



Southern IFCA

Annual Report 2025 to 2026

Presented to the Secretary of State pursuant to Section
178 of the Marine & Coastal Access Act 2009

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PART 1: BACKGROUND TO ANNUAL REPORTING

Annual Reporting

Under Section 178 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act (2009) Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities (IFCAs) are required to produce an Annual Report, which provides an account of the work delivered during the previous reporting year. This report must be sent to the Secretary of State annually following the end of the financial year.

The IFCA Model

A 'golden thread' demonstrates the connection between IFCA aims and objectives on a national stage (Vision, High Level Objective and Success Criterion) with operational delivery at a district level (Southern IFCA Annual Strategy and Team Plans).

National IFCA Vision

'IFCAs will lead, champion and manage a sustainable marine environment & inshore fisheries, by successfully securing the right balance between social, environmental & economic benefits to ensure healthy seas, sustainable fisheries & a viable industry'

National IFCA High Level Objectives & Success Criterion

High-Level Objectives and Success Criterion were developed nationally to support attainment of the IFCA Vision and to reflect the developing programme of work delivered by IFCAs' nationally and to demonstrate the IFCAs' contribution to the delivery of the UK Marine Policy Statement. More details can be found in Annex 1.

Southern IFCA Vision

Building upon and with reference to the National IFCA Vision, Southern IFCA developed its own local vision in 2024-2025, to **'champion prosperous inshore fisheries founded upon thriving marine environments'**.

The Southern IFCA vision recognises the symbiotic relationship which exists when well managed inshore fisheries reap environmental and socioeconomic benefit.

Southern IFCA Key Themes

In championing these symbiotic relationships, Southern IFCA set out to draw upon three key themes throughout 2025-2026, which were embedded and threaded throughout all of Southern IFCA's work which, as captured within and central to the wider IFCA model, are essential components to facilitate the delivery of the Southern IFCA vision: **industry collaboration**, **co-development** and **partnership working**.

Southern IFCA Strategic & Organisational Anchors

Ten Strategic Anchors were introduced in the 2025-2026 Annual Strategy to help align Southern IFCAs work at a local level to wider contexts and directions at national and international levels, recognising that rapidly changing landscapes in work prioritisation and national policy objectives.

In addition, an Organisational Anchor was introduced which recognises that Southern IFCAs ability to deliver statutory functions is directly related to the skills and experience that we develop, nurture and maintain across the staff body.

Measuring Success: Annual Reporting Metrics & Document Navigation

Part 2 of this Annual Report provides a high-level overview of how Southern IFCA has performed in its delivery of its [Annual Strategy](#) priorities for the period April 2025 to March 2026, via achievement of, or contribution to the following reporting metrics, using case studies to demonstrate impact:

- ✓ The Southern IFCA **Key Themes, Strategic Anchors & Organisational Anchor**

Parts 3 to 5 of this Annual Report present the work achieved across the three Southern IFCA teams: Research & Policy, Compliance & Enforcement and the Business Services Team, demonstrating where work is aligned with:

- ✓ The Southern IFCA **Key Themes, Strategic Anchors & Organisational Anchor**
- ✓ delivery of the 2025-2026 **Team Horizon Priorities**,
- ✓ the **Eight Fisheries Objectives**, as set out in the Fisheries Act 2020, where IFCA's are required to have regard to the Objectives in delivery of function.
- ✓ where Southern IFCA have **supported Defra in the delivery of additional and specific functions**, further supporting achievement of Government targets set out in the Environment Improvement Plan 2023, to include MPA, FMP and Marine Consents work.
- ✓ the **UK Net Zero Strategy**, via identification and instigation of changes in operations in order to minimise and reduce emissions.

In delivering the above reporting metrics, Southern IFCA are complying with, and demonstrating their **Biodiversity Duty**; a requirement upon all public authorities in accordance with the Environment Act 2021, to consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity in England. This duty is intrinsically interweaved into the work that Southern IFCA deliver and have committed to review annually.

Reporting Metric Symbols

The symbols below are used throughout this report to denote where contributions or achievements to the above reporting metrics have been made between the 1st April 2025 and the 31st March 2026.

Strategic Anchors			Key Themes		Fisheries Objectives	
Economic Growth		Employing proportionality when considering best available evidence		Industry Collaboration & Co-development	Sustainability	
Food Security		Supporting Nature's Recovery		Working in partnership	Precautionary	
Resilient Communities		Building awareness of Climate Change implications		Supporting Defra	Ecosystem	
Fishers as Custodians		Managing fisheries which co-exist & thrive alongside conservation protections			Scientific Evidence	
Evolving Research Methodologies		Inform national discussions on robust inshore fisheries & conservation management			Bycatch	
Organisational Anchor			Facilitating a flourishing culture		Equal Access	
					National Benefit	
					Climate Change	

PART 2: DELIVERING THE ANNUAL STRATEGY

Delivering Southern IFCA's Key Themes

Key Theme: Industry Collaboration

Strengthening engagement through Community Drop-In Surgeries



Strong collaboration with the fishing industry is fundamental to delivering effective inshore fisheries management. Southern IFCA recognises that the most successful management approaches are developed with, rather than for, the communities they affect. During 2025/26, the Authority further embedded this collaborative approach through its programme of Community Drop-In Surgeries, creating opportunities for meaningful dialogue and ensuring that the experiences of the inshore fishing industry continue to shape the Authority's priorities and decision-making.

Following their introduction during the previous reporting period, Community Drop-In Surgeries became an established part of Southern IFCA's engagement programme. Led by the Chairman of the Authority, the Chairman of the Technical Advisory Committee, the Chief Executive Officer and Deputy Chief Officers, the surgeries were designed to provide an informal and accessible environment in which fishers and the wider coastal community could discuss matters of importance directly with senior representatives of the Authority.

During the reporting period, seven Community Drop-In Surgeries were held across the District, including Lulworth Cove, Swanage, the Isle of Wight, Poole, Lymington, Mudeford, Warsash and Portsmouth. Rather than adopting the format of formal public meetings, the sessions were intentionally designed as informal conversations—often over a cup of tea—creating a welcoming environment where stakeholders felt comfortable sharing their experiences, raising concerns and discussing opportunities for improvement.

The objective of these sessions was simple but purposeful: to understand the realities of working within the inshore fishing sector and identify where Southern IFCA could make a practical difference to the daily lives of those working in the industry, whilst recognising the need to balance wider environmental, legislative and strategic responsibilities.

The discussions provided valuable insight into both local issues and challenges shared across the District. Participants engaged openly and constructively, demonstrating a strong willingness not only to highlight concerns but also to propose practical solutions and contribute positively to the future management of the District's fisheries. This collaborative approach reflects Southern IFCA's commitment to developing management that is informed by those with first-hand knowledge and experience of the marine environment.

Importantly, these surgeries were not undertaken simply as an engagement exercise. The feedback received has been analysed to identify recurring themes and common challenges facing the inshore

fishing industry, providing a valuable evidence base to inform future planning and operational priorities. The Authority has subsequently developed an Action Plan for 2026/27, identifying opportunities to address shared challenges, improve ways of working and strengthen support for the inshore sector wherever possible.

The Community Drop-In Surgeries have also reinforced Southern IFCA's commitment to being visible, approachable and embedded within the communities it serves. By listening first, understanding differing perspectives and maintaining open channels of communication, the Authority is fostering stronger relationships built on trust, transparency and mutual respect. This two-way dialogue ensures that local knowledge continues to inform fisheries management while enabling Southern IFCA to explain the rationale behind management decisions and identify opportunities for collaborative solutions.

The overwhelmingly positive response to the Community Drop-In Surgeries demonstrates the value of genuine engagement founded on partnership rather than consultation alone. By placing collaboration at the heart of decision-making, Southern IFCA is developing stronger relationships with industry, ensuring that management remains grounded in practical experience and helping to build resilient, sustainable fisheries that are shaped through shared understanding and collective stewardship.

Key Theme: Co-Development

Developing collaborative management for Black Seabream in Dorset's MCZs



Southern IFCA recognises that the most effective fisheries management is developed with the communities it affects, rather than for them. During 2025/26, the Authority continued to embed co-development as a core principle of its approach through the development of a collaborative management package for black seabream across the Purbeck Coast, Poole Rocks and Southbourne Rough Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs).

Black seabream are both a designated feature of these Marine Conservation Zones and an important seasonal fishery with significant cultural, recreational and economic value to Dorset's coastal communities. The species supports a diverse range of users, including commercial fishers, charter vessel operators and recreational anglers, and forms part of the heritage and identity of many local communities. Recognising both the ecological importance of the species and the significance of the fishery, Southern IFCA sought to develop a management approach that balanced conservation objectives with the long-term sustainability of the fishery.

A key objective throughout the process was to move beyond traditional consultation and instead work collaboratively with stakeholders from the outset to develop management solutions together. This approach recognised the concerns expressed by the fishing community regarding the future of the fishery and provided reassurance that management decisions would be informed by evidence, local knowledge and an open assessment of risk across all material considerations.

Southern IFCA undertook one of its most comprehensive engagement exercises to date, ensuring that participation was accessible to all sectors of the community. Alongside a formal online consultation, the Authority delivered coastal drop-in sessions, targeted industry workshops, community forums, stakeholder meetings, coastal engagement events and online discussions. This ensured that stakeholders could participate in ways that suited them and that local knowledge was captured from those with first-hand experience of the fishery.

Draft Co-Developed Principles were taken forward for public consultation in late spring 2025, with engagement generating 124 responses, the highest number ever received by Southern IFCA during an informal consultation. Responses were received from commercial fishers, recreational anglers, charter vessel operators and other interested stakeholders, demonstrating both the significance of the fishery and the strong commitment of the community to its long-term future.

Perhaps the most important outcome of the process was not simply the volume of responses, but the willingness of stakeholders to work collaboratively with Southern IFCA. Feedback demonstrated broad support for the co-development approach itself, with participants recognising the value of working together to develop practical, proportionate management that safeguards black seabream populations while maintaining opportunities for sustainable fishing. The consultation reinforced a shared aspiration to ensure that future generations continue to benefit from healthy black seabream populations and the communities and businesses they support.

The resulting management package reflects this collaborative philosophy. Rather than relying solely on regulatory controls, the proposed approach combines statutory fisheries management with shared principles developed alongside stakeholders. Existing spatial protections have been strengthened through the extension of Bottom Towed Fishing Gear closures, while recognising existing Ministry of Defence spatial restrictions in place. Alongside these statutory measures, the introduction of a Shared Principles model encouraged voluntary stewardship, responsible fishing practices and community-led ownership of conservation outcomes.

This project demonstrates how co-development can strengthen both fisheries management and stakeholder confidence. By bringing together scientific evidence, statutory responsibilities and the knowledge and experience of those who depend on the fishery, Southern IFCA has developed a model of collaborative governance that not only supports conservation objectives but also builds trust, encourages shared stewardship and creates management solutions that are more likely to be understood, supported and successful in the long term.

Strengthening partnerships to deliver effective marine regulation



Effective marine regulation relies on strong partnerships between organisations with shared responsibilities for protecting the marine environment, supporting sustainable fisheries and safeguarding coastal communities. Throughout 2025/26, Southern IFCA continued to strengthen its excellent working relationships with a wide range of regulatory bodies, law enforcement agencies and local authorities, recognising that collaborative working delivers greater outcomes than could be achieved through individual organisations operating independently.

The Southern IFCA Compliance and Enforcement Team maintained a proactive programme of joint operations throughout the reporting period, participating in 11 joint patrols and multi-agency operations across the District. These operations took place both at sea and ashore and demonstrated the Authority's

commitment to intelligence-led, collaborative regulation, ensuring that resources, expertise and operational capability are shared effectively to address a broad range of fisheries, environments and wider activity.

Southern IFCA worked alongside colleagues from the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) to include the South MMO, South east MMO, and MMO Operations teams, Hampshire & Isle of Wight Constabulary, the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority (GLAA), the Home Office, Natural England, the Environment Agency, Local Authority Environmental Health Officers, Langstone Harbour Board, and other partner organisations. These strong relationships enable coordinated responses to emerging risks, improve intelligence sharing and ensure a consistent regulatory presence across the District.

Several operations during the year demonstrated the value of this collaborative approach. These included multi-agency enforcement activity targeting illegal hand gathering, coordinated offshore patrols with the MMO to investigate suspected illegal fishing activity, joint inspections of commercial shellfish landings, harbour-based enforcement operations and collaborative patrols supporting the protection of marine wildlife and sensitive habitats. By combining operational expertise and resources, these activities strengthened both the effectiveness and efficiency of enforcement across the District.

Partnership working also extended beyond operational enforcement. In July 2025, Southern IFCA hosted representatives from the Tristan da Cunha Fisheries Department, alongside colleagues from the Home Office and the MMO's Global Marine Team, as part of the UK Government's Blue Belt Programme. Visitors observed Southern IFCA's approach to land and coastal patrols, drone deployment and compliance monitoring, providing an opportunity to share best practice and demonstrate innovative approaches to small-scale fisheries management on an international stage.

The Authority also continued to support wider regulatory initiatives through participation in partner-led enforcement tasking, including collaborative operations with Natural England focused on environmental protection and conservation enforcement.

These partnerships reflect Southern IFCA's commitment to working collaboratively across the regulatory landscape to deliver effective, proportionate and intelligence-led enforcement. Through maintenance of strong relationships with partner organisations, sharing expertise and coordinating operational activity, the Authority is helping to maximise the impact of public resources, improve compliance and deliver better outcomes for fisheries, the marine environment and coastal communities.

The continued success of these partnerships is founded on mutual trust, shared objectives and a commitment to collaborative problem-solving. By working together, Southern IFCA and its partners are building a more resilient and integrated regulatory network, ensuring that marine management remains effective, responsive and capable of addressing both current and emerging challenges.

Working with Scientists and Policy Makers



Building management which is based on best available evidence and is aligned with wider policy ensures that measures remain robust to deliver across multiple objectives. During 2025/26 Southern IFCA have taken the opportunity to work with the scientific community and other policy makers to both establish new

partnerships as well as strengthen existing ones, seeking opportunities for joint learning and collaboration to support knowledge development and understandings of the wider policy landscape.

Southern IFCA engaged with scientists from Heriot-Watt University to understand the outputs of the Environmental Assessment of Scallop Innovation (EASIG) project and how this industry and science-led research collaboration had contributed to the evidence base on different types of scallop dredge. Seeing the outputs of this project and how they could be relevant to the Solent Scallop Fishery led to the development of the Solent Scallop Research Programme, comprised of multiple components including Solent specific gear trial research, to be delivered across the 2025/26 and 2026/27 years to further develop the evidence base underpinning this important inshore fishery.

Engagement during the year with a number of ongoing programmes also provided mutual benefit in increasing awareness of environmental projects in the District, as well as an opportunity to provide Southern IFCA held data and expertise to integrate local fisheries into these programmes and ensure that the fishing industry, across all sectors, is able to be represented and considered. These programmes include the Solent Seascapes Project, where Southern IFCA sits on the technical working group and attends development workshops for the proposed recovery plan, the Coastal Health Programme, run collaboratively between Cefas, AIFCA, the IFCAs and multiple other organisations to facilitate a coordinated understanding of coastal health events, input to the development of a hand gathering social survey by the University of Gloucester seeking to understand more about stakeholder perspectives on hand gathering activities and relevant regulations, and Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) being developed for Hampshire, Dorset and the Isle of Wight where the remit extends to intertidal coastal areas.

In 2025/26 Southern IFCA has also been involved in providing District fisheries knowledge and experience to an international audience. Advice was sought by Oceano Fresco, a sustainable seafood company in Portugal using innovative aquaculture techniques to grow high quality bivalve species, on the use of pump-scoop dredges and the experience of both Southern IFCA as the management authority and the fishers in the Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Fishery on working with this gear, the environmental considerations and the benefits and challenges of using hydraulic dredging techniques with the aim of exploring its use in Portuguese aquaculture. Southern IFCA also presented at the International Manila and European Clams Conference in Arcachon, France, on the Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Fishery and the development of empirical reference points as trigger thresholds linked to harvest control rules through the introduction of a Monitoring & Control Plan for the fishery. Both of these opportunities demonstrated Southern IFCA and the fishers' work in continuing to promote sustainability and develop novel approaches within inshore fisheries, which have been communicated to a wider audience as a demonstration of best practice in bivalve management.

In the policy realm, Southern IFCA has been part of workshops on the National Contingency Plan for the South East, working with multiple organisations and participating in test scenarios to understand the underlying policy and collaborative approach which is required in the event of a marine incident. The Research & Policy Team have also taken part in Defra training on the use of a new De Minimis Assessment template for Impact Assessments for byelaw development, seeking to streamline and simplify this process, in part to aid stakeholder understandings of this component of management development. The team have also worked with the MMO through the initial phase of the MMO Stage 4 MPA Management process, providing input and evidence on gillnet fishing in the District in relation to an initial exploration of evidence and potential management options for harbour porpoise MPAs.

