. Once FMPs are published, they will inform relevant fisheries management actions, with each FMP being designed according to the specific needs of the stock, fisheries and locations that it covers.

The Southern IFCA District is covered by the following FMPs (all FMPs cover the whole District unless otherwise specified):

#### Tranche 1 & 2 – Published December 2023

- Crab & Lobster FMP
- Whelk FMP
- King Scallop FMP
- Bass FMP
- Channel Demersal Non-Quota Species FMP
- Southern North Sea and Eastern Channel Mixed Flatfish FMP (*ICES area 7d only, published October 2024*)

#### Tranch 3 – Published December 2025

- Southern North Sea and Channel Skates and Rays FMP
- Cockles FMP

- Queen Scallop FMP
- North Sea and Channel Sprat FMP

#### Tranche 4 – Publication Phase

- Seabream FMP
- Wrasses Complex FMP
- Celtic Seas and Western Channel Pelagic FMP (*ICES area 7e only*)
- Celtic Seas and Western Channel Demersal FMP (*ICES area 7d only*)

Southern IFCA is involved at all phases of FMP development, working to support Defra in the preparation, publication and implementation of FMPs, to drive forward the improvement in the sustainable management of fish stocks and fisheries and shift towards an ecosystem-based approach to management taking account of climate change.

This work will be ongoing throughout the 2026-2027 year and therefore does not have specific quarterly timelines. The Southern IFCA continues to provide representation at Working Group meetings for relevant FMPs, attendance at engagement events and meetings both virtual and in person at a District, regional and national level and maintains a dedicated webpage on the Southern IFCA website to provide a resource for stakeholders to find information for specific FMPs including engagement events and contact details for Delivery Partners. Southern IFCA has a dedicated Project Officer for FMPs to facilitate and coordinate this workstream.

Southern IFCA is committed to providing expert sectoral and inshore fisheries management advice to the FMP process and engages closely with Delivery Partners on relevant FMPs to provide such advice, any evidence/data held by the IFCA and to review draft/final FMP outputs.

 **The Southern IFCA FMP webpage can be viewed here**  
<https://www.southern-ifca.gov.uk/fisheries-management-plans>

Southern IFCA supports the post-publication phase of FMPs through identifying opportunities for feeding research and monitoring outputs into national datasets and in order to contribute to identified evidence gaps. Whilst all Southern IFCA monitoring outputs provide data that can be fed into this process, there are three specific areas of research that have direct links to identified evidence gaps within the relevant FMPs.

#### (1) Whelk LPUE Project



- **District Applicability:** District-wide
- Following the delivery of this as a pilot project in 2025/26, the project will continue for a second year, seeking to work collaboratively with the fishing industry to collect data on landings per unit effort from pot fishing for whelks that will improve understanding of the whelk fishery within the district and support



understanding the effectiveness of management measures under the Southern IFCA Pot Fishing Byelaw (currently in the MMO QA process prior to consideration by the SoS).

- The outputs from year 1 have identified that data collection can provide LPUE at temporal and spatial scales which is able to help identify fishing patterns, potential stock delineations and differences in fishing practice across the District.
- This work could provide data which would contribute to the following objectives identified in the Whelk FMP:

Main Objective from Whelk FMP:

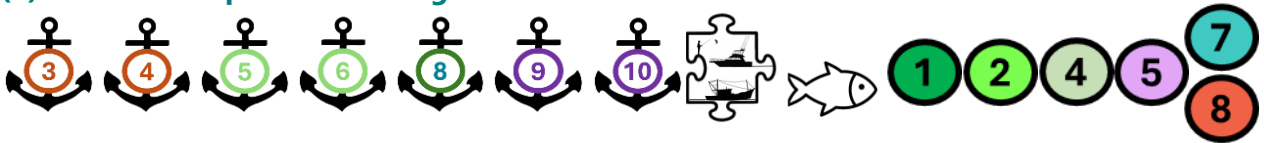
- Assess catch per unit effort in the whelk fishery – *Improved understanding of fishing effort and catches will facilitate improved modelling and assessment of stock status. This will improve the ability to implement evidence-based fisheries management which is responsive to changes in fishing activity and stock status.*

Additional Relevant Objectives:

- Develop a data collection program
- Define stock boundaries for assessment and management
- Assess stock or exploitation status
- Develop a whelk harvest strategy with harvest control rules

Whelk LPUE Project – Year 2				
RPT Core Function	Quarter 1 Apr - Jun	Quarter 2 Jul - Sept	Quarter 3 Oct - Dec	Quarter 4 Jan – Mar
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continuation of data collection program</li> <li>• Collation and analysis of data</li> <li>• Engagement with the whelk fishing sector</li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collation and analysis of data</li> <li>• Reporting on Year 2 data collection</li> </ul>

**(2) Solent Scallop Research Programme**



- **District Applicability:** Solent Dredge Permit Byelaw Fishery
- The aim of the programme is to bring together current research; the Solent Scallop Survey and catch data from the SDPB fishery, with three new research projects to deliver a holistic programme that aims to answer key questions and facilitate improved understandings of the fishery. The aim of the project is to collect data, working with fishers, that can inform sustainable management at a local level and feed into discussions on scallop management at a national level by complementing research such as that carried out by the Environmental Assessment of Scallop Innovation Gear (EASIG) project and supporting the implementation and addressing of evidence gaps for the King Scallop FMP and the UK King Scallop Fishery Improvement Project (FIP).



- The following tables detail the new research elements under this project, and the relevance to both local and national management.

<b>Additions to current Solent Scallop Survey</b>
To increase survey data collection by including analysis of occurrence of empty scallop shell, occurrence of defined bycatch species and condition scoring of live scallop.
<p><b>Data use:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional understanding of impacts of the SCE fishery and gear on SCE condition and levels of bycatch within the fishery.</li> <li>• Monitoring trends in SCE which could indicate environmental or other influencing factors (i.e., presence of disease).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Links to management:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to quantify additional elements of SCE fishery which could inform future adaptive management approaches.</li> <li>• Provision of data specific to SIFCA District to understand potential implications of management options proposed at a national level.</li> </ul>
<p><b>National Relevance:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relevant to 4x evidence gaps identified in the King Scallop FMP</li> </ul>
<b>Identification of key fishing areas in the Solent</b>
To explore the feasibility of mapping fishing activity using existing datasets to identify areas of importance and relationship to other fisheries/elements of the marine environment.
<p><b>Data use:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifying areas of overlap between the Solent SCE fishery and other fisheries, for example pot &amp; trap fisheries to help identify hot spots of fishing activity.</li> <li>• To help inform future monitoring work and spatial distribution of survey sites.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Links to management:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring monitoring data is capturing appropriate the scope and scale of the fishery.</li> <li>• Potential to inform marine spatial planning in future reviews of South Marine Plan.</li> <li>• Understanding of fishery distribution in relation to other fisheries within the Solent.</li> </ul>
<p><b>National Relevance:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relevant to 2x evidence gaps identified in the King Scallop FMP</li> </ul>
<b>Gear Trial Research</b>
To compare dredge types within the Solent fishery to explore influence of ground type, water depth and other influencing factors on CPUE, condition, bycatch and collection of detritus. Methodology based on those used by EASIG project to allow for similar data collection specific to the Solent SCE fishery.
<p><b>Data use:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inform understandings of differences between dredge types to complement national research.</li> <li>• Providing an indication as to differences in gear type for a small-scale, inshore SCE fishery.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Links to management:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential to inform national discussions on management for SCE gear sustainability.</li> <li>• Complement research being carried out/proposed for larger SCE fisheries by providing a perspective on small-scale fisheries.</li> <li>• Support use of N-Viro dredges within the Solent.</li> <li>• Potential to provide information to support any future review of The Scallop Fishing (England) Order 2012.</li> </ul>
<p><b>National Relevance:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relevant to 3x evidence gaps identified in the King Scallop FMP</li> </ul>