Specific to the FMP programme, Southern IFCA have participated in various reviews, workshops and groups for the implementation of active FMPs. This included input into the Bass Authorisation Review, attendance at the Whelk Science Group and Whelk Implementation Group, sitting on the King Scallop Fishery Improvement Project (FIP) and participating in the Defra King Scallop Science Group. During 2025/26 Southern IFCA were invited to be part of the King Scallop Project Steering Board, related to the FIP but also outputs of the King Scallop FIP, as a representative for the collective IFCAs, providing input

on inshore management of King scallop fisheries and data collected in the inshore sector and how this may be able to be integrated into the national King scallop evidence base. The Research & Policy Team also took part in a two-day workshop run by Cefas and hosted by Cornwall IFCA looking at survey techniques, discussing inshore survey methodologies and the national Cefas survey and undertaking training in King scallop aging techniques. This workshop has enabled further updates to be made to the Southern IFCA Solent Scallop Survey including condition assessments for King scallop, consideration of updates to the spatial coverage of the survey and sampling King scallop from the Solent for aging.

Southern IFCA remains committed to seeking opportunities for collaboration across the scientific and policy communities, with the knowledge gained through this already being factored into monitoring and evidence gathering within the District as well as policy development. It is important for fishing sectors to understand where and how evidence is gathered, and how Southern IFCA policy is aligned with or considers the wider policy landscape. Through transparent and active collaboration, evidence and policy are both strengthened and can remain adaptive and responsive to change.

Delivering Southern IFCA's Strategic Anchors: Demonstrating Impact

Strategic Anchor 1.



Economic growth: Supporting the UK Government's vision via development and maintenance of effective & adaptive novel fisheries management spanning wild (fish & shellfish) and farmed stocks (shellfish).

Introducing a shared principles model for black seabream

Through the process of introducing a Shared Principles Model for black seabream management for three Dorset Marine Conservation Zones, there was a need to reconcile the challenge of achieving multiple objectives which historically have been viewed as being in opposition to each other, environmental, social and economic. As a designated feature of the three MCZs, under Section 154 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009, Southern IFCA must seek to ensure that the conservation objectives of the MCZs for black seabream are furthered thus prioritising the need to meet environmental objectives, however it was important to be able to do this proportionate to relative risk, recognising the importance of the species to the inshore fishing industry.

Black seabream is a key species for the inshore small-scale Dorset fishing community across the commercial, recreational and charter sectors, increasingly so as the species becomes more prevalent with warming waters. In order to understand the extent of the socio-economic contribution of black seabream to the local economy Southern IFCA had previously undertaken a quantification of impact exercise based on an initial set of management proposals involving seasonal no take zones to inform the early stages of policy development and understand risk.

To ensure that the socio-economic importance of the species to local fisheries could be accurately represented, Southern IFCA sought information through targeted engagement with relevant stakeholders across all fishing sectors, online data on charter vessel operations, data from partner agencies such as

the MMO and also from published literature. The outcome of this exercise was a cumulative economic assessment which indicated an annual impact of approximately £1.3m across the sectors if no take zones were implemented, as well as an understanding of wider impacts which focused around fisheries being generational, integrated into communities, part of local heritage and providing reliable and sustainable fishing opportunities, as well as the ability to provide locally caught seafood and the importance of the fisheries in providing wellbeing benefits. Southern IFCA also investigated the links between sectors and other industries, identifying multi-pathway connectivity across tourism, harbour authorities, mechanics, marinas, tackle/bait shops, transport, merchants, processors, local seafood providers and angling clubs.

In seeking to balance multiple objectives by distinguishing management based on relative risk, the process of developing management was split into two parallel but complementary policy objectives. Under the Primary Policy Objective, relevant to Section 154 of the Act, a combination of existing and extended statutory management tools focused on managing higher-risk fishing activities to further the conservation objectives of the MCZs. Having therefore addressed the environmental objective, the Secondary Policy Objective, under the Authority's wider duties under Section 153 of the Act enabled the co-development of a proportionate and adaptive approach for lower-risk fishing activities which considered the ability to achieve economic and social objectives, whilst seeking to improve understandings of black seabream populations across the three MCZs, including from a fisheries socio-economic perspective.

The development of Co-Developed Principles for black seabream in the three MCZs, working closely with the Dorset Community, allowed for transparency in the process of developing measures, ensuring through multiple rounds of engagement and consultation that views and evidence on the importance of this species across multiple sectors could be captured and incorporated. Consideration of the potential impact of the Co-Developed Principles was achieved in part by reviewing the management against the initial Quantification of Impact Exercise. It was noted that information provided through the Exercise by industry on potential mitigation measures was aligned with the Co-Developed Principles, providing support for the approach taken. Additionally, in providing the opportunity for the Dorset Community to be part of the process and have opportunities to feed in and shape management options, the level of impact economically, socially, culturally and to wellbeing was further informed and seen to be greatly reduced from that identified through the initial exercise, with input from all sectors primarily reflecting support for the approach the Authority had now taken. In considering the relevant Material Considerations applicable to the development of management solutions, it was identified that, across all sectors, achieving a positive impact which delivers across multiple objectives, including the ability to balance environment with socioeconomics, could only be achieved through the application of statutory management alongside a Shared Principles Model, which allows continued co-development facilitated by an adaptive approach.

Southern IFCA will continue to monitor the application of this Shared Principles Model through each black seabream breeding season, with initial implementation due in the 2026/27 year, with a commitment to review annually to incorporate all best available evidence and allow the furthering of understandings of this species and associated fisheries to feedback into the management development process.

Example of adaptive management of the Solent scallop fishery

Southern IFCA continued to support the UK Government's vision for sustainable economic growth through the implementation of adaptive, evidence-based management of the Solent King scallop (*Pecten maximus*) fishery under the Solent Dredge Permit Byelaw. The Solent King scallop fishery provides a key fishing opportunity for inshore vessels during the November to March season with first sale value of catches estimated to be between £560,000 to £785,000 from 2023 to 2025.

Following the 2025 Southern IFCA Solent Scallop Survey, officers reviewed the available evidence and worked closely with Members and permit holders to identify appropriate measures to reduce fishing effort by approximately 48%, ensuring that harvesting remained aligned with the condition of the stock while supporting the long-term viability of the fishery.

Following consultation with industry and consideration by Members, revised permit conditions were introduced in November 2025, reducing the permitted daily fishing hours from 08:00-16:00 to 08:00-14:00. The reduction in King scallop landings during the 2025/26 season supported the validity of this approach to manage effort for stock sustainability whilst maintaining a first sale value within the fishery of over £330,000. This targeted management response demonstrates Southern IFCA's commitment to adaptive fisheries management, balancing sustainability with continued commercial opportunity.

The Authority has continued to strengthen compliance and monitoring of this fishery through the use of Themis to monitor Inshore Vessel Monitoring System (I-VMS) data from vessels under 12 metres, alongside drone surveillance, providing greater capability to detect non-compliance and improve oversight of fishing activity. These tools have enhanced the Authority's ability to support a level playing field for compliant fishers while protecting the sustainability of the resource.

Through continued partnership with industry, evidence-led decision making and enhanced compliance monitoring, Southern IFCA is supporting the long-term sustainability and productivity of the Solent shellfish fisheries, contributing to resilient coastal economies while safeguarding marine resources for future generations.

Strategic Anchor 2.



Food security: Facilitating thriving inshore fisheries & aquaculture via sound & informed governance for local, national & international gain.

Facilitating thriving inshore fisheries through evidence-based management

Sustainable food security depends on healthy and productive marine ecosystems that can continue to provide a reliable supply of seafood for local, national and international markets. Southern IFCA's Monitoring Programme provides the evidence base for adaptive fisheries management, enabling informed governance that supports thriving inshore fisheries while ensuring the long-term sustainability of fish and shellfish stocks.

Throughout 2025/26, the Southern IFCA Monitoring Programme continued to assess the health of key commercial fisheries across the District. Catch per unit effort (CPUE) and Landings per unit effort (LPUE) were used as indicators of stock health and fishery performance for permitted bivalve fisheries, with data informing management decisions and ensuring that harvesting levels remain aligned with the condition of the resource.

Survey outcomes during the reporting period indicated the continued health and productivity of several key fisheries, suggesting that commercially important shellfish populations remained capable of supporting sustainable harvesting. Positive indicators were recorded within the Poole Harbour clam and cockle fisheries and the Solent clam fishery. These findings provide confidence that current management

measures are maintaining productive fisheries capable of contributing to a secure and sustainable seafood supply.

Monitoring of juvenile fish populations also produced encouraging results, with surveys identifying positive levels of abundance, diversity and species richness across key species. The presence of healthy numbers of juvenile fish entering the population provides an important indicator of future stock resilience and demonstrates that Essential Fish Habitats (EFH) continue to support the next generation of commercially important species. Protecting these life stages is fundamental to maintaining productive fisheries and securing future food supplies.

By combining long-term scientific monitoring with adaptive, evidence-led management, Southern IFCA is helping to ensure that inshore fisheries remain healthy, productive and resilient. This approach supports the sustainable production of high-quality seafood, strengthens the resilience of coastal fishing communities and contributes to food security at local, national and international scales.

Supporting sustainable aquaculture through the Poole Harbour Fishery Order

Aquaculture plays an increasingly important role in delivering food security by providing a reliable, sustainable source of high-quality seafood while supporting employment, investment and exports. Through the management of the Poole Harbour Fishery Order 2015, Southern IFCA facilitates the sustainable cultivation of shellfish, ensuring that aquaculture continues to contribute to local, national and international food supply chains through sound, evidence-based governance.

Southern IFCA manages aquaculture across 837.8 hectares of Poole Harbour under the Poole Harbour Fishery Order 2015, made pursuant to the Sea Fisheries (Shellfish) Act 1967. The Order grants Southern IFCA the right of several fishery for the cultivation of shellfish for a period of 20 years from 1 July 2015, with leases renewed through successive five-year tranches. In July 2025, the third tranche of leases commenced, securing the continuation of sustainable shellfish cultivation until June 2030.

The lease renewal process provides a robust governance framework that gives industry the confidence to invest in long-term shellfish production while ensuring that aquaculture operates in accordance with environmental legislation and best practice. Effective management by Southern IFCA supports business continuity, promotes responsible stewardship of the marine environment and provides certainty for producers supplying domestic and international seafood markets.

Poole Harbour supports the cultivation of a range of commercially important shellfish species, principally Pacific oysters and mussels, while native oysters, clams and common cockles have also been cultivated historically. These shellfish make an important contribution to sustainable seafood production, providing nutritious, low-carbon food that supports UK food resilience while contributing to export markets. Southern IFCA also supports the sector through the provision of biosecurity guidance and shellfish movement protocols, helping to maintain high animal health standards, protect production and facilitate the safe movement of shellfish within national and international supply chains.

The importance of Poole Harbour's aquaculture sector is well established. It is home to the largest Pacific oyster production area in England and operates within the UK's largest Several Order fishery. Previous economic assessments demonstrated that aquaculture in Poole Harbour generates significant value through both direct production and wider supply chains, supporting employment, processing, distribution and associated marine industries. The continuation of the Order provides the long-term stability required for this sector to continue contributing to sustainable food production and economic resilience. In 2025/26

187 tonnes of shellfish was harvested across the footprint of the Order valued at over £465,000 first sale value.

The Poole Harbour Fishery Order 2015 also demonstrates how productive aquaculture can successfully coexist with internationally and nationally designated marine protected areas, including Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). Through careful regulation and adaptive management, Southern IFCA balances sustainable food production with the conservation of internationally important habitats and species.

Beyond seafood production, cultivated bivalves provide a range of wider ecosystem services. As natural filter feeders, oysters and mussels improve water quality by removing suspended particles and recycling nutrients, while their reefs and culture structures can provide habitat for other marine species and contribute to broader ecosystem functioning. Although the full value of these ecosystem services has yet to be quantified within Poole Harbour, [a supporting literature review](#) undertaken alongside the Tranche 3 lease renewal process has strengthened the evidence base for considering these wider environmental benefits in future management.

Through the continued delivery of the Poole Harbour Fishery Order 2015, Southern IFCA is enabling sustainable aquaculture to flourish within a well-regulated and environmentally responsible framework. This evidence-led approach supports resilient seafood production, strengthens food security, underpins local and national economies and contributes to the UK's ambition for thriving inshore fisheries and aquaculture.

Strategic Anchor 3.

Supporting **thriving & resilient communities**: Recognising how we can make a difference to our fishing communities, supporting opportunity, diversification and new ways of working.



Working in partnership with the fishing industry to improve compliance and reduce regulatory burden

Southern IFCA recognises that thriving and resilient fishing communities are built on strong partnerships, practical support and a shared commitment to sustainable fisheries management. During 2025/26, the Authority continued to work alongside the fishing industry to develop innovative solutions that reduce regulatory burden, support compliance and help fishers adapt to new management measures.

Following the ratification of the Bottom Towed Fishing Gear Byelaw 2023 on 7 July 2025, the Authority recognised the practical challenges faced by fishers in manually entering the coordinates of 43 closed areas into their vessel plotters. For many inshore fishers, who often operate single-handed or with small crews in demanding conditions, manually inputting large volumes of navigational data is both time-consuming and susceptible to error.

To address this, Southern IFCA developed a practical solution by transferring the closed area coordinates onto USB memory sticks and SD cards, enabling the information to be imported directly into vessel plotters. This significantly reduced the time required to update onboard navigation systems while ensuring that spatial management information was transferred accurately and consistently.

Officers have delivered this service directly to fishers during routine patrols, working alongside vessel owners to install the data on board wherever possible. Recognising that the inshore fleet operates a wide range of plotter makes, models and software systems, the Authority has continued to collaborate closely with industry to understand compatibility requirements and refine the process so that it can be offered across an increasing proportion of the fleet.

Demand for the initiative has grown steadily throughout the reporting period as more fishers have recognised the operational benefits of having regulated fishing areas clearly displayed on their navigation systems. Southern IFCA has successfully installed the closed area data on numerous vessels and continues to expand compatibility with additional equipment. The approach also provides a foundation for supporting the future implementation of other spatial fisheries management measures in a practical and user-friendly way.

The initiative has been extremely well received by the fishing industry, with fishers expressing strong support for a service that helps them navigate an increasingly complex regulatory environment. As national and local fisheries legislation continues to evolve, practical initiatives such as this recognise the realities of operating small inshore fishing businesses and demonstrate Southern IFCA's commitment to supporting compliance through collaboration rather than enforcement alone.

By listening to industry, understanding operational challenges and providing practical assistance, Southern IFCA is helping to remove barriers to compliance, reduce administrative burden and build trust between regulators and the fishing community. This collaborative approach supports voluntary compliance, improves confidence in fisheries management and contributes to the resilience, adaptability and long-term sustainability of inshore fishing communities.

Improving access to fisheries information through digital innovation

Southern IFCA recognises that resilient fishing communities depend not only on sustainable fisheries but also on accessible, clear and practical information that enables fishers and other marine users to make informed decisions. As the marine environment becomes increasingly regulated, providing simple and effective ways for stakeholders to understand where and when management measures apply is essential to supporting opportunity, reducing uncertainty and encouraging voluntary compliance.

During 2025/26, Southern IFCA continued to improve accessibility to fisheries information through the development of [a digital mapping tool, using Google Maps](#), which enables stakeholders and wider marine users to view the location of spatial regulations across the District.

The tool has been designed to provide a user-friendly overview of spatial management measures, helping users understand how regulations apply in relation to their activities, including the location, extent and purpose of different measures. By improving access to this information, the tool supports fishers and other marine users in planning their activities more effectively and reduces the risk of unintentional non-compliance.

The interactive map provides a clearer understanding of how different management measures operate across space and time, recognising that fisheries regulations are often designed for specific purposes, such as protecting vulnerable habitats, supporting species recovery or managing sustainable fisheries. This improved understanding supports cooperation between sectors and helps users appreciate the wider objectives behind fisheries management decisions.

The tool currently includes five Southern IFCA Byelaws relating to Marine Protected Area (MPA) protection and Bass Nursery Areas. Additional spatial information relating to the Poole Harbour and Solent permit fisheries, which also support MPA management objectives, is being incorporated to further enhance the value of the resource.

Alongside the development of the mapping tool, Southern IFCA has created dedicated guidance to help stakeholders access and use the resource effectively. This ensures that the benefits of the tool are available to a wide range of users, including commercial fishers, recreational users, conservation groups and other marine stakeholders.

By embracing digital approaches and improving transparency around fisheries management, Southern IFCA is helping to create a more informed and connected marine community. This initiative supports fishers and other users to adapt to changing management requirements, promotes shared understanding of sustainable use of marine resources and contributes to the long-term resilience of coastal communities.

Strategic Anchor 4.