### (3) Pot Fishing Byelaw Implementation

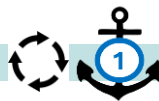


- **District Applicability:** District-wide
- The proposed Southern IFCA Pot Fishing Byelaw (PFB) is currently undergoing QA by the MMO prior to consideration by the SoS. One element of the PFB is the proposed introduction of a permit scheme for commercial and recreational pot fisheries with specific conditions proposed for fisheries targeting different species including whelk and crab & lobster.
- Through the implementation of the PFB, the permit scheme can be used as a pilot for exploring how such measures can be implemented within pot fisheries and provide useful information to inform wider permit approaches for both whelk and crab & lobster fisheries.
- This work could provide information which would contribute to the following management outputs identified through the Whelk and Crab & Lobster FMPs:
  - Whelk FMP
    - Short-term (1-2 years) measure: whelk fishing permit scheme or entitlement with conditions
  - Crab & Lobster FMP
    - Long-term: managing recreational fishing effort
    - Long-term: embedding long-term management approaches focusing on the development of a harvest strategy with appropriate harvest control rules



Pot Fishing Byelaw Implementation				
RPT Core Function	Quarter 1 Apr - Jun	Quarter 2 Jul - Sept	Quarter 3 Oct - Dec	Quarter 4 Jan – Mar
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The timeline for delivery of the implementation of the PFB is dependent on timescales required for MMO QA and consideration by the SoS.</li> </ul>			

### Marine Sustainable Development



This workstream relates to the Southern IFCA's contributions to marine planning and marine licencing.

#### Marine Licencing

Marine licencing covers a diverse range of activities from sea wall repairs through to large scale infrastructure developments. The Marine Management Organisation (MMO) is responsible for issuing marine licences in English waters and applicants must go through a formal application process if the proposed activity requires a marine licence. IFCAs are a statutory consultee in this process. Southern IFCA continue to act in their capacity as a statutory consultee for marine licences reviewing relevant licence applications provided through the MMO system and providing comment, data and information on relevant fishing activities as required as well as encouraging applicants to engage directly with the fishing industry. Summaries of our engagement in this process are provided quarterly to the Authority.

## Marine Protected Areas and Good Environmental Status



The Marine Strategy Regulations 2010 have a high-level objective of achieving good environmental status (GES) in UK waters. GES is consistent with the 25 Year Environment Plan vision of clean, healthy, safe, productive and biologically diverse seas and supports the wider environmental objectives of the Environment Improvement Plan.

The Environmental Improvement Plans 2023 & 2025 set out how Defra will delivery biodiversity targets and commitments by restoring Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) through strengthened protections. This requires IFCAs to ensure all fishing activity in inshore MPAs has been assessed, and where necessary, management put in place. The management development phase of this work has been completed with the ratification of the Bottom Towed Fishing Gear Byelaw 2023, the drafting of the Shore Gathering Byelaw (with the MMO for quality assurance) and the implementation of Co-Developed Principles for black seabream. Through 2026-2027 these management measures will be monitored.

Deliverables for Southern IFCA, defined by Defra for this workstream are as follows:

### Marine Protected Areas

- Ensure all fishing activity in inshore MPAs has been assessed and, where necessary, fisheries management measures put in place.
- Collaborating with partners to deliver management where necessary to achieve MPA conservation objectives.

### Good Environmental Status

- Work with Defra, MMO and SNCBs on a workplan of measures required to prevent damaging impacts on Marine Protected Areas, to support the achievement of Good Environment Status under the Marine Strategy.
- To support the development and coordination of management within MPAs in accordance with the new statutory MPA target and with the Good Environment Status targets.
- Enable co-ordination and reporting on the MPA network, both locally and nationally so as to demonstrate the contribution of the MPA network to the statutory MPA target, GES and the 25 Year Environment Plan targets.
- Contribute to the 25 Year Environment Plan and targets relevant to the inshore marine environment as laid out in England’s Environmental Improvement Plans.

## 5.2 Reviews of Management Interventions

### Black Seabream Co-Developed Principles

#### Delivery Metrics:



Southern IFCA recognise that black seabream (BSB) fisheries are data poor and the adaptive approach under the [Black Seabream Co-Developed Principles](#) allows Southern IFCA to robustly respond in a timely way to ensure the future sustainability of the fisheries. To facilitate an adaptive approach,

Southern IFCA are committed to reviewing the Co-Developed Principles under an Annual Review pathway. The first annual review will follow the conclusion of the recognised breeding season in year 1 (1<sup>st</sup> April to 31<sup>st</sup> July 2026).


The Annual Review, will consider:

- **community feedback** following on the application of the Co-Developed Principles & overall health of BSB fishery.
- analysis of **data collected** during the applicable season,
- additional data collected (running all year-round)
- IFCA **compliance & enforcement metrics**,
- **data from external sources** (other relevant authorities),
- any updated **Conservation Advice** from Natural England,
- **BSB FMP** outcomes (goals, actions and data gaps),
- **emerging evidence on BSB populations or fisheries** (for example published outputs from the Angling for Sustainability Project).

Following the Annual Review in any given year, if changes to the Co-Developed Principles are identified to be required, any proposals will be considered with the community prior to consideration by the Authority. Any changes will be implemented prior to the subsequent season.



Following Annual Review in any given year, if singular or multiple Co-Developed Principles are deemed to be not achieving the Policy Objectives, then consideration may be given to the development of fisheries relevant triggers and/or statutory management mechanisms for one or more Co-Developed Principles in accordance with recognised practice. In this instance, Southern IFCA would follow the established byelaw making process with associated opportunities for consultation with stakeholders.

Black Seabream Co-Developed Principles – Year 1 Review				
RPT Core Function	Quarter 1 Apr - Jun	Quarter 2 Jul - Sept	Quarter 3 Oct - Dec	Quarter 4 Jan – Mar
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data collection &amp; monitoring under Co-Developed Principles</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any proposed updates considered at Nov TAC Meeting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Final recommendations to Feb TAC</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analysis of data &amp; all BAE following 31<sup>st</sup> July</li> <li>• Engagement with the community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Further engagement with community following Nov TAC</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dissemination of information to community on review outcomes post Feb TAC</li> </ul>

## Net Fishing Byelaw – Year 3 Review

### Delivery Metrics:



Under the [Net Fishing Byelaw](#), Southern IFCA carries out an annual review of flexible permit conditions, permit fees and limitations on the number of permits for **Net Permit Areas**. A review of the Monitoring & Control Plan (M&CP) for Net Permit Areas is also carried out, including updating Threshold Trigger Levels for salmonid interactions in line with the defined process in the M&CP.

The review takes place in accordance with the process set out in the Net Fishing Byelaw incorporating engagement with Permit Holders, providing opportunities to give feedback on net fisheries in the Net Permit Areas and any comment or evidence Permit Holders wish to provide to inform the review process. Outputs from consultation form one source of best available evidence considered by the Authority for the review.



The review commences in **Quarter 3**, with a decision on any outcomes made at the **February TAC Meeting** ahead of the start of the new permit period on 1<sup>st</sup> April.

## Legacy Byelaws

### Delivery Metrics:



During the 2026-2027 year, the RPT will commence an initial exploration of Southern IFCA legacy byelaws, identifying relevant byelaws and undertaking an initial exercise to determine relevance and suitability of each byelaw as well as what best available evidence exists relevant to each identified byelaw. This initial exploration will be used to scope a full review of legacy byelaws and associated timelines.

## Minimum Conservation Reference Size Review

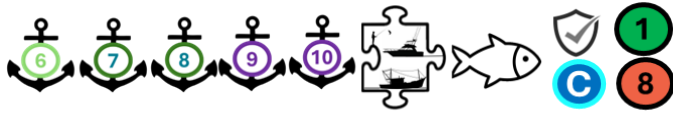
### Delivery Metrics:



[Minimum Conservation Reference Size](#) (MCRS) is a management tool used at a national and regional level to help achieve sustainable fisheries. During the 2023–2024 year, information was collated to update evidence packages for key species in the district and ensure that the best available evidence had been identified as part of the review. In order to align any outcomes of the review with national direction and incorporate outputs from relevant FMPs, there is a need for Southern IFCA to engage in the post-publication phase for published FMPs, and determine how outputs from FMPs for relevant species relate to current Southern IFCA management and suggested management approaches from the district-specific MCRS review. As this understanding continues to develop through the 2026-2027 year, Southern IFCA will review the scope and requirements under the MCRS review, progressing the workstream as needed alongside the development of the national direction in fisheries management.