Championing the positive role that inshore fishers have as **custodians of a sustainable inshore marine environment.**



Compliance in Practice: Evidence of Responsible Inshore Fishing

Southern IFCA recognises that the long-term sustainability of inshore fisheries depends on the stewardship and commitment of the fishing industry. Fishers are not only harvesters of marine resources but also custodians of the marine environment, whose livelihoods are intrinsically linked to the health of fish and shellfish stocks and the habitats that support them. Through collaborative, proportionate and intelligence-led regulation, Southern IFCA works alongside the fishing community to promote responsible fishing practices that safeguard marine resources for future generations.

During 2025/26, Southern IFCA maintained a strong operational presence across the District, undertaking 78 patrols at sea, 267 port visits and 90 drone deployments to monitor compliance with 24 Byelaws, seven Codes of Practice and relevant national fisheries legislation. While these activities provide an effective regulatory framework, they also create valuable opportunities for engagement, enabling officers and fishers to work together to improve understanding of management measures and reinforce their shared responsibility for protecting the marine environment.

Operational activity included 274 inspections at sea, 115 landing inspections in port, 16 premises inspections and 42 'other' inspections (further details can be found under section titled 'Compliance Inspections Undertaken'). These interactions extended beyond compliance checks, providing opportunities to share knowledge, answer questions and strengthen relationships with the fishing community. By supporting fishers to understand the purpose and benefits of management measures, Southern IFCA encourages a culture of stewardship in which protecting fish and shellfish stocks, sensitive habitats and the wider marine ecosystem becomes a shared objective.

Overall compliance during the reporting period was 87.6%, demonstrating the strong commitment of the overwhelming majority of fishers to responsible and sustainable fishing practices. This high level of

compliance reflects not only proportionate, risk-based regulation but also the willingness of the fishing community to work in partnership with the Authority to ensure that fisheries remain productive and environmentally sustainable.

The high level of voluntary compliance observed across the District is underpinned by positive working relationships, open communication and mutual trust between Southern IFCA and the fishing industry. As understanding of the long-term benefits of fisheries management continues to grow, stewardship is increasingly reinforced through peer support, shared values and a collective commitment to protecting the marine environment. This collaborative approach recognises that fishers are often the first to observe changes within the marine environment and play a vital role in ensuring that marine resources are managed responsibly.

By championing responsible fishing practices and recognising the fishing industry's role as custodians of the marine environment, Southern IFCA helps maintain healthy fish and shellfish stocks, protects important marine habitats and supports resilient coastal communities. This partnership approach demonstrates that effective fisheries management is most successful when regulators and fishers work together towards the shared goal of sustaining thriving inshore fisheries and a healthy marine environment for future generations.

Providing Local Context on Bottom Towed Fishing Gear Management

During the year at a national and subsequently local level, there was an increase in attention placed on bottom towed fishing gear (BTFG) activity and associated management, particularly within MPAs. This arose from the reading of a Private Members Bill titled the 'Marine Protected Areas (Bottom Trawling) (England) Bill', timetabled for a second reading in the House of Commons in May 2026, the release of the film 'Ocean' with David Attenborough, which highlighted the debate on bottom trawling and dredging within MPAs, an online campaign #TheBottomLine, an online science-based response to how fishing and marine conservation can work together, and the MMO Stage 3 MPA consultation on assessing and managing the impacts of fishing in offshore English MPAs, including a proposed prohibition for BTFG in specified areas of 31 MPAs and minor changes to existing BTFG prohibitions in 5 MPAs.

In response to the conversation on BTFG and associated management, the Authority developed and published a Southern IFCA position statement to provide local context on BTFG management in the Southern IFCA District, the role of fishers as key custodians of sustainable marine environments and how well managed fisheries can continue to co-exist alongside the attainment of conservation objectives in the inshore waters, harbours and estuaries across the district, in turn supporting local coastal communities.

The position statement including examples of features within the district's 21 MPAs which, based on best available evidence, are sensitive to BTFG and are therefore protected via spatial prohibitions, including 100% of confirmed rock habitats (reef features), 99.1% of seagrass beds, 100% of maerl beds and 100% of black seabream nesting habitat, cumulatively closing 51.4% of the district's MPAs and 27.2% of the entire district. Information was also provided on the compliance & enforcement approach to BTFG management where non-compliance by a minority of fishers is identified.

Highlighting the sustainable approach taken to BTFG management in the inshore coastal area which ensures that conservation objectives of MPAs can be met allows for a demonstrated example of well managed BTFG fisheries and recognises the role of fishers as custodians in this process, seeking to ensure sustainability in the marine environment in which they work.

Strategic Anchor 5.



Evolving research methodologies in line with recognised standards to inform local objectives & national considerations.

Robust, adaptive and scientifically credible research is fundamental to effective fisheries management. During 2025/26, Southern IFCA continued to evolve its research methodologies to ensure that local evidence remains aligned with recognised national standards, strengthening the contribution of inshore fisheries science to both local management decisions and wider fisheries policy development.

Developing innovative research to support local fisheries management and national policy

The Solent king scallop (*Pecten maximus*) fishery is a unique, small-scale inshore fishery that has developed significantly since its emergence in 2013. As the fishery has evolved, Southern IFCA has progressively adapted its management framework, moving from an industry-led Code of Conduct to regulation under the Solent Dredge Permit Byelaw, supported by permit conditions and complementary national legislation. Alongside these management developments, the Authority has continued to invest in research that provides the evidence required to support sustainable harvesting while ensuring that the characteristics of small-scale inshore fisheries are represented within national fisheries management.

The Southern IFCA Solent Scallop Survey continues to provide the primary evidence base for local management of the fishery. Originally trialled in 2021 and implemented as a biannual survey from 2022, and triannual survey from 2024, the programme has evolved in response to both management requirements and advances in fisheries science.

During 2025/26, the survey methodology was refined to improve alignment with nationally recognised king scallop survey approaches and the evidence requirements of the King Scallop Fisheries Management Plan (FMP). Survey coverage was also updated to better reflect the principal fishing grounds used by the fleet, ensuring that data collected more accurately represented the operational fishery.

Importantly, these methodological developments were undertaken in collaboration with local permit holders, recognising the value of industry knowledge in designing practical and scientifically robust monitoring programmes. This collaborative approach has ensured that local ecological knowledge continues to complement scientific data collection while strengthening confidence in the evidence used to inform management.

The survey programme now comprises three surveys annually—pre-season, mid-season and post-season—providing a more comprehensive understanding of stock condition throughout the fishing season. Data collected on catch per unit effort (CPUE) and scallop size distributions enables Southern IFCA to assess stock health, evaluate management measures and identify emerging trends that may require adaptive management.

These survey data are complemented by mandatory monthly catch returns submitted by permit holders under the Solent Dredge Permit Byelaw. Analysis of Landings Per Unit Effort (LPUE) provides an additional indicator of fishery performance comparable between seasons and over time. The addition of mid-season CPUE sampling direct from permit holders fishing operations in January 2026 also provided a third data input, giving an on the ground perspective on stocks in a commercial fishing environment. The combination of LPUE and mid-season sampling allows survey outcomes to be validated against commercial fishing activity, creating a more robust evidence base for management decisions.

Throughout the reporting period, Southern IFCA continued to ensure that research undertaken within the Solent contributes beyond local management by engaging with national research programmes, the King scallop Fishery Improvement Project (FIP) and Fisheries Management Plan delivery.

The Authority explored opportunities to participate in the Environmental Assessment of Scallop Innovation Gear (EASIG) Fisheries Industry Science Partnership project, working closely with local industry representatives and researchers at Heriot-Watt University. Although the unique characteristics of the Solent fleet ultimately meant that the fishery could not be incorporated into the next phase of the national project, the discussions highlighted the importance of ensuring that the evidence needs of small-scale inshore fisheries are recognised within national research programmes.

This engagement reinforces Southern IFCA's commitment to ensuring that the perspectives and operational realities of the inshore fleet continue to inform the development of national fisheries policy and future research priorities.

Building upon existing monitoring, Southern IFCA developed the Solent Scallop Research Programme, bringing together ongoing monitoring with a series of complementary research projects to provide a more holistic understanding of the fishery.

The programme integrates routine stock surveys and catch data analysis with new research focused on identifying key fishing areas, refining survey methodologies and investigating innovative fishing gear and monitoring technologies. Collectively, these projects are designed to address local evidence needs while contributing to national discussions surrounding the implementation of the King Scallop Fisheries Management Plan and the UK King Scallop FIP.

This integrated programme demonstrates a shift from individual monitoring projects towards a strategic research framework capable of supporting both operational fisheries management and long-term scientific understanding.

Southern IFCA continues to evaluate emerging technologies that could enhance fisheries monitoring and evidence collection. During 2025/26, the Authority investigated the feasibility of incorporating drop-down camera systems into the Solent Scallop Survey to supplement traditional stock assessment methods. While logistical and health and safety considerations meant that a standalone feasibility study could not be progressed, opportunities to trial camera technology remain under consideration through future gear trial research.

This adaptive approach reflects Southern IFCA's commitment to continually reviewing and refining research methodologies in line with technological advances and recognised best practice, ensuring that local fisheries management remains underpinned by high-quality scientific evidence.

By evolving research methodologies, strengthening collaboration with industry and aligning local monitoring with national evidence requirements, Southern IFCA is ensuring that the unique characteristics of the Solent's inshore scallop fishery continue to inform both local management decisions and the future direction of fisheries policy across England and Wales.

Advancing adaptive monitoring to support evidence-based fisheries management

A significant development during the reporting period was the introduction of the [Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Fishery Monitoring and Control Plan \(M&C Plan\)](#). Developed collaboratively with Permit Holders, the Plan establishes a structured framework for reviewing fishery performance throughout the season and enables proactive, evidence-based adaptation of management where required.

The M&C Plan was introduced ahead of the 2025/26 fishing season following industry reports of declining Manila clam catches during the previous year. By combining routine monitoring with clearly defined decision-making processes, the M&C Plan allows Southern IFCA and industry to respond proportionately should indicators suggest that management intervention is required, ensuring that fisheries remain sustainable while minimising unnecessary restrictions on fishing activity.

Under the M&C Plan, the on-site monitoring programme utilises Landings per unit effort (LPUE) data, collected between May and December 2025, to provide detailed monthly analysis of commercial catch data, and survey data, as Catch per unit effort (CPUE) from the Poole Harbour Bivalve Survey, collected in April each year prior to the fishing season. Both data sources were made available to Permit Holders, providing transparency and supporting collaborative decision-making, with clearly defined threshold levels and control mechanisms in the event of stocks declining to unsustainable levels. Considering both variables together, the indication was that the fishery continued to perform within expected parameters and consequently no in-season management intervention was required. This outcome demonstrates the value of adaptive monitoring frameworks, and the ability to use reference points aligned with the available data outputs, which provides assurance that management decisions are driven by evidence and implemented only when necessary.

Recognising that annual stock surveys provide only a snapshot of fishery performance, Southern IFCA also introduced an in-season monitoring programme within the Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Fishery under the M&C Plan. This enhanced approach enables the Authority to monitor monthly variations in catch rates throughout the fishing season through Permit Holder submitted data and compare fishery performance with previous years. By analysing trends as they emerge, rather than retrospectively, the Authority is better positioned to identify changes in stock performance which contributes to determinations under the on-site monitoring programme and the need to respond where necessary through adaptive management.

A mid-season Catch Per Unit Effort (CPUE) observer programme was introduced as part of the in-season monitoring programme, providing an additional source of independent information on stock condition as the season progresses. This enhanced monitoring bridges the gap between annual surveys, improving understanding of how stocks respond to fishing pressure and environmental variation over time. The resulting data strengthens confidence in management decisions and provides a more comprehensive picture of fishery performance.

The continued evolution of Southern IFCA's monitoring methodologies reflects a broader commitment to adaptive, evidence-led fisheries management. By integrating routine commercial data, independent scientific monitoring and collaborative governance, the Authority is developing increasingly responsive

approaches that support sustainable fisheries at a local level while contributing valuable evidence and practical learning to national fisheries management and the implementation of Fisheries Management Plans.

Strategic Anchor 6.



Develop, implement & review local management interventions with **proportionality when employing best available evidence.**

Developing a proportionate and evidence-led approach to black seabream management

Southern IFCA is committed to developing, implementing and reviewing local fisheries management interventions in a way that remains proportionate to risk, reflects the best available evidence and remains responsive as understandings improves. This approach is demonstrated through the development of the [Black Seabream Shared Principles Management Model](#) for three Dorset Marine Conservation Zones: Purbeck Coast MCZ, Poole Rocks MCZ and Southbourne Rough MCZ.

Black seabream are designated features of each of these sites. Under Section 154 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009, Southern IFCA must seek to ensure that the conservation objectives of MCZs are furthered. In responding to this duty, the Authority developed an approach that distinguishes management based on relative risk.

The review was therefore structured around two parallel but complementary policy objectives. The Primary Policy Objective, under Section 154 of the Act, focuses on managing higher-risk fishing activities that may affect black seabream as a designated feature of the three MCZs. Extensions of existing management tools (increase of BTFG protections), combined with existing District wide Minimum Conservation Reference Size management, and spatial restrictions in place by the Ministry of Defence, were used to address these risks and further the conservation objectives of the sites.

The Secondary Policy Objective, under the Authority's wider duties in Section 153, considers lower-risk fishing activities and seeks to improve understanding of black seabream populations across the Dorset MCZs. This strand recognises that, where evidence does not demonstrate a need for additional restrictive regulation, proportionate management may be better achieved through monitoring, voluntary measures, engagement and collaborative evidence gathering.

This dual approach avoids applying a single management response to activities with different risk profiles. Instead, it enables Southern IFCA to meet its statutory conservation duties while ensuring that interventions remain justified, focused and proportionate. It also provides a mechanism for management to evolve as new evidence becomes available.

To provide transparency and clarity, Southern IFCA developed three policy documents setting out the legal basis, evidence, management intentions, monitoring arrangements and future review process underpinning the Black Seabream Management Package. These documents are designed to be read

alongside the supporting evidence and collectively explain how the Primary and Secondary Policy Objectives are being delivered through distinct but coordinated management tools.

A central feature of the approach was the development of shared principles with the Dorset fishing and wider coastal community. Through ongoing co-development, stakeholders are contributing local knowledge, observations and practical experience to improve understanding of black seabream populations and fishing activity. This collaborative process supports ownership of the management approach and ensures that future decisions are informed by both scientific evidence and the experience of those who use and understand the fishery.

By bringing together statutory protection, risk-based management, community participation and continued evidence gathering, Southern IFCA has developed a holistic and proportionate response. The approach addresses the immediate legal requirement to protect black seabream as a designated MCZ feature while also building the evidence needed to support sustainable black seabream fisheries across the three Dorset MCZs and beyond.

Strategic Anchor 7.



Supporting Nature's Recovery: To continue to support the Government target of achieving 30% protections in the marine environment by 2030.

Southern IFCA's MPA Byelaws are providing 76% protections across the district.

Southern IFCA continues to play a key role in supporting the Government's commitment to protect 30% of the marine environment by 2030 ("30 by 30") by developing and implementing fisheries management measures that deliver meaningful conservation outcomes while enabling sustainable inshore fisheries to operate responsibly.

Collectively, Southern IFCA's suite of Marine Protected Area (MPA) Byelaws provide spatial protection across a significant proportion of the District, ensuring that fishing activities are managed in accordance with the conservation objectives of nationally designated sites. During 2025/26, further progress towards this objective was achieved through the implementation of new management measures.

A major milestone during the reporting period was the implementation of [the Bottom Towed Fishing Gear \(BTFG\) Byelaw 2023](#), following its ratification on the 7th July 2025. The Byelaw enhanced protection for sensitive seabed habitats by increasing the proportion of the Southern IFCA District closed to bottom towed fishing gear from 25.5% (696.3 km²) to **27.2%** (743.1 km²). These additional protections represent an important contribution towards the Government's ambition to recover marine ecosystems and improve the condition of England's Marine Protected Area network.

Using the best available scientific evidence, the Byelaw provides protection for habitats and species known to be sensitive to bottom towed fishing activity, including: 100% of confirmed reef (rock) habitats, 99.1% of mapped seagrass beds, 100% of known maerl beds, 100% of identified black seabream nesting habitats.

Overall, bottom towed fishing gear restrictions now apply across **51.4%** of the District's 21 Marine Protected Areas. These measures significantly strengthen the resilience of priority habitats and species, supporting ecosystem recovery while maintaining sustainable fishing opportunities in appropriate areas.

Further progress towards achieving conservation objectives has continued following the submission of the [Shore Gathering Byelaw](#) to the MMO for Quality Assurance in December 2024. During the reporting year, Southern IFCA has continued to respond to several rounds of quality assurance. Subject to the completion of the MMO and Defra quality assurance process and subsequent ratification, the Byelaw will introduce spatial management across an additional 42.8 km² of the District, providing enhanced protection for sensitive coastal habitats and species. The proposed measures will apply across 24.2% of Special Protection Areas (SPAs), 32.4% of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), and 16.1% of Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs) within the intertidal area, collectively covering 23.1% of the relevant intertidal area of Marine Protected Areas within the District.