## BTFG Review: Phase II

### Delivery Metrics:



The aim of Phase II of the BTFG Review is to consider district-wide management interventions for sensitive habitats. During 2025-2026, it has become evident that not all evidential elements are in place to allow a full consideration of the delivery of Phase II in an appropriate and proportionate way in line with Southern IFCA's Section 153 MaCAA duties, noting that Phase II will need to balance socioeconomics with the marine environment and the needs of all persons engaged in the exploitation of sea fisheries resources. At present, compounding factors include limited data on the spatial distribution of fisheries, such as that provided by iVMS, a need to understand appropriate methodologies for quantifying RSA usage of different areas of the District, limited mapped feature data for sensitive features outside of MPAs, a need to develop methodologies for appropriately capturing and quantifying social, cultural and community impacts of management, and discussion on appropriate management for BTFG. During the 2026-2027 year, Southern IFCA will maintain a watching brief on relevant factors including; the implementation of FMPs, many of which include furthering understandings of BTFG impacts and the geographic scope of different fisheries, gathering of evidence through the RPT Monitoring Programme on relevant stocks, and stakeholder engagement, committed to through the 2026-2027 Mission, to more fully understand the best methods of defining the scope and overlap of different activities spatially and potential social, cultural and community impacts to inform an appropriate understanding of the scope and delivery of BTFG Phase II.

## 5.3 Monitoring Inshore Fisheries




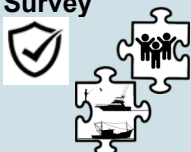
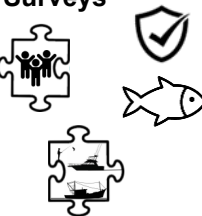
This section details the standard monitoring program for the RPT for 2026-27. Opportunities for engagement are explored through all monitoring activities. The Delivery Metrics achieved by the overarching monitoring programme are detailed above, for each survey the Delivery Metrics of **Industry Collaboration, Co-development, Working in partnership, Fisheries Management Plans** and **Marine Protected Areas** are detailed as relevant.

Survey	Time of Year	Species	Area	Aim	Time Series Data		Outcomes
<b>Whelk Population Survey</b> 	Spring	Common whelk	Solent, Poole Bay, Weymouth Bay, Lyme Bay	To obtain whelk samples from fishers and collect data on size frequency and Catch Per Unit Effort (CPUE)	2023 2024 2025		1) To improve evidence base for whelk data specific to SIFCA District 2) To inform management under the anticipated Pot Fishing Byelaw 3) Data to be made available for use by Whelk FMP
<b>Poole Bivalve Survey</b> 	Apr	Manila clam, Common cockle, American Hard-Shelled clam, other bivalves	Poole Harbour	To obtain bivalve samples from 27 shellfish beds in Poole Harbour and collect data on size frequency and CPUE which can be related to fishery catch and effort data	2016 2017 2018 2019 <del>2020</del> <sup>2</sup> 2021 2022	2023 2024 2025	1) To contribute to time-series dataset 2) To inform management under the Poole Harbour Dredge Permit fishery through M&CP 3) To support the MSC certification 4) Data to be made available for Cockle FMP
<b>Solent Bivalve Survey</b> 	Mar Oct	Manila clam, Common cockle, American Hard-Shelled	Solent Dredge Permit Management Areas 4-6	To obtain bivalve samples from three management areas (Southampton Water, Portsmouth Harbour,	2017 <sup>3</sup> 2018 2019 2020 – spring only <sup>4</sup>	2023 2024 2025 2026	1) To build a baseline of CPUE data 2) To contribute to a time-series dataset 3) To inform management under the Solent Dredge Permit Byelaw – Cat A Permit Conditions

<sup>2</sup> Note that dates with a strikethrough indicate where surveying could not take place due to the Covid-19 Pandemic.