Collectively, these measures demonstrate Southern IFCA's commitment to delivering practical conservation outcomes through proportionate, evidence-led fisheries management. By continually strengthening protections for sensitive habitats and species, while ensuring that management remains adaptive and underpinned by the best available science, the Authority is making a significant contribution towards the recovery of England's marine environment and the Government's ambition to protect 30% of UK seas by 2030.

Ensuring Marine Protected Area management delivers effective conservation outcomes

The effectiveness of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) depends not only on the introduction of management measures, but also on ensuring those measures are actively monitored, enforced and adapted where necessary. Southern IFCA is committed to ensuring that the District's MPA Byelaws deliver tangible conservation outcomes, demonstrating that protected areas are actively managed rather than existing as "paper parks". Through a risk-based programme of monitoring, compliance and proportionate enforcement, the Authority provides assurance that fisheries management measures are achieving their intended purpose of protecting designated habitats and species.

During 2025/26, Southern IFCA undertook 227 inspections at sea within 15 of the District's 21 Marine Protected Areas, providing a strong regulatory presence across sites subject to fisheries management measures. Overall, **94.1%** of inspections undertaken within MPAs were fully compliant, demonstrating that the overwhelming majority of fishing activity was conducted in accordance with the management measures designed to protect sensitive marine features.

Non-compliance was identified within five Marine Protected Areas—South Wight Maritime SAC, Bembridge MCZ, Solent Maritime SAC, Solent and Southampton Water SPA, and Poole Harbour SPA—resulting in 16 proportionate enforcement actions being taken in accordance with Southern IFCA's Compliance and Enforcement Framework. This intelligence-led approach ensures that regulatory action is targeted, consistent and proportionate, providing an effective deterrent while supporting high levels of voluntary compliance across the wider fleet.

Of the spatial infringements identified, 11 involved incursions into areas closed to bottom towed fishing gear. Importantly, a proportion of these incursions occurred within the precautionary buffer zones surrounding protected features rather than over the designated habitats themselves. The inclusion of buffer zones within the design of Southern IFCA's spatial management measures is a deliberate risk management approach, providing an additional margin of protection that reduces the likelihood of fishing

activity interacting directly with sensitive features. In these cases, while the regulatory boundary had been crossed, the presence of buffer zones significantly reduced the risk of damage to the designated habitats they are designed to protect.

A smaller number of spatial infringements occurred within Special Protection Areas (SPAs), where fishing activity had the potential to interact with supporting habitats, including seagrass beds and saltmarsh, which are integral to maintaining the ecological function of internationally important bird populations. These incidents were investigated and addressed through the Authority's established compliance framework, ensuring that appropriate regulatory action was taken in response to the level of environmental risk presented.

By combining robust monitoring with proportionate enforcement, Southern IFCA ensures that fisheries management measures within Marine Protected Areas are effective in practice as well as in policy. This active management approach provides confidence that conservation protections are delivering real benefits for marine habitats and species, while allowing sustainable fishing activity to continue in appropriate areas. In doing so, the Authority is making a meaningful contribution to the Government's ambition to recover marine biodiversity and achieve effective protection of 30% of the marine environment by 2030.

Strategic Anchor 8.



Build awareness of the implications of **Climate Change at a District level**, drawing from & informing national objectives.

Building awareness of climate change through local evidence

Understanding the impacts of climate change on inshore fisheries is fundamental to ensuring that fisheries management remains adaptive, resilient and responsive to emerging environmental change. Southern IFCA continues to build awareness of climate change at a District level by combining scientific monitoring with the invaluable observations of the fishing industry, ensuring that local evidence both informs and contributes to regional and national understanding of changing marine ecosystems.

The Authority recognises that commercial and recreational fishers are often the first to observe environmental change. Through their continued presence at sea and across the coastline, many have developed decades of local ecological knowledge, making them invaluable partners in identifying changing species distributions, shifting fishery dynamics and emerging environmental pressures. Southern IFCA continues to foster strong relationships with the fishing community through regular patrols, port visits and Community Forums, creating opportunities for fishers to share observations that may indicate the effects of climate change long before they become evident through formal scientific monitoring.

Throughout the reporting period, Southern IFCA remained committed to understanding the challenges and opportunities that climate change presents to the inshore fishing sector. Officers actively engaged with fishers to identify emerging trends, recognising that maintaining open dialogue is essential if local concerns are to be reflected within future fisheries management and national policy development.

To strengthen this two-way flow of information, Southern IFCA introduced the Coastal Whispers initiative during 2025/26. This internal reporting mechanism enables officers to capture observations and concerns raised by fishers and coastal communities during routine patrols and feed them directly into the Authority's evidence base. The initiative ensures that intelligence gathered on the coast reaches those responsible for developing management measures and contributes to regional and national discussions. In this way, Southern IFCA continues to fulfil its role as both the "eyes on the coast" and a trusted voice representing the experiences of the inshore fishing community.

Local intelligence collected through patrols, Community Forums and routine engagement is routinely shared through regional and national forums, including Marine and Fisheries Coordination (MAFCO) meetings and Fisheries Management Plan (FMP) discussions. This helps ensure that the experiences of Southern IFCA's fishing communities contribute to a broader understanding of climate-related change and that the inshore sector continues to inform national fisheries policy.

Alongside industry engagement, Southern IFCA has continued to strengthen its scientific monitoring programme to better understand environmental change. During the reporting period, additional monitoring introduced to look at bivalve condition (for scallop and Manila clam) and the continued and increasing ability to compare datasets over time periods of multiple years supports understanding how species may be changing across multiple parameters, enabling a consideration of whether any climate induced changes are being observed. This monitoring seeks to provide valuable evidence to complement long-term fisheries monitoring and improve understanding of how environmental pressures may affect commercially important species.

Observations from both the community and scientific monitoring continue to identify changes that may be indicative of a warming marine environment. Fishers have reported increasing occurrences of species such as octopus and Atlantic bluefin tuna within the District, while black seabream appear to be remaining in local waters for longer periods rather than moving offshore during winter. At the same time, a reduction in crab abundance and distribution are reported as well as for fish species such as flounder and mackerel, with fishers highlighting potential links to changing water temperatures. Although many of these observations require further enquiry, they provide important early indicators of environmental change and demonstrate the value of maintaining close engagement with those working at sea every day.

While some climate-driven changes observed elsewhere around the UK, such as the significant octopus blooms experienced in the south-west, have not yet been seen at the same scale within the Southern IFCA District, the Authority continues to monitor these developments closely. Understanding how regional temperature gradients and local environmental conditions influence species distributions will be increasingly important in anticipating future changes to inshore fisheries.

Strategic Anchor 9.

Deliver well managed inshore **fisheries which co-exist & thrive alongside achievement of conservation protections.**



International recognition for innovation in sustainable fisheries management

Southern IFCA's approach to fisheries management demonstrates that thriving commercial fisheries and the conservation of the marine environment are complementary objectives. By combining evidence-based management, innovative technology and strong partnerships with industry, the Authority continues to ensure that fisheries continue to support coastal livelihoods while achieving conservation outcomes within nationally and internationally important marine protected areas.

This approach received international recognition during 2025/26 when Southern IFCA was awarded the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) Ocean Leadership Award for its pioneering application of drone technology within the Poole Harbour Clam & Cockle Fishery. The award recognises outstanding leadership in sustainable fisheries management and celebrates innovative approaches that secure the long-term health of marine ecosystems while supporting productive fisheries.

The independent judging panel recognised Southern IFCA's pioneering use of drone technology within its Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS) programme, highlighting how the technology has transformed the management of fishing activity within Poole Harbour's complex estuarine environment. By integrating drones into routine compliance and monitoring activities, Southern IFCA has strengthened its ability to oversee fishing activity, respond proportionately to emerging issues and improve the efficiency of fisheries management within one of England's most environmentally significant harbours.

Innovation has enabled the Authority to better quantify fishing activity and distinguish between authorised and unauthorised operations, providing greater confidence that management measures are being followed and that legitimate fishing activity can continue alongside robust protection of sensitive habitats. This enhanced understanding supports both effective regulation and the ongoing achievement of conservation objectives within Marine Protected Areas.

The use of drone technology has also contributed to maintaining the high sustainability standards required for the Poole Harbour Clam & Cockle Fishery's Marine Stewardship Council certification. By providing improved oversight of fishing activity and supporting proportionate, risk-based enforcement, the technology helps ensure that harvesting remains sustainable while safeguarding the ecological integrity of the harbour.

Importantly, this achievement reflects the collaborative approach taken by Southern IFCA. The award recognises not only the innovation of the Authority's officers and Members but also the commitment of the Poole Harbour Clam & Cockle fishers, represented by the Poole & District Fishermen's Association, whose responsible fishing practices and stewardship are fundamental to the success of the fishery. Together, this partnership demonstrates how effective governance and industry collaboration can deliver fisheries that coexist successfully with conservation protections.

The recognition provided by the MSC Ocean Leadership Award reinforces Southern IFCA's position as a leader in modern inshore fisheries management. It demonstrates that embracing new technologies can strengthen environmental protection while supporting sustainable fishing businesses, providing a model of best practice for small-scale fisheries both nationally and internationally.

By continuing to invest in innovation, evidence-led management and collaborative working, Southern IFCA is delivering well-managed fisheries that not only meet the highest standards of sustainability but also demonstrate that thriving inshore fisheries and healthy marine ecosystems can be achieved together.

Strategic Anchor 10.

Inform national discussions on robust inshore fisheries management & conservation governance.



Contributing local evidence to national fisheries policy & supporting data gaps

Southern IFCA plays an important role in ensuring that the experiences, challenges and opportunities of inshore fisheries are reflected in national fisheries policy. Throughout 2025/26, the Authority continued to support Defra in delivering the objectives of the Fisheries Act 2020 by contributing evidence, expertise and practical management experience to the development and implementation of Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs), Marine Protected Area (MPA) management and the marine consenting processes.

A key area of focus during the reporting period has been supporting the implementation of [England's FMPs](#). Southern IFCA has 14 Defra led FMPs of direct relevance to the District with a further 6 Joint UK Scottish led FMPs also overlapping with part or all of the District, covering a diverse range of commercially important species. As the published Tranche 1, Tranche 2 and Tranche 3 FMPs move from policy development into implementation, Southern IFCA has played an active role in ensuring that local evidence and practical fisheries management experience continue to inform their successful delivery.

Recognising that robust fisheries management depends upon high-quality evidence, Southern IFCA has focused on addressing several of the evidence gaps identified through the T1 and T2 FMP programme as well as continuing to collect cockle data from permitted fisheries and surveys that supports the T3 Cockle FMP. During 2025/26, the Authority continued to develop monitoring programmes and research projects that directly support national FMP objectives while simultaneously informing local management decisions. This ensures that data collected within the District has value beyond local fisheries, contributing to a stronger national evidence base for sustainable fisheries management.

A significant contribution has been the ongoing Whelk LPUE Pilot Project, developed in collaboration with the local fishing industry to improve understanding of the District's whelk fishery. In line with the Whelk FMP, the project collects Landings Per Unit Effort (LPUE) data from commercial pot fishers, providing valuable information on fishing activity, catch rates and fishery performance. This is combined with the Whelk Population Survey which gathers Catch per unit effort (CPUE) data from four key whelk fishing locations annually. The combined Whelk Monitoring Programme not only supports the ability to move towards adaptive pot fishing management within the District but also contributes evidence that will help inform future national approaches to whelk fisheries management.

Southern IFCA also continued to enhance the Solent Scallop Survey, refining survey methodologies to align with the evidence requirements of the King Scallop Fisheries Management Plan. By reviewing survey design, expanding seasonal monitoring and improving data collection methods, the Authority is helping to address nationally recognised evidence gaps while ensuring that the characteristics of small-scale inshore fisheries are represented within wider stock assessments and future policy development.

Southern IFCA remains actively engaged with the wider FMP programme via response to Defra consultations, facilitating Defra engagement on the coast, participating in technical working groups and implementation meetings, and providing specialist advice where required. During the reporting period,

Southern IFCA continued to act as the single point of contact for both the Wrasses Complex and Seabream FMPs, ensuring that the expertise developed within the District contributes directly to national discussions and supports consistency across the wider fisheries network.

Southern IFCA's involvement spans every stage of the FMP process—from the identification of local evidence needs during plan development, through consultation and publication, to supporting implementation and ongoing review. This continuous involvement enables Southern IFCA to ensure that national policy remains informed by practical experience of managing inshore fisheries, while also translating national objectives into effective local delivery.

Through sustained collaboration with Defra, the MMO, other IFCAs and the fishing industry, Southern IFCA continues to strengthen the link between local fisheries management and national policy development. By addressing evidence gaps, contributing technical expertise and championing the role of the inshore sector, the Authority is helping to support robust, ecosystem-based fisheries governance that supports sustainable fish stocks, resilient coastal communities and healthy marine ecosystems, while ensuring that climate change and wider environmental considerations remain integral to future fisheries management.

Advancing the application of Remote Electronic Monitoring in the inshore fleet

Throughout 2025/26, Southern IFCA continued to play a leading role in exploring how Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) can support sustainable, evidence-led management of inshore fisheries. As fisheries management increasingly embraces digital technologies at wider resolutions, Southern IFCA has sought to ensure that the opportunities and challenges unique to the under-12 metre fleet are represented within national discussions, helping to shape future policy and governance.

March 2026 marked the successful completion of Phase 1 of Southern IFCA's Remote Electronic Monitoring and Artificial Intelligence Pilot Project, a two-year programme focussing on three priority fisheries relevant to the District. The project has provided a comprehensive assessment of how REM technologies can be applied within small-scale inshore fisheries, generating valuable evidence to inform both local management and national policy development.

The project explored the application of REM on two under-12 metre stern trawlers and an under-10 metre vessel with capability to deploy both pots and nets. This diversity of vessel and gear types enabled Southern IFCA to assess the practical opportunities and limitations of deploying REM technology across the varied nature of England's inshore fleet.

A key achievement of the pilot was the successful evaluation of emerging AI technologies to support automated analysis of fisheries data. The project demonstrated encouraging potential for AI to assist with species identification and the recording of discards. The trial also explored the use of gear sensors on strings of pots, demonstrating opportunities to improve understanding of fishing effort and informing potential future approaches to effort management within pot fisheries.

The pilot has also highlighted the potential for REM to support proportionate, evidence-based regulation. High-resolution positional data demonstrated how fishing activity can be accurately interpreted within complex spatial management areas, offering opportunities to improve monitoring of closed area compliance while reducing reliance on more traditional surveillance methods. In addition, the technology has shown wider operational benefits, including supporting safety at sea, improving understanding of

gear deployment and providing an objective record of fishing activity that can demonstrate compliance with fisheries regulations.

Importantly, the project has provided valuable insight into the practical challenges of applying REM technology within the inshore fleet. Lessons learned include the need for equipment capable of withstanding harsh marine environments, reducing camera degradation, improving system durability and addressing the ongoing operational costs associated with maintaining REM systems. These findings represent an important contribution to the future development of fit-for-purpose technology for small-scale fisheries and will help inform future investment and deployment decisions.

The success of the pilot has been underpinned by the willingness of local fishers to volunteer their vessels and work collaboratively with Southern IFCA. Feedback from participating fishers has been overwhelmingly positive, with many recognising the value of REM in demonstrating responsible fishing practices, providing assurance of regulatory compliance and supporting transparency within the industry. This collaborative approach has ensured that the technology has been developed with, rather than imposed upon, the inshore fishing sector.

Beyond the District, Southern IFCA has continued to work closely with Defra's REM team and Devon & Severn IFCA to ensure that the lessons learned through the pilot inform wider national policy development. The Authority's practical experience has contributed directly to the development of the national IFCA REM and AI Strategy, ratified by the AIFCA in year, helping to ensure that future approaches to REM reflect the operational realities, opportunities and challenges of England's inshore fisheries.

In exploring innovative technologies and openly sharing the lessons learned, Southern IFCA is helping to shape the future of evidence-led fisheries management. The completion of Phase 1 demonstrates how locally delivered innovation can inform national governance, ensuring that future applications of REM are proportionate, practical and capable of supporting sustainable inshore fisheries across England.

Delivering Southern IFCA's Organisational Anchor

Enable & resource a high performing team, investing in staff & their professional attainment, the work environment & the provision of suitable tools to **create an enabling and flourishing work culture.**



Investing in people to deliver excellence in inshore fisheries management

Southern IFCA recognises that its greatest asset is its people. The Authority's ability to deliver its statutory responsibilities, respond to emerging challenges and provide high-quality fisheries management is directly dependent on the skills, experience and commitment of its workforce. Throughout 2025/26, Southern IFCA continued to invest in its staff, creating opportunities for professional development, career progression and a positive working environment that enables individuals and teams to flourish.

At the heart of the Authority's approach is a commitment to developing and retaining a highly skilled workforce. Recognising the specialist nature of inshore fisheries management, Southern IFCA has developed structured pathways, embedded into Personal Work Plans, that equip staff with the knowledge, skills and practical experience required to meet both current and future organisational and professional needs. These Local Training Pathways have been developed to complement national training with district relevant skills and operational experience. These pathways ensure that officers receive training tailored to the unique operational environment of the Southern IFCA District while providing clear progression routes that support long-term career development and staff retention.

Southern IFCA continues to support the nationally recognised SFJ Awards Level 3 Certificate in Fisheries and Marine Enforcement. Working with the MMO, Southern IFCA continues to invest and enrol officers onto this professional accreditation course, promoting greater professional recognition of the work that officers deliver, whilst strengthening professional capability and providing staff with nationally recognised and transferable skills. Three of the Southern IFCA officers now hold the competencies required to assess and sign off the professional accreditations, reflecting the depth of expertise existing within Southern IFCA.

Southern IFCA continues to invest in succession planning and internal career progression. During the reporting period, two Project Officers successfully progressed into IFCO roles, demonstrating Southern IFCA's commitment to developing talent from within the organisation. Since starting the new roles, both IFCOs have completed the IFCA Enforcement Course and undertaken VHF radio qualification in preparation for undertaking sea patrols.

During the reporting year two officers attained warranted IFCO status, completing the comprehensive training and assessment programme within nine months of joining Southern IFCA (a team record!). In year, all operational officers completed internal boarding and pacing training. Working with the University of Southampton to use RV Callista as a proxy fishing vessel, officers trained on both FPV Protector and FPV Vigilant to ensure competency and confidence in boarding vessels at sea, providing a good team building opportunity as well as important training.

Within the Research & Policy Team, in-house training was delivered on GIS skills and the use of the QGIS programme which is used by all officers for mapping work. This training was made available across the whole team recognising the importance of sharing knowledge and experiences to increase resilience and capabilities that can be applied across multiple workstreams. An RPT IFCO and the DCO RPT attended a 2-day King scallop workshop run by Cefas and facilitated by Cornwall IFCA to discuss survey methods for King scallop stocks and compare inshore and offshore sampling techniques to consider how IFCA collected data may be able to be integrated into national King scallop datasets. The workshop also provided training on King scallop aging, a technique which has since been applied to samples from The Solent fishery for the first time.

Officers in the Research & Policy Team have also furthered their development by attending relevant webinars, hosted by different organisations, to further their wider knowledge on topics of interest, and understand the role and delivery of projects by other organisations. This year, webinars have included the South West Marine Ecosystem Webinar series specifically for webinars on fish species, fisheries and marine protected areas, a webinar on marine restoration, and one run by the Shellfish Association of Great Britain on shellfish waters and associated testing. Officers have also attended a webinar on funding for restoring future seascapes run by Esmeé Fairbairn, and the series of AIFCA Briefings, made available

across the team and to Members, covering recreational sea angling, inshore small-scale fisheries and women in fisheries.

Alongside investment in technical skills, Southern IFCA has continued to strengthen communication across the organisation, recognising that a well-informed workforce is better equipped to engage with stakeholders and respond to emerging issues. Greater emphasis has been placed on sharing organisational priorities, national policy developments and strategic objectives, ensuring that all staff understand how their individual roles contribute to the Authority's wider mission and enabling more informed conversations with fishers and stakeholders during day-to-day engagement.

The Authority has also invested in improving the physical working environment, continuing office regeneration and workplace improvements to create a modern, collaborative and welcoming workspace that supports staff wellbeing. These improvements recognise that an enabling work environment is an important component of staff satisfaction, collaboration and organisational performance.

By investing in people, supporting professional attainment and creating opportunities for growth, Southern IFCA is building a highly capable workforce equipped to meet the challenges of modern inshore fisheries management. This commitment to continuous development, wellbeing and career progression underpins a positive organisational culture where people are valued, supported and empowered to deliver excellence for the marine environment and the communities the Authority serves

PART 3: BUSINESS SERVICE TEAM DELIVERY

Delivering Horizon Priorities

Alignment with the Employment Rights Bill

During 2025/26, Southern IFCA continued to monitor and prepare for significant changes to the national employment landscape arising from the Employment Rights Bill, which received Royal Assent in December 2025 to become the Employment Rights Act 2025.

The legislation represents a substantial programme of employment reform, with measures being introduced progressively through 2026 and 2027. Although many of the principal changes fell outside the 2025/26 reporting period, their scale required the Authority to begin considering their implications in advance to ensure that employment practices, policies and organisational arrangements remained compliant and responsive to emerging requirements.

Preparatory considerations included forthcoming changes to Statutory Sick Pay, including entitlement from the first day of sickness absence; the introduction of day-one rights to Paternity Leave and Unpaid Parental Leave and wider reforms relating to employee protections and employment practices, to include the introduction of Policy to ensure that Southern IFCA take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace.

Southern IFCA have continued to work with lawyers to ensure that all applicable HR Policy remains in keeping with statutory requirements, to include transparency in work from home arrangements and formal flexible working processes. Full reviews were undertaken in year.

The developing legislation also reinforced the importance of maintaining effective recruitment, induction, probation, performance management and staff development arrangements. Southern IFCA continued to consider these requirements alongside its wider commitment to creating a supportive and high-performing workplace, recognising that good employment practice extends beyond legislative compliance and is fundamental to attracting, developing and retaining the specialist workforce required to deliver the Authority's statutory functions.

By remaining informed of national employment reform and considering its implications ahead of implementation, Southern IFCA sought to ensure that the organisation was appropriately prepared for the changing employment landscape entering 2026/27.

Investing in Communications

Local Authority Reports – Demonstrating Local Delivery and Public Value

Effective communication is fundamental to ensuring that Southern IFCA's work is understood by the organisations and communities it serves. During 2025/26, the Authority invested in a new approach to communicating its impact, providing clearer, more locally relevant information about how fisheries management, conservation, enforcement, research and engagement are being delivered across the District.

In September 2025, Southern IFCA introduced a new series of Local Authority Reports, producing an individual report for each of the six Constituent Councils that fund the Authority: Dorset Council; Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council; Hampshire County Council; Southampton City Council; Portsmouth City Council; and the Isle of Wight Council.

The initiative was developed in recognition that Southern IFCA's District-wide reporting does not always make it easy for individual Local Authorities and their Elected Members to identify the work being delivered specifically within their communities. The new reports therefore translate the Authority's broad programme of activity into a local context, clearly demonstrating what Southern IFCA delivers within each council area and the value generated from the funding provided by Constituent Authorities.

Each report provides a tailored overview of the local inshore marine environment and Southern IFCA's activities within it. This includes information on the local commercial and recreational fishing fleet, principal fisheries and target species, vessel activity observed through patrols, and the Marine Protected Areas relevant to each Local Authority. Complex information relating to marine designations is presented in an accessible way, helping readers understand both what is protected and why those protections matter.

The reports then demonstrate how Southern IFCA's statutory functions translate into practical delivery at a local level. This includes scientific research, data collection, surveys and monitoring; the development and implementation of fisheries and conservation policy; compliance patrols and inspections on land and at sea; enforcement outcomes; engagement with fishing communities and other stakeholders; partnership working; and responses to marine licence consultations.

Importantly, the reports also connect local delivery to wider Government objectives. This enables Local Authorities to see how management undertaken within their individual areas contributes to priorities extending beyond administrative boundaries, including sustainable fisheries, Marine Protected Area management, nature recovery, food security and resilient coastal communities.

A central purpose of the initiative is to strengthen transparency and accountability to Southern IFCA's funding authorities. By presenting activity and outcomes at an individual Local Authority level, the reports provide Elected Members, council leaders and finance officers with clearer evidence of the services and public value delivered through their annual levy contributions. This provides an improved evidence base for annual budget discussions and supports more informed consideration of Southern IFCA's funding requirements.

During 2025/26, the reports were incorporated into the Chief Executive Officer's engagement with Constituent Authorities, including a presentation at the BCP Council Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee Meeting and wider engagement with Local Authority representatives, strengthening understanding of Southern IFCA's role and responsibilities.

The introduction of the reports is particularly timely given the evolving landscape of local government devolution and potential future changes to funding arrangements in the District. In a period of organisational and financial change, Southern IFCA recognises the importance of being able to clearly articulate its purpose, demonstrate outcomes and evidence the value derived from investment in effective inshore fisheries and conservation management.

The reports are also intended to have value beyond Southern IFCA's formal funding relationships. By presenting information at a recognisable local scale and making complex fisheries and conservation information more accessible, they provide coastal communities with a clearer understanding of the work taking place within their local marine environment.

Following their successful introduction, Southern IFCA intends to produce the Local Authority Reports annually, enabling progress and activity to be communicated consistently over time. As the reporting series develops, it will provide an increasingly valuable mechanism for demonstrating local impact, supporting informed decision-making and strengthening accountability to both funding bodies and coastal communities.

The Local Authority Reports represent an important investment in Southern IFCA's communications: moving from simply reporting what the Authority does across the District towards clearly demonstrating where it is delivered, why it matters and the value it provides to individual communities and the public bodies that support them.

Community Drop-In Surgeries – Listening, Understanding and Acting

Effective communication is not simply about providing information; it is equally about listening, understanding and creating opportunities for meaningful two-way dialogue. Southern IFCA recognises that maintaining strong relationships with fishing and coastal communities requires the Authority to be visible, accessible and willing to hear directly from those whose livelihoods and activities are affected by fisheries management.

During 2025/26, Southern IFCA continued to invest in this approach through its programme of Community Drop-In Surgeries. Following their introduction during the previous reporting period, the surgeries became an established part of the Authority's communications and engagement programme, providing a direct connection between local communities and senior representatives of Southern IFCA.

The sessions were attended by the Chairman of the Authority, Chairman of the Technical Advisory Committee, Chief Executive Officer and Deputy Chief Officers, providing fishers and other stakeholders with direct access to those responsible for shaping the strategic and operational direction of the Authority. This senior-level participation also ensured that issues raised within communities could be heard first-hand and taken directly back into organisational discussions and decision-making.

Surgeries were held at locations across the District, including Lulworth Cove, Swanage, the Isle of Wight, Poole, Lymington, Mudeford, Warsash and Portsmouth, ensuring that Southern IFCA went directly into the communities it serves rather than expecting stakeholders always to engage through formal Authority processes.

Importantly, these sessions were deliberately different from traditional meetings or consultations. They were designed to be informal, accessible and conversational—often simply sitting down over a cup of tea—to provide an environment in which people felt comfortable raising concerns, sharing experiences, challenging existing ways of working and suggesting practical improvements.

The purpose was straightforward: to listen first. The Authority wanted to better understand the day-to-day realities of working within the inshore fishing sector, including where regulatory requirements, changing fisheries, administrative processes or interactions with Southern IFCA were creating challenges. Equally, the sessions provided opportunities for officers and Members to explain the reasons behind management decisions, address misunderstandings and provide information directly to those affected.

This two-way exchange is particularly important within a changing fisheries management landscape. Communication provides the bridge between policy and its practical application on the water. By understanding how management measures are experienced by those working within fisheries, Southern IFCA can identify where communication needs to improve, where practical assistance can be provided and where different approaches could achieve the same management outcome more effectively.

The value of the programme extended beyond individual conversations. Feedback from the surgeries was captured and reviewed collectively, allowing Southern IFCA to identify recurring themes, shared challenges and emerging issues across the District. In this way, individual conversations have become a source of organisational intelligence, ensuring that experiences reported locally can inform wider priorities and discussions.

Crucially, the surgeries were not undertaken as engagement for engagement's sake. The findings have informed the development of a Community Drop-In Surgery Action Plan for 2026/27, providing a structured mechanism for considering the issues raised and identifying where Southern IFCA can make meaningful improvements. This creates an important feedback loop: listen, understand, act and communicate back, demonstrating to stakeholders that investing their time in engagement can influence tangible outcomes.

The overwhelmingly constructive response from participants throughout 2025/26 demonstrates the value of this approach. Fishers and other stakeholders showed a strong willingness to share their knowledge and experiences, raise difficult issues and work collaboratively to identify potential solutions. This openness provides an important foundation for building trust and maintaining effective relationships between regulator and regulated community.

The Community Drop-In Surgeries demonstrate Southern IFCA's wider commitment to investing in communications that are accessible, purposeful and genuinely two-way. By getting out into communities, listening directly to those with first-hand experience and ensuring that information flows from the coast into organisational decision-making—and back again—the Authority is strengthening relationships, improving its own understanding and ensuring that fisheries management remains connected to the communities it serves.

Delivering Core Functions

Funding & Accounting

Levies

Paragraph (16) of The Southern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation (Amendment) Order 2019 states that the expenses incurred by Southern IFCA must be defrayed by the relevant councils, of which there are six. Dorset Council, Hampshire County Council, Isle of Wight Council and BCP Council receive a grant from central government (via the New Burdens Doctrine) which totals £329,425.

The constituent Local Authorities (LA) are levied on an annual basis by Southern IFCA in accordance with a prescribed formula, as captured in the table below. **The total LA levy contributions in 2025-2026 were £902,440.** This was an increase of **6.72%** on the previous year.

Constituent Council	Formula (%)	Levy increase on previous year (£)	Levy 2025-2026 (£)
Hampshire County Council	40.40	22,957	364,586
Dorset Council	24.79	14,085	223,684
Isle of Wight Council	14.35	8,154	129,499
BCP Council	11.14	6,332	100,563
Portsmouth City Council	5.02	2,852	45,302
Southampton City Council	4.30	2,444	38,806
		56,824	£902,440

Defra Project Funding

As part of the Government Spending Review 2021, Defra committed to a provision of funding (£150k per IFCA) for three financial years (2022-23, 2023-24, 2024-25). The funding provision was to enable IFCA's to support Defra in their delivery of Fisheries Act 2020 and Environment Act 2021 objectives, specifically Marine Protected Area (MPA), Fisheries Management Plan (FMP) and Marine Consents work. As part

of the 2025-26 1 Year Government Spending Review, Defra committed to an additional year of funding (2025-26) for the above-mentioned purposes.

The following amounts were received in year across three programmes of work:

- Fisheries Management Plans: **£50,000** (received August 2025)
- Marine Protected Areas: **£52,256** (received April 2026)
- Marine Consents: **£30,000** (received March 2026)

End of Year Accounts

With effect from 1st April 2015, Southern IFCA were no longer required to have their accounts audited. However, in order to ensure that the Authority's financial business is conducted in accordance with proper recognised standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for, the Authority appointed Francis Clark LLP, registered auditors to carry out a "limited scope assurance report" which is a formal procedure recognised by the Institute of Chartered Accountants. This external audit was undertaken in summer 2026, with the Final Statement of Accounts approved by the Authority on the 17th September 2026. The full report is available [here](#) (Agenda Item 10) and includes a Consolidated Revenue Account and consolidated Balance Sheet for the financial year 1st April 2025 to 31st March 2026.

During the year to 31st March 2026, the consolidated revenue account recorded a net deficit of £151,860, which was taken to the General Reserve.

The Team

	1 st April 2025	31 st March 2026
Full Time, Permanent	14	14
Part Time, Permanent	2	2
Full Time, Fixed term	3	1

Correct as of the 31st March 2026, 53% of the staff body are female and 47% are male, with 47% of employees aged 20-30 years, 18% aged 30-40 years, 12% 40-50 years, 18% 50-60 years and 5% 60-70 years of age.

Leavers 2025-2026

Job Role	Team	Time in Post	Reason
Inshore Fisheries & Conservation Officer	Research & Policy Team	2 years, 9 months	Resignation
Senior IFCO Research & Policy	Research & Policy Team	3 years, 7 months	Resignation
Office Manager	Business Services Team	1 year, 10 months	Resignation

Staff Recruitment Campaigns 2025-2026

Job Role	Team
Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officer	Research & Policy Team
Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officer	Research & Policy Team
Facilities & Administration Officer	Business Services Team

Professional Development



All Southern IFCA employees are set Personal Work Plans which underpin and describe professional development targets which are specific to each member of the team. This year this has included officers completing Powerboat Level 2 courses and GVC Drone pilot courses, as well as IFCOs appointed in year completing the IFCA Enforcement Course and VHF radio qualification. In addition, QGIS training has been provided inhouse and officers have attended a Cefas run workshop on King scallop surveying and analysis as well as participating in a variety of webinars to broaden wider knowledge on relevant topics including south west fisheries, fish species and MPAs, restoration and shellfish waters testing.

IFCO Warranting

There are 10 operational officers across the CET & RPT, of which 6 hold IFCA warrants. In addition, 2x DCOs & 1xCEO also hold a warrant.

Two CET officers achieved warranted status in January 2026 following their recruitment in October 2024.

SFJ Awards Level 3 Certificate in Fisheries and Marine Enforcement

Between 31st March 2025 and 1st April 2026 two IFCO's in the CET have been working towards achieving the above qualification and are expected to complete early in the next reporting year.

SFJ Awards Level 3 Certificate in Assessing Competence

One IFCO completed the above-named qualification, which allows for the internal assessment of the SFJ awards across the team. Southern IFCA now have 3 officers who have this accreditation.