<sup>3</sup> 2017 survey was for autumn in Southampton water only.

<sup>4</sup> Autumn 2020 survey could not take place due to the Covid-19 Pandemic

		clam, other bivalves		Langstone Harbour) and collect data on size frequency and CPUE which can be related to fishery catch and effort data.	2021 – autumn only <sup>5</sup> 2022		4) Data to be made available for Cockle FMP
<b>Solent Scallop Survey</b> 	Jan Apr Sept	King scallop	Solent Dredge Permit Management Areas	To obtain samples of King scallops to improve understanding of the population in the Solent through collecting data on size frequency and CPUE	2021 – July survey <sup>6</sup> 2022 2023 2024	2025 2026	1) To inform management under the Solent Dredge Permit Byelaw – Cat A Permit Conditions 2) Data to be made available for use by the King Scallop FMP
<b>Solent Oyster Survey</b> 	Aug – every other year	Native oyster	Solent Dredge Permit Management Areas	To obtain samples of native oysters and collect data on size frequency and CPUE	2014 2015 2016 2017 2018 2019	2021 2022 2024	1) To inform management under the Solent Dredge Permit Byelaw – Cat B Permit Conditions 2) To inform understandings of native oyster stocks in the Solent
<b>Juvenile Fish Surveys</b> 	Jun Oct	Estuarine fish species	The Fleet, Christchurch Harbour, Yarmouth, River Hamble	To obtain samples of juvenile fish from estuaries across the District identified as having Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) <sup>7</sup> present and collect data on species presence, abundance and size frequency	2016 2017 2018 2019 2020 <sup>8</sup> 2021	2022 2023 2024 2025	1) To inform management under the Net Fishing Byelaw, specific to EFH 2) To promote engagement with the wider stakeholder community 3) To explore opportunities for partnership working and understand potential contribution of data to support partner projects such as those exploring co-management approaches, marine natural capital & ecosystem services 4) To contribute to a time-series dataset to highlight the importance of estuaries to certain species 5) Data to be made available for use by relevant FMPs

<sup>5</sup> Spring 2021 survey could not take place due to the Covid-19 Pandemic

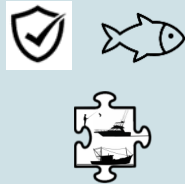
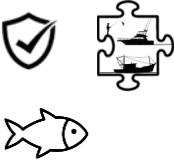
<sup>6</sup> The first Solent Scallop Survey was carried out in the summer of 2021 as a trial and to test the methodology, twice yearly sampling commenced from 2022

<sup>7</sup> In this case, the use of the term 'Essential Fish Habitat' refers to the term as used in the Net Fishing Byelaw package

<sup>8</sup> Spring survey unable to take place and autumn survey partially achieved due to the Covid-19 Pandemic.