The Membership

Elected Members

Local Authority	1 st April 2025	31 st March 2026
Isle of Wight Council		Cllr P Fuller
Dorset Council		Cllr R Hughes
Dorset Council		Cllr K Wheller
Hampshire County Council		Cllr R Cooper
Hampshire County Council	Cllr B Dunning	Cllr L Quantrill
BCP Council		Cllr C Goodall
BCP Council		Cllr P Miles
Southampton City Council		Cllr J Savage
Portsmouth City Council		Cllr M Winnington

General Members

Sector Representatives	1 st April 2025	31 st March 2026
Commercial Fishing		Mr R Stride
Commercial Fishing	Mr C Brock	Mr M Cornwell
Recreational Sea Angling		Mr C Francis
Aquaculture	Mr G Wordsworth	Mr R Milton
Conservation/Marine Environment		Dr Antony Jensen
Conservation/Marine Environment		Dr Simon Cripps
Conservation/Marine Environment		Dr H Guille
Other		Mr N Hornby (marine policy and science)
Other		Ms E Bussey-Jones (marine heritage & law)

General Member biographies can be found [here](#).

In accordance with the Terms and Conditions of IFCA General Membership, as determined by the Marine Management Organisation, annual Member Appraisals are held to consider the contributions that appointees make to the work of the IFCA, as well as consideration of behaviours in accordance with NOLAN principles and community representation. The appraisals also provide a useful opportunity for feedback to the CEO and Chair of both the Authority and Chair of the Technical Advisory Committee. All Member Appraisals were held in August 2025.

Additional Members

Partner Organisations	1 st April 2025	31 st March 2026
Environment Agency	Mr S Kingston-Turner	
Natural England	Dr R Morgan	
Marine Management Organisation	Ms R Irish	

Authority Meetings

Full Authority

During the reporting period Cllr P Fuller was Chairman of the Authority with Cllr R Hughes the Vice Chair.

In accordance with the Southern IFCA Standing Orders, between 1st April 2025 and 31st March 2026, four meetings of the Full Authority were held at the following locations across the district: Winchester, Portsmouth, Poole and Dorchester.

Member	June 2025	Sept 2025	Dec 2025	Mar 2026
Cllr P Fuller (Isle of Wight Council)				
Cllr R Hughes (Dorset Council)		Apologies		Apologies
Cllr K Wheller (Dorset Council)		Apologies		
Cllr R Cooper (Hampshire County Council)	Apologies			
Cllr B Dunning/Cllr L Quantrill (Hampshire County Council)	Apologies	Apologies		
Cllr C Goodall (BCP Council)	Apologies	Apologies		Apologies
Cllr P Miles (BCP Council)	No comm.	No comm		No comm
Cllr J Savage (Southampton City Council)	Apologies	Apologies	Apologies	
Cllr M Winnington (Portsmouth City Council)				
Dr A Jensen (MMO appointee)				
Mr R Stride (MMO appointee)				
Mr C Brock/Mr M Cornwell (MMO appointee)			Apologies	
Mr G Wordsworth/Mr R Milton (MMO appointee)				
Dr Simon Cripps (MMO appointee)	Apologies	Apologies		
Dr H Guille (MMO appointee)				Apologies
Mr N Hornby (MMO appointee)	Apologies	Apologies	Apologies	
Ms E Bussey-Jones (MMO appointee)		Apologies		Apologies
Mr C Francis (MMO appointee)	Apologies	Apologies	Apologies	Apologies
Mr S Kingston-Turner (EA)	Apologies			
Ms R Irish/ Mr J Morgan/Mr S Douglas (MMO)		Apologies		
Dr R Morgan (NE)				

Executive Sub Committee

During the reporting period Cllr P Fuller was Chairman of the Executive Sub Committee with Cllr R Hughes the Vice Chair. In accordance with the Southern IFCA Standing Orders, four Executive Sub-Committee meetings were held. The Membership of this Sub-Committee comprised of the following, with attendance figures provided.

Member	June 2025	Sept 2025	Dec 2025	Mar 2026
Cllr P Fuller (Isle of Wight Council)				
Cllr R Hughes (Dorset Council)		Apologies		Apologies
Cllr C Goodall (BCP Council)				Apologies
Cllr B Dunning/ Cllr L Quantrill (Hampshire County Council)		Apologies		
Dr A Jensen (MMO appointee)	Apologies			
Mr R Stride (MMO appointee)				

Audit & Governance Sub Committee

In accordance with the Southern IFCA Standing Orders, four AGSC meetings were held. The Membership of this Sub-Committee comprised of the following, with attendance figures provided.

Member	June 2025	Sept 2025	Dec 2025	Mar 2026
Cllr P Fuller (Isle of Wight Council)				
Cllr R Hughes (Dorset Council)		Apologies		Apologies
Cllr K Wheller (Dorset Council)				
Cllr R Cooper/Cllr L Quantrill (Hampshire County Council)	Apologies			
Cllr M Winnington (Portsmouth City Council)				

Technical Advisory Sub Committee

Dr A Jensen was the Chairman of the Technical Advisory Committee, with Mr R Stride as the Vice Chair. In accordance with the Southern IFCA Standing Orders, four Technical Advisory Sub-Committee meetings were held. The Membership of this Sub-Committee comprises the General Members and Additional Members.

Member	May 2025	Aug 2025	Nov 2025	Feb 2026
Dr A Jensen (MMO appointee)				
Mr R Stride (MMO appointee)				Apologies
Mr C Brock/Mr M Cornwell (MMO appointee)		<i>vacancy</i>	Apologies	Apologies
Mr G Wordsworth/Mr R Milton (MMO appointee)	Apologies		Apologies	
Dr Simon Cripps (MMO appointee)				Apologies
Dr H Guille (MMO appointee)		Apologies		Apologies
Mr N Hornby (MMO appointee)		Apologies	Apologies	Apologies
Ms E Bussey-Jones (MMO appointee)		Apologies		
Mr C Francis (MMO appointee)	Apologies			
Mr S Kingston-Turner (EA)				Apologies
Ms R Irish (MMO)	Apologies	Apologies	Apologies	
Dr R Morgan/Mr Connor Reid (NE)				
Cllr P Fuller (Isle of Wight Council)				

Extraordinary meetings of the Technical Advisory Sub Committee

Member	Oct 2025	Dec 2025
Dr A Jensen (MMO appointee)	Apologies	
Mr R Stride (MMO appointee)		
Mr C Brock/Mr M Cornwell (MMO appointee)		Apologies
Mr G Wordsworth/Mr R Milton (MMO appointee)		
Dr Simon Cripps (MMO appointee)	Apologies	Apologies
Dr H Guille (MMO appointee)		
Mr N Hornby (MMO appointee)	Apologies	Apologies
Ms E Bussey-Jones (MMO appointee)	Apologies	Apologies
Mr C Francis (MMO appointee)	Apologies	
Mr S Kingston-Turner (EA)		Apologies
Ms R Irish/Mr G Chittenden (MMO)	Apologies	
Dr R Morgan/Mr Connor Reid (NE)	Apologies	
Cllr P Fuller (Isle of Wight Council)		

Technical Advisory Sub Committee Working Groups

Member	9 th October 2025	8 th January 2026
Dr A Jensen (MMO appointee)		
Mr R Stride (MMO appointee)		
Mr C Brock/Mr M Cornwell (MMO appointee)	Apologies	Apologies
Mr G Wordsworth/Mr R Milton (MMO appointee)		
Dr Simon Cripps (MMO appointee)	Apologies	
Dr H Guille (MMO appointee)		Apologies
Mr N Hornby (MMO appointee)	Apologies	Apologies
Ms E Bussey-Jones (MMO appointee)		Apologies
Mr C Francis (MMO appointee)	Apologies	
Mr S Kingston-Turner (EA)		
Ms R Irish/Mr G Chittenden (MMO)	Apologies	Apologies
Mr R Morgan/Mr Connor Reid (NE)		

In addition to Working Groups, two workshops (running the same content) were held in March 2026 to provide an opportunity for Members of the TAC to discuss the Tranche 4 FMPs ahead of submission of Southern IFCA responses to the public consultation.

Member	23 rd March 2026	26 th March 2026
Dr A Jensen (MMO appointee)	Apologies	
Mr R Stride (MMO appointee)	Apologies	Apologies
Mr C Brock/Mr M Cornwell (MMO appointee)	Apologies	Apologies
Mr G Wordsworth/Mr R Milton (MMO appointee)	Apologies	
Dr Simon Cripps (MMO appointee)	Apologies	Apologies
Dr H Guille (MMO appointee)		Apologies
Mr N Hornby (MMO appointee)	Apologies	
Ms E Bussey-Jones (MMO appointee)	Apologies	Apologies
Mr C Francis (MMO appointee)	Apologies	
Mr S Kingston-Turner (EA)	Apologies	Apologies
Ms R Irish/Mr G Chittenden (MMO)	Apologies	Apologies
Mr R Morgan/Mr Connor Reid (NE)	Apologies	Apologies

Member Briefings & Guest Speakers

With the purpose to provide Members with contextual and site-specific information on fisheries and conservation within the district, and where possible, information relevant to specific Authority meeting locations. The Briefings are optional to Members and held prior to the start of the formal meeting.

- **Angling for Sustainability, a Fisheries Industry Science Partnership Project** (May 2025, from Dr Peter Davies, Post Doctoral Researcher in Marine Ecology and the University of Plymouth)
- **Key fisheries and conservation considerations in Southampton Water** (June 2025, IFCOs)
- **MMO Compliance & Enforcement: Inshore Vessel Monitoring Systems** (June 2025, Mr S Douglas, Director of Operations, MMO)
- **The Inshore and Small-Scale Fisheries Consortium** (May 2025, Senior Technical Officer, Mr. S Pengelly, AIFCA)
- **Key fisheries and conservation considerations in Portsmouth & Langstone Harbours** (September 2025, IFCOs)
- **Aquaculture in Poole Harbour** (December 2025, IFCOs)
- **Solent Seascapes Project Update** (December 2025, Ms L MacCallum, Solent Project Manager, Blue Marine)
- **IFCA Community Films** (March 2026, Mr. S Pengelly, Senior Technical Officer, AIFCA)
- **Coasts in Mind: 100 years of change in Poole Harbour** (March 2026, Mr O Hutchinson, Project Officer for Coasts in Mind, Dorset)

Health & Safety Oversight

During the reporting period, one accident, one incident and one near miss were recorded. All accidents, incidents and near misses are formally reported to the Executive Sub-Committee, with appropriate mitigations and any required changes to policy, procedure, equipment or working practices considered as part of the Authority's ongoing approach to health, safety and organisational learning.

Classification	Summary	Outcome & Mitigation
Accident	Loss of a work mobile phone overboard during operational survey activity.	No injury occurred. Equipment lanyards were subsequently issued across the operational team to reduce the risk of recurrence during at-sea activities.
Incident	A battery fault occurred during a routine drone flight, activating the aircraft's automated safety systems.	The Remote Pilot safely recovered the aircraft with no injury or damage. The drone was removed from service, professionally inspected and the affected battery set replaced before the aircraft returned to operational use.
Near Miss	An electrical fault was identified in a wall-mounted office radiator before the issue escalated.	No injury or fire occurred. The equipment was immediately isolated and subsequently inspected by a qualified electrician. Similar equipment across the office was checked, remedial works were completed and staff were reminded to report signs of potential electrical faults promptly.

The low number of recorded events, together with the actions taken following each occurrence, demonstrates the Authority's continued focus on proactive risk management, organisational learning and maintaining safe working environments across both operational and office-based activities.

GDPR Requests & responses

During the reporting period 10 Freedom of Information (**FOI**) requests were received, 4 Environmental Information Regulations (**EIR**) requests and 2 Data Subject Access (**DSA**) requests were received in accordance the Public Access to Information. Two requests were received under the Data Protection Act 2018 for the prevention of crime.

Type	Date received	Detail	Response date
Freedom of Information request	19 th May 2025	Information about decline in crab stocks	16 th June
Freedom of Information request	2 nd July 2025	Whole body vibration	28 th July
Environmental Information Regulation request	5 th Aug 2025	Further information provided 25 th August re: Manila clam data 2011 to present. No payment received following notification of charges on 24 th September.	24 th Sept
Freedom of Information request	2 nd Sept 2025	Information on saltmarsh protections in Poole Harbour. Additional information received 3 rd September.	29 th Sept
Environmental Information Regulation request	13 th Sept 2025	10 years of data on shellfish. No payment within 60 days of request – null response	13 th Sept
Freedom of Information request	23 rd Sept 2025	Enforcement actions 2015-2025	15 th Oct
Freedom of Information request	25 th Sept 2025	Fishing activity and aggregate dredging	21 st Oct
Freedom of Information request	3 rd Nov 2025	Sea Trout	3 rd Nov
Freedom of Information request	8 th Nov 2025	Sea Trout	5 th Dec
Freedom of Information request	12 th Nov 2025	Information exempt under FOIA – null response	11 th Dec
Subject Access Request	12 th Nov 2025	Former employee seeking information	10 th Dec
Environmental Information Regulation request	17 th Nov 2025	Fishing activity in Solent. Paid 9 th January	4 th Feb
Freedom of Information request	17 th Feb 2025	Enforcement data 2022-2025	4 th Mar
Subject Access Request	16 th Mar 2026	Catch data request from permit holder.	19 th Mar
Subject Access Request	17 th Mar 2026	Catch data request from permit holder.	19 th Mar

Freedom of Information request	19 th Mar 2026	Bycatch datasets 2017-present	20 th Apr
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This is an increase of 150 % on receipt of FOI, 33.3% increase for EIRs and a 50% increase on SARs, when compared with the period 2024-2025.

Public Questions

No public questions were received during the reporting period.

Formal Complaints

No formal complaints were received during the reporting period.

Dispensations

During the reporting period 11 dispensations to Southern IFCA Byelaws were issued to external organisations.

Dispensation Type	Applicant	Reason	Byelaw Dispensing Against
Stocking and Breeding	Commercial Operator (Aquaculture)	Maintain aquaculture operations on lease beds (carriage of gear)	PHDP Byelaw
Scientific	Environment Agency	Ecological Assessment for Water Framework Directive Purposes	MCRS Byelaw & Vessels Used in Fishing Byelaw
Scientific	CEFAS	Scientific survey	MCRS Byelaw
Scientific	Panthalassa Ltd	Small fish survey	Net Fishing Byelaw & MCRS Byelaw
Scientific	University of Portsmouth	Small fish survey	Net Fishing Byelaw & MCRS Byelaw
Stocking and Breeding	Commercial Operator (Aquaculture)	Maintain aquaculture operations on lease beds (carriage of gear)	PHDP Byelaw
Scientific	Langstone Harbour Board/ RSPB	Small fish survey	MCRS Byelaw
Scientific	CEFAS	Scientific Survey	MCRS Byelaw & Vessels Used in Fishing
Scientific	Portsmouth City Council (Port Health Authority)	Shellfish Classification	SDP Byelaw, Fishing for Cockles Byelaw & MCRS Byelaw
Scientific	University of Essex	Small fish survey	MCRS Byelaw

Educational	Hampshire County Council (Calshot Activity Centre)	Small fish seine net	Net Fishing Byelaw & MCRS Byelaw
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PART 4: DELIVERING THE RESEARCH & POLICY TEAM PLAN

Horizon Priorities

MCZ Management: Black Sea Bream

Developing Management Intervention



During the 2024/25 reporting year the Authority agreed to explore a Shared Principles Model for managing black seabream as a designated feature of three Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs); Purbeck Coast MCZ, Poole Rocks MCZ and Southbourne Rough MCZ. At the end of the 2024/25 reporting year, Authority Members drew together and reviewed the components of such an approach, reviewing potential management options against all relevant Material Considerations through a Management Matrix, identifying that existing and extended statutory measures in the form of the proposed Bottom Towed Fishing Gear Byelaw 2023 (subsequently ratified in July 2025), the Minimum Conservation Reference Size Byelaw and external spatial closures in Purbeck Coast MCZ by the Ministry of Defence, combined with a series of Co-Developed Principles would achieve the greatest benefit and meet the greatest number of Material Considerations compared to other options (including No Take Zones or no additional management beyond current and pending statutory measures).

In reviewing all the evidence gathered to date, including that gathered from stakeholders, a series of Co-Developed Principles and their proposed application were developed.

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

Between 6th May and 22nd June 2025 a public consultation was held on the Co-Developed Principles. Both in-person and online engagement opportunities were made available to stakeholders throughout the duration of the consultation, including coastal drop-in sessions, a targeted industry workshop, coastal engagement, community forums, stakeholder group meetings, an online meeting and an online questionnaire.

The consultation received 124 responses, the highest number ever received by Southern IFCA during an informal consultation. Responses were received from charter vessels (33), recreational anglers (65), commercial fishers (23) and other representatives (3). The community were engaged with the consultation and were supportive of the Co-Development approach, expressing their desire to continue to work with Southern IFCA to ensure the future health of the black seabream population in Dorset. All

the Co-Developed Principles, as taken to consultation, received majority support through the consultation responses. Members considered the outcome of the consultation with a focus on five discussion areas, three related to compliance elements for a Maximum Conservation Reference Size, one related to bag limits and one related to the data collection programme and resolved to take forward the Co-Developed Principles with no amendments.

At an Extraordinary meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee on 4th December 2025, Members discussed the proposed Black Seabream Management Package in full, incorporating the following documentation:

- [Process Document 1 – Delivery Policy Objectives](#)
- [Process Document 2 – Decision Making & Roadmap](#)
- [Process Document 3 – Management Tools, Application & Review](#)
- [MCZ Assessment Package](#)
- [Black Seabream Literature Review](#)
- [Black Seabream Site Specific Evidence Packages](#)

The Authority resolved to implement the Co-Developed Principles from 1st April 2026.

The conclusion of the review of black seabream management therefore centred around the delivery of two parallel but complementary policy objectives, the Primary Policy Objective to manage black seabream as a designated feature of MCZs focusing on managing higher-risk fishing activities from a baseline position of no management via the quantification of existing management measures, and the Secondary Policy Objective to improve understandings of black seabream across the Dorset MCZs to complement the protections afforded by statutory measures as well as advance understandings of the health of the black seabream fishery over time. The development of the Co-Developed Principles across the entire footprint of the three MCZs during the recognised breeding season, provided a suitable management mechanism by which Southern IFCA could both satisfy and facilitate progress towards achieving the Policy Drivers and Headline Objectives which framed the Secondary Policy Objective.

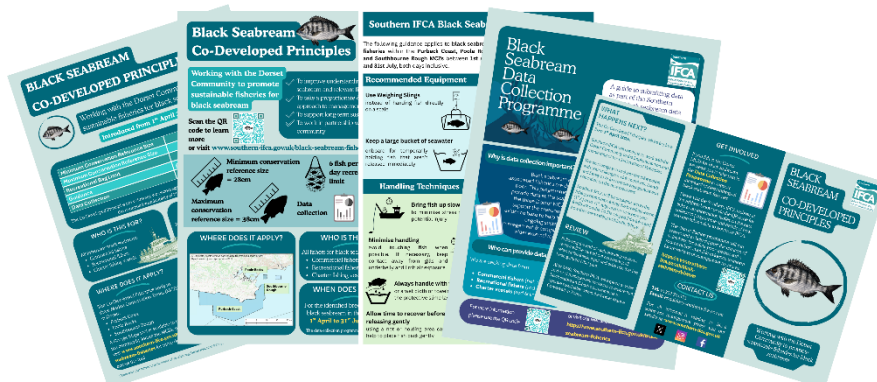
In satisfying both Policy Objectives, via the application of dual legislative function, and in the unification of the resulting management solutions applicable to each, Southern IFCA, with the support of the Dorset Community are collectively championing a proportionate management approach which fundamentally seeks to improve understandings of the black seabream population, information which is vital in current and future approaches to sustaining black seabream fisheries across the three Dorset MCZs and beyond. This approach allows ongoing management to be based on improved evidence as supported and informed via ongoing co-development with the community and can provide a model and data outputs to support the delivery of the Seabream FMP. This holistic approach to management provided not only a solution to the primary legislative driver, namely the furthering of Conservation Objectives to satisfy Southern IFCA's duties under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 but also facilitates holistic and adaptive approaches that remain true to the functions of Southern IFCA, as specific under Section 153 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009, the national IFCA Vision to balance the marine environment and sustainable fisheries and the Southern IFCA Vision to champion prosperous inshore fisheries founded upon thriving marine environments.

Year 1 lead in – engagement & raising awareness

Ahead of 1st April 2026 and the Year 1 introduction of the Co-Developed Principles, Southern IFCA focussed on the intention for Year 1 delivery of engagement, raising awareness and seeking compliance.

In order to support the stakeholder community in being aware of the Co-Developed Principles and maximising opportunities for engagement ahead of the 1st April, Southern IFCA produced a series of engagement materials, utilising both electronic and paper formats to support wider engagement. These included an information leaflet (in two formats), a poster, a data collection programme guidance leaflet and waterproof handing & fishing guidance.

These materials were made available in hard copy to individual fishers, angling clubs, fishing associations, tackle & bait shops, marinas, quaysides and noticeboards as well as being available on the Southern IFCA website. Southern IFCA also presented at the 2026 Professional Boatman's Association AGM and at a meeting of the Poole & District Sea Angling Association.



A new Dorset Black Seabream webpage was developed on the Southern IFCA website with sections providing more detail on the management of black seabream within the three Dorset MCZs, with a section on management of black seabream as a designated feature of the MCZs and a section on the Co-Developed Principles. A section was also added linking the three Process Documents that collectively provide clarity of the process and intention that underpinned the management approach and explain the route to achieving the two Policy Objectives, as well as Southern IFCA's intentions for the implementation and monitoring of management tools, and future reviews of black seabream fisheries in the three Dorset MCZs.



All fishers and charter businesses who are engaged with the black seabream fisheries in the three Dorset MCZs were invited to become Black Seabream Custodians via displaying a sticker on their vessel, and/or adding information to their business website. Any organisation, business or community group who wished to promote their support for the initiative were also invited to have their logo displayed on the Southern IFCA webpage under the Dorset Community Section. Southern IFCA also developed a QR code, used in all engagement materials to provide quick access to resources on the Southern IFCA website.

A new Google Maps Interactive Tool was also developed to allow stakeholders to view their position in relation to Southern IFCA spatial management, including the three Dorset MCZs within which the Co-Developed Principles apply and Bottom Towed Fishing Gear Byelaw 2023 prohibition areas, including those overlapping the three Dorset MCZs. This provides another tool to support fishers awareness and seeking compliance with both the statutory and voluntary aspects of the management package for black seabream.

During the engagement phase prior to 1st April 2026, Southern IFCA engaged by email with 151 stakeholders and in-person with 80 stakeholders across individual recreational sea anglers,

angling/tackle shops, charter vessels, commercial fishers, angling clubs, organisations, partner organisations and angling competitions.

BTFG: Phase 2

The aim of BTFG: Phase 2 was to explore district wide management interventions for sensitive habitats. During the 2025/26 year, it became evident that not all evidential elements were in place to allow a full consideration of the delivery of Phase 2 in an appropriate and proportionate way in line with Southern IFCA's duties under Section 153 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009, noting that Phase 2 would 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 new to understand appropriate methodologies for quantifying recreational sea angling use of different areas in 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 bottom towed fishing gear.

Southern IFCA commit to maintaining a watching brief on relevant factors going forward 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, 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 potential future delivery of BTFG: Phase 2.

Core Functions

Data Collection Programme



Net Fishing Byelaw

Data is collected during the year in line with the five monitoring components of the On-Site Monitoring Programme under the [Net Permit Area Monitoring and Control Plan for Net Permit Areas](#). This includes a requirement on permitted net fishers to report any interactions or incidents of mortality of salmonids when operating within Net Permit Areas, as well as Southern IFCA collected data on net fishing activity from targeted and non-targeted compliance patrols as well as joint working with the Environment Agency.

During the Year 2 period (1st March 2025 to 31st March 2026), there were two reported salmonid interactions, both related to sea trout in the Christchurch Harbour Net Permit Area. In both cases the individual fish were in good condition and returned to the fishery. Based on the data collected across all five monitoring components, no trigger levels for salmonid interactions or mortality were reached.

PHDP Byelaw

Under the flexible permit conditions of the Poole Harbour Dredge Permit, permit holders are required to submit monthly catch returns detailing for each fishing day during the season the species harvested, the quantity, catch location, fishing trip duration and buyer information. Commonly harvested species include the Manila clam, common cockle, American hard-shelled clam and native clam.

[The Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Fishery Monitoring and Control Plan](#) (M&CP), first utilised during the 2025/26 reporting year, was developed to provide a comprehensive framework for monitoring and feedback within the fishery. Responding to low catch levels of Manila clam in 2024, the M&CP uses best available evidence to aid the Authority in understanding the operation of the fishery in relation to Manila clam as a target stock, environmental designations and any changes to management. The M&CP considers an On-Site Monitoring Programme and an SPA Monitoring Programme which outline specific triggers for various monitoring variables and associated control mechanisms. In addition, an In-Season Monitoring Programme allows for continued high level monitoring to provide additional evidence to support any required determinations under the other two programmes.

Ahead of the 2025/26 fishing season (starting on 25th May 2025), the Technical Advisory Committee reviewed the outputs of the On-Site Monitoring Programme for Manila clam based on permit holder provided catch data for the 2024/25 season and survey data from the Poole Harbour Bivalve Survey 2025. These two data sources provide the basis for the two monitoring variables under the On-Site Monitoring Programme, with Trigger Threshold Levels (TTLs) set for each variable based on variation around the lowest 5-year rolling average from the timeseries dataset (2015-2025).

Landings data for Manila clam, analysed as Landings per Unit Effort (LPUE) (kg/day), were 72.4 kg/day, below the LPUE TTL of 78.3 kg/day, therefore the control mechanism for the TAC to consider all available evidence in determining whether any additional management intervention was required to support sustainable Manila clam harvesting was activated.

The review of evidence included consideration of monthly catch level patterns and comparisons to previous years, as well as the second Monitoring Variable outputs, based on the Poole Harbour Bivalve Survey, where the TTL is based on Catch per Unit Effort (CPUE) (kg/m of dredge/hour), which, in 2025, did not reach the CPUE TTL, the average value being 43.5 kg/m of dredge/per hour compared to the TTL of 34.6 kg/m of dredge per hour. It was determined that although the LPUE TTL had been reached, results from monthly catch monitoring indicated that catch rates were consistent with historic levels (2016-2019) and that environmental influences including a mild winter and increased freshwater inputs had potentially contributed to lower catch levels. In addition, the survey results indicated that the stock of Manila clam in Poole Harbour at the pre-season point remained stable and, on this basis, no additional management intervention was determined to be required ahead of the 2025/26 fishing season.

Catch data for 2025 is reported in the [Poole Harbour Bivalve Survey Report 2025](#).

In August 2025, as part of the In-Season Monitoring Programme, a Mid-Season Observer Programme was carried out for the first time in the fishery in collaboration with permit holders operating under normal fishing practice. The Programme involved the analysis of Manila clam samples from active fishing grounds to provide a mid-season indication of CPUE that could be reviewed against the pre-season survey. Permit holders were very receptive to the Programme and happy to assist in the catch sampling as part of their routine operations. The first application of this Programme showed an increase in CPUE compared to the pre-season survey indicating that Manila clam stocks remained sustainable at the mid-season point. This Programme will now be repeated annually as part of monitoring in this fishery to

support increased understandings of stock changes and trends, with a view to also incorporating common cockle into the M&CP in the coming year.

SDPB Byelaw

Solent Dredge Permit Byelaw (SDPB) permit holders are required to provide monthly catch returns detailing, for each of the days fished during that month, the species caught, the quantities, the duration of the fishing trip, the location of fishing and the number of tows as well as buyer information. The species most commonly reported are King scallop and Manila clam.

The catch data is used to monitor trends in the quantities of each species removed from the fishery, allowing for comparison with Southern IFCA run stock surveys, in combination to monitor the status of commercially important target species populations and therefore make an assessment of the sustainability of the fishery. In the event that a review of management under the SDPB is required, data from permit holders forms one element of the scientific and survey evidence used to inform the review.

For the King scallop fishery in 2025/26, data indicated that average catch rates, expressed as Landings per Unit Effort (LPUE) (kg/hour/vessel) were similar to those of the 2024/25 season at 2.62 kg/h/vessel and 2.59 kg/h/vessel respectively, although the total quantity of King scallop landed was lower in 2025/26 (241.8 tonnes) than in 2024/25 (400.1 tonnes). Average catch rates for King scallop in 2025/26 were lower than in the 2021/22 and 2023/24 seasons but higher than the 2022/23 season.

For the Manila clam fishery in 2025/26, data indicated that average catch rates were similar to the 2024/25 season at 1.56 kg/h/vessel and 1.61 kg/h/vessel respectively, with the total quantity of Manila clam landed the highest for the fishery to date at 4.7 tonnes. Average catch rates for Manila clam in 2025/26 were lower than the 2021/22, 2022/23 and 2023/24 seasons.

Data is reported in full in the [Solent Scallop Survey Report 2025](#) and the [Solent Bivalve Survey Report 2025](#).

In February 2026, a two-day observer programme was run within the fishery, seeking to verify data provided within SDPB catch returns by collecting at-sea data from across the fishing fleet. The programme was developed following discussions at a Cefas King scallop workshop, hosted by Cornwall IFCA, which aimed to understand the comparability between the national Cefas King scallop survey and data collected by individual IFCAs. The addition of this programme to the SDPB fishery enables an understanding of what permit holders are seeing on the ground and how this relates to data used to inform the management of the fishery from previous years' catch data and the timeseries dataset from the Solent Scallop Survey. Permit holders were receptive to the new programme and were positive that the sampling enabled Southern IFCA to get a snapshot of the fishery as they were seeing it on the ground which then forms part of the wider evidence based used to inform understandings and management for the fisheries under the SPDB.

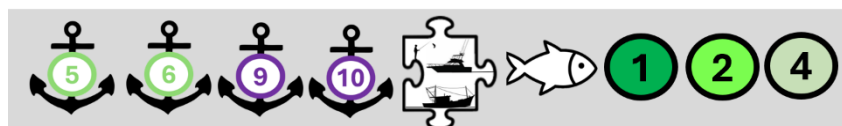
Live Wrasse Data Collection

During the 2025/26 reporting period the live wrasse fishery did not take place. Officers maintained engagement with the main buyer in the fishery and local fishers previously engaged in the fishery in the run up to the anticipated start date on 1st July, receiving information in May that the fishery would not go ahead. This was due to a combination of live wrasse being able to be sourced from closer to their final destination in Scotland, thus reducing transport costs, and the introduction of the RSPCA Welfare

Standards for Farmed Atlantic Salmon which states that wild wrasse must not be caught or harvested when the sea water temperature is above 17°C. The start of the fishery in July means that there is limited time available before this temperature threshold is reached, therefore affecting the viability of having a live wrasse fishery in the District. Officers will continue to engage with the buyer each year to establish whether the fishery is likely to be active.

Across all data programmes Southern IFCA are continuing to evolve methodologies, the type of data that can be obtained and the analysis carried out, seeking opportunities for increasing fisher-dependent data to ensure that fishers can be actively involved in the provision of evidence for their fisheries and develop an understanding of how data is collected and then used by Southern IFCA to inform management. Engagement opportunities across all fisheries provide an additional opportunity to speak to fishers about what they are seeing on the ground, relay survey results and discuss how data is related to target stocks of interest and associated management, fishers are always keen to offer additional anecdotal insights from their experience and daily operations, which is invaluable and can only be captured through direct interaction, providing important context alongside datasets to build robust evidence bases for these fisheries.

Survey Programme



Whelk Population Survey

The Whelk Population Survey is designed to assess the distribution and abundance of the common whelk across the Southern IFCA District. The survey is undertaken in collaboration with commercial fishers in four areas of the District, providing fishery-independent data from Lyme Bay, Weymouth Bay, Poole Bay and the Solent.

Whelk samples are collected using a standardised sampling methodology in which a fixed number of pots are deployed at each survey site. The survey also allows for collaboration with Bournemouth University, who provide lab facilities during the summer for the processing and analysis of samples. Data from the survey is used to calculate Catch per Unit Effort (CPUE) for a series of defined size classes, as well as shell length measurements to assess population size structure and length frequency distributions.

The third survey was carried out in 2025, with a timeseries dataset being built on spatial and temporal trends in stock distribution, abundance and population structure across the District. Combined with the Whelk LPUE Pilot Project, the Southern IFCA Whelk Monitoring Programme aims to provide a local evidence base to support considerations of management as well as contribute District-specific evidence to support addressing evidence gaps identified through the Whelk FMP at a national level.

[The findings of the 2025 survey](#) were consistent with previous years, indicating that there is spatial variation in whelk populations across the District both in catch quantities and size range, indicating the potential for the presence of localised subpopulation differences over relatively small spatial scales. Even this early indication of District specific differences is key to ensuring any management for whelk fishing is appropriate to the characteristics of the fishery and how this changes spatially as well as being an important indicator at a national level in considerations of defining whelk populations spatially.

Poole Bivalve Survey

The Poole Bivalve Survey is carried out annually over a three-day period in April prior to the start of the Poole Harbour Dredge Permit fishing season on 25th May. Southern IFCA work collaboratively with permit holders, chartering a permitted fishing vessel to undertake the sampling alongside officers, with standardised survey methods used to collect Catch per Unit Effort (CPUE) data for the main two target species, Manila clam and common cockle, and length-frequency data for these and other species including American hard-shelled clam and native clam.