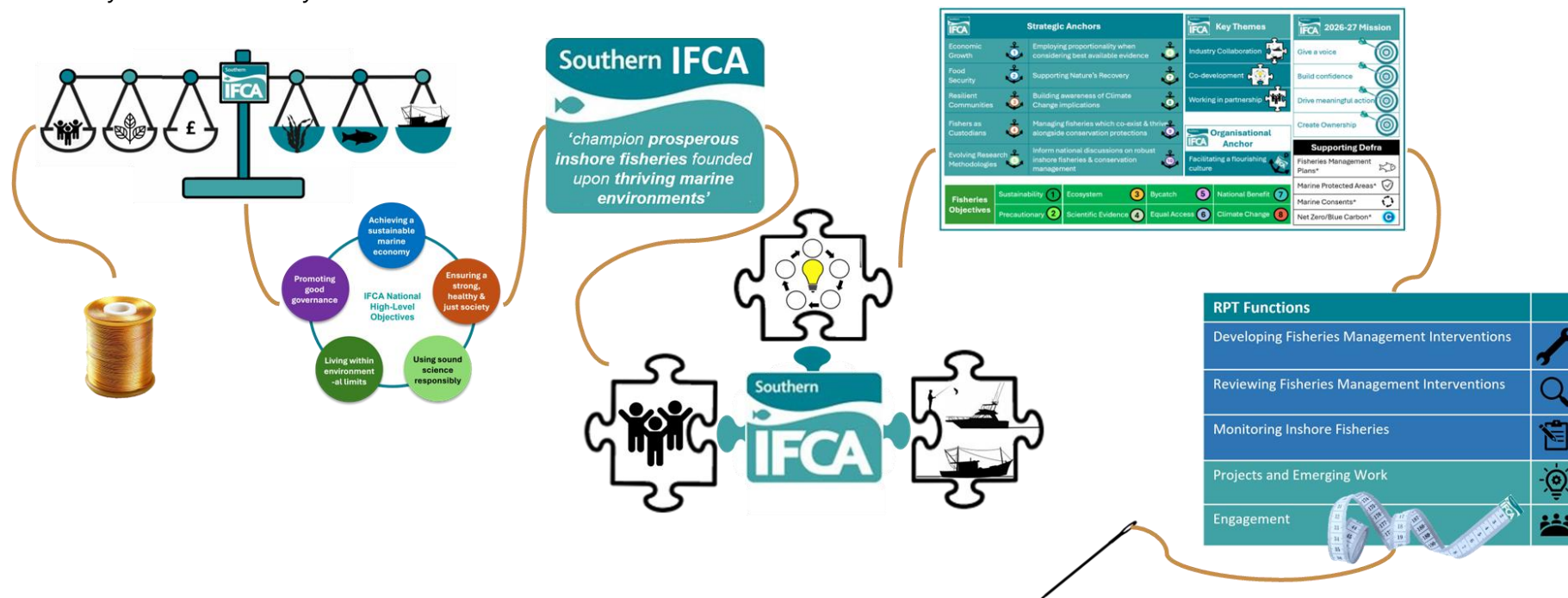
The following table outlines additional monitoring activities undertaken by the RPT which are separate from the survey program of work.

Analysis of data under these activities is carried out by the RPT, however these monitoring activities sit across all teams within the Southern IFCA for the obtaining and collation of the data (Business Services Team) and ensuring compliance with data submission as required by related management measures (Compliance & Enforcement Team).

Monitoring Activity	Time of Year	Species	Area	Aim	Time Series Data		Outcomes
<b>Wrasse Fishery Data Collection</b> 	Jul – Dec	Wrasse species	West of District	To obtain catch data from fishers on a voluntary basis on <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Count data of wrasse landed</li> <li>Fishing location</li> <li>Fishing effort</li> </ul>	2018 2019 2020 2021 2022 2023 2024 <i>*no live fishery in 2025</i>		1) To inform management of the live wrasse fishery 2) To inform monitoring under the M&C Plan 3) Report compiled annually for delivery to TAC Meeting following fishery closure 4) Data to be made available for informing Wrasses Complex FMP
<b>Permit Data Collection</b> 	Throughout relevant permit seasons	Poole Harbour Dredge Permit – bivalves  Solent Dredge Permit – bivalves  Net Fishing Byelaw – salmonid interactions	Dependent on specific permit	To analyse data provided by permit holders in respective permitted fisheries and to build time-series datasets which can be used to relate fisher-dependent data to stock survey data.	<u>Poole</u> 2015 2016 2017 2018 2019 2020 2021 2022 2023 2024 2025	<u>Solent</u> 2021 2022 2023 2024 2025  <u>NFB</u> 2024 2025	1) To inform management under respective permit byelaws 2) To help inform evidence gaps on CPUE in relevant FMPs

## Section 6: Reporting

The Southern IFCA Annual Report 2026-27, due for publication in summer 2027, will provide an account of how the RPT have performed in their delivery of this Team Plan, demonstrating achievement of and contribution to, the National IFCA Vision & High-Level Objectives, the Southern IFCA Vision & Key Themes, Delivery Metrics, 2026-2027 Mission and RPT Focus Areas.



Sarah Birchenough  
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Southern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority  
April 2026