Data is analysed at the level of Shellfish Catch Zones, of which there are 11 within the Harbour. This aligns with the spatial level of reporting by permit holders through monthly catch return submissions and enables survey results to be analysed alongside catch data from the previous season. Data is analysed to look at spatial variation in CPUE and length-frequency as well as comparisons to previous survey years to enable an understanding of stock changes and trends over time to provide an indication of stock sustainability for target species.

The survey forms one monitoring component under the On-Site Monitoring Programme under the Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Fishery Monitoring and Control Plan (M&CP), with annual average CPUE values for Manila clam analysed against a set Threshold Trigger Level (TTL), based on variation around the lowest 5-year running average from the survey timeseries dataset, to determine sustainability in the Manila clam stock and whether there is any indication additional management intervention may need to be considered to support a sustainable fishery. Ahead of the 2025/26 season the CPUE TTL was not breached by the annual survey results and this, combined with consideration of all other available evidence including a second monitoring variable linked to catch data, determined that no further action was required to be taken in the fishery for the 2025/26 season.

[Analysis of the 2025 survey data](#) indicated that the harvestable populations of both Manila clam and common cockle remain sustainable.

The survey data also contributes to the evidence base informing the management of the fishery under the Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Byelaw and associated permit conditions, helping to inform any reviews of management and is also reviewed annually as part of the Marine Stewardship Council sustainability standard audit for the fishery to ensure that the fishery continues to operate sustainability from a stock status perspective.

Solent Bivalve Survey

The Solent Bivalve survey is run twice per year, once pre-fishing season in October 2025 and one post-fishing season in March 2026. Each survey takes place over three days, facilitated by the chartering of active vessels in the fishery, working with the permitted skippers to use standard dredging equipment. Shellfish beds are sampled in three of the Bivalve Management Areas under the Solent Dredge Permit Byelaw, Southampton Water, Portsmouth Harbour and Langstone Harbour. Weight and length data is collected for key commercially targeted species in these areas including Manila clam, common cockle and American hard-shelled clam. Data is used to determine Catch per Unit Effort (CPUE) values and length-frequency distributions for these species, with the data contributing to a timeseries dataset that allows the identification of trends in stock and an indication of the sustainability of the fishery under the Solent Dredge Permit Byelaw (SDPB). The survey data is also compared to catch data from SDPB permit holder catch returns within Bivalve Management Areas to get an indication as to how stock levels on the ground are related to the landings then seen in the fishery for the previous and upcoming seasons.

The 2025 survey report concluded that the current fishing effort in the SDPB fishery does not appear to be having a significant impact on Manila clam or common cockle stock levels, and that the trends observed could be related to the influence of environmental variables.

Solent Scallop Survey

The Solent Scallop Survey Programme consists of three surveys each year, a survey in April post the previous fishing season, a survey in September pre the upcoming fishing season and a mid-season survey in February. Each survey is run for three days, deploying multiple dredge types including an industry standard N-Viro dredge and a Queenie scallop dredge, to sample King scallop across the breadth of size ranges from juveniles to adults.

The introduction of the Queenie scallop dredge to the survey methodology followed pilot and developmental work that took place in 2025. The smaller belly ring size of this dredge type (operated under dispensation from the MMO) allows for the retention of a larger number of juvenile scallops and is run alongside the industry standard dredge to allow for comparisons of fishing practice. Other additions to the survey made in 2025 include recording metrics on bycatch and King scallop condition, with the aim of aligning Southern IFCA's survey with efforts to address evidence gaps identified through the UK King Scallop Fisheries Improvement Plan (FIP) and the King Scallop FMP. Refinement of the spatial areas surveyed within the fishery was also implemented this year, reflecting areas that are more closely aligned with key fishing areas to allow improved comparisons between survey data and fisher catch data. This spatial refinement was developed in close consultation with fishers, utilising fishing location information provided on monthly catch returns as well as engagement opportunities for fishers to identify on maps key areas of importance for scallop fishing.

The Solent Scallop Survey uses a commercial vessel that actively operates within the permitted fishery collecting weight and length data for King scallop which is used to determine Catch per Unit Effort (CPUE) and length-frequency distributions, with data contributing to a timeseries dataset, 2025 marking the fourth year of multi-year and multi-site surveying for this fishery.

Following the autumn post-season survey in September 2025 and a full analysis of survey data for 2025, with comparisons to previous years, a number of key points were identified which formed a driver for actioning a review of permit conditions, permit fees and limitations on the number of permits under a Category A Solent Dredge Permit. These drivers included significantly lower CPUE in the autumn survey compared to previous years, an increase in the number of individual sampling sites seeing a decline in CPUE between successive autumn surveys reaching the highest level to date, increases in CPUE between spring and autumn surveys (fishery closed period) being smaller than seen previously and not statistically significant and the survey results being in the context of landings of King scallop being lower for the preceding season. The review determined that additional management intervention was required in the King scallop fishery ahead of the 2025/26 season, resulting in a reduction in daily fishing hours from 08:00-16:00 to 08:00-14:00.

Analysis of data from the 2025/26 fishing season which ran from November 2025 to March 2026 and both fisher-dependent and fisher-independent Fishery Performance Indicators, showed that catch levels were lower than the previous season by 39.5%, and lower overall than all but one previous season. With a focus on carrying out multiple surveys per year, combined with data from permit holder catch returns and mid-season observer sampling, Southern IFCA is able to build a robust evidence base which can be used as a source of evidence both in reviews of management but also to quantify the response of the

fishery following any intervention. In this case the data indicated that additional effort controls in the fishery were warranted, and it is important to be able to provide this feedback to permit holders and the wider community to illustrate how evidence is used at all stages of the process and to provide quantification to actions taken by Southern IFCA as well as to support contextual evidence provided anecdotally by those working in the Solent scallop fishery.

Juvenile Fish Survey

Through the Juvenile Fish Monitoring Programme, surveys are carried out at four locations across the District to monitor the occurrence and distribution of juvenile fish species including size frequency and measures of species diversity and richness. The surveys are carried out twice per year in early summer and autumn with data added to a timeseries dataset that allows for trends and patterns in fish species to be analysed.

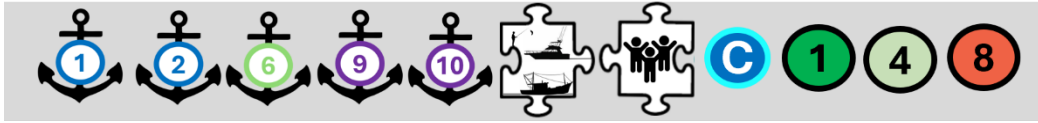
Data from the programme contributes to understandings of the use of Essential Fish Habitats (EFH) by commercially and recreationally important fish species. As part of the development of management for net fishing under the Net Fishing Byelaw, one of the objectives of the review was to enhance the environmental, socio-economic and sustainability of fisheries within the District by supporting the use of harbours and estuaries as EFH. Of the four areas currently surveyed, The Fleet, River Hamble, Yarmouth and Christchurch Harbour, three are identified through the Net Fishing Byelaw as requiring management which is linked, in part, to the importance of the area as EFH. Additionally, understandings of EFH are highlighted as an evidence gap across multiple FMPs for fish species, with data from the Southern IFCA monitoring programme therefore having the potential to contribute to addressing evidence gaps at a national level. Data from this programme has been provided as evidence to support the Wrasses Complex and Seabreams FMPs and the data is also helping understand European seabass within the District, including localised distribution and age structure as well as contributing to understanding the relative importance of certain nursery grounds and potential regional variations in spawning periods, all important evidence identified through the implementation phase of the Tranche 1 Bass FMP.

Juvenile Fish Surveys took place in June and October 2025, with the outcomes analysed at a survey and timeseries dataset level. [The report](#) looked at the top ten dominant species for 2025 in comparison to 2024, the distribution of species across survey sites and, for the first time, European seabass age groups using length thresholds for <1 year old, 1-2 year old, 2-3 year old and 3+ year old individuals. For each survey site the total and relative species abundance was also calculated, along with species richness and the Shannon Diversity Index. To date there are no observable long-term variations in the trends in species abundance and species richness between sites. For all sites sample a variety of fish species are noted to be using the EFH including European seabass, goby species, grey mullet species and sand smelt as the most commonly occurring and the 6 most abundant species in the 2025 surveys.

The surveys offer the opportunity to work in collaboration with research establishments and organisations with an interest in fisheries science and management. In 2025 Southern IFCA were joined by representatives from the Solent Seascape Project, the Environment Agency and a member of the Greenspace Management Team from BCP Council. Southern IFCA also worked with the Science Lead for the Bass Angler's Sportfishing Society who assisted in developing the methodology to determine the age classes of juvenile European seabass using season-specific total length thresholds.

Reviewing Management Interventions

The Poole Fishery Order 2015



On 1st July 2025, the Tranche 3 issuing of leases under The Poole Fishery Order 2015 (the Order) commenced. Leases are issued under the Order for periods of 5-years within the overall 20 year Order timeline, made pursuant to the Sea Fisheries (Shellfish) Act 1967. Under the Order, Southern IFCA as the grantee of the Order and the Aquaculture Production Business (APB) authorised body administers shellfish aquaculture through the issuing of leases, the process providing a robust framework that provides confidence to aquaculture businesses in investing in long-term shellfish production whilst allowing Southern IFCA to exercise the necessary scrutiny for sustainable management of aquaculture within a Marine Protected Area.

During the 2025/26 year, applicants for a lease submitted final Business Plans and End of Lease reports for the previous tranche (2020-2025). For this tranche a template document was developed to help guide and standardise Business Plan Development, and through this process it was determined that there would be no significant changes to species or aquaculture activity for Tranche 3 compared to the previous tranche. An update was also made to the [Poole Harbour Several Order 2015 Management Plan](#) to include information relevant to Tranche 3 including improved biosecurity provisions such as the development of a Shellfish Movement Guidance Document to aid leaseholders in the provision of data relating to shellfish movements, the application of a prohibition on any activity between 18:00-06:00 for November to March across all lease beds to ensure site integrity of the Poole Harbour Special Protection Area, Site of Special Scientific Interest and Ramsar Site, and the addition of a new management plan detailing how the Order is supporting delivery of national legislation and policy.

[The Test of Likely Significant Effect and Habitats Regulations Assessment](#) were also reviewed and updated as needed to include any updated Conservation Advice from Natural England and to assess the proposed activities under Tranche 3 (noting no proposed change from Tranche 2) against potential pressures on designated features and supporting habitats to determine the appropriateness of management under the Order as mitigating any adverse effect. The Assessment for Tranche 3 was supported by two new documents, the [Literature Review of Bivalve Ecosystem Services](#) and the [Pacific Oyster Monitoring Report](#). Both of which aim to support the importance of aquaculture within Poole Harbour by highlighting the varied range of important services provided by bivalve species including for water quality, food provision, supporting designated species and in mitigating climate change, and by demonstrating that the farming of Pacific oyster in the Harbour is well managed and closely monitored as a non-native species respectively.

The Authority undertook a period of formal consultation on the updated Management Plan in line with Section (4) of the Order, receiving no objections. The Management Plan was published ahead of 1st July 2026, and successful applicants were issued with Tranche 3 leases.

Since the implementation of Tranche 3, Southern IFCA have continued to operate as the APB for the Order, recording and submitting data to Cefas on all on-shore and off-shore shellfish movements in line with biosecurity requirements. Within 2025/26 34 on-site movements and 107 off-site movements were

recorded. Southern IFCA also completed the annual Fish Health Inspectorate (FHI) inspection, during which the FHI observe aquaculture operations, engage with leaseholders and ensure that Southern IFCA is compliant with the required biosecurity responsibilities detailed in the [Poole Order Biosecurity Measures Plan \(2025 Version\)](#). Southern IFCA were informed that the annual inspection had been passed successfully with no required changes to the Biosecurity Plan, maintaining Southern IFCA's status as the APB. As part of monitoring under the Order, officers carry out biosecurity inspections of all leaseholders looking at stock health, assessing incoming stock for any signs of disease and to check the provenance of shellfish prior to it being relayed. Biosecurity inspections also allow officers an opportunity to engage with leaseholders and discuss how biosecurity management impacts aquaculture operations, considerations for future movements of shellfish and the wider environment of Poole Harbour.

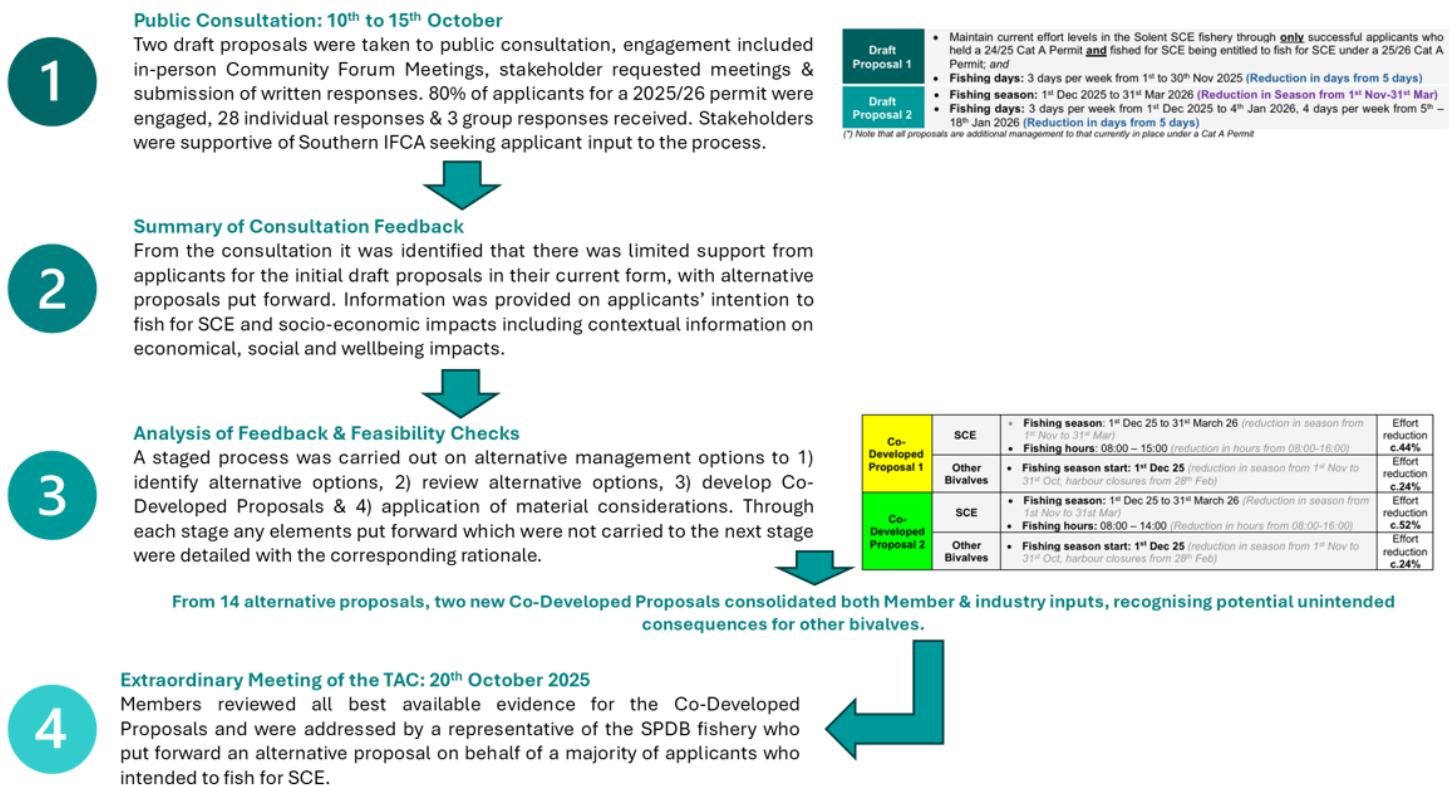
Solent Dredge Permit Byelaw Review



Under the Solent Dredge Permit Byelaw (SDPB), understanding stock sustainability in relation to the fishery is gained from permit holder provided catch data which is analysed as Landings per Unit Effort (LPUE) and data from the triannual Solent Scallop Survey which is analysed to provide Catch per Unit Effort (CPUE) and size frequency data. The Management Intentions Document which supports the SDPB states that *“unsustainable will be determined by the Authority based on a number of considerations which may include CPUE...and any other evidence that the Authority deems to be relevant”*. CPUE is a recognised measures for the long-term monitoring of a fishery, providing a measure of target species abundance. A decreasing CPUE can suggest that the target species are unable to support current levels of harvesting.

Analysis of survey data from 2025 revealed several indicators of low stock abundance in the Solent Scallop Fishery ahead of the 2025/26 season (1st November to 31st March), including significantly lower CPUE in the autumn survey compared to previous years, an increase in the number of individual sampling sites seeing a decline in CPUE between successive autumn surveys reaching the highest level to date, increases in CPUE between spring and autumn surveys (fishery closed period) being smaller than seen previously and not statistically significant and the survey results being in the context of landings of King scallop being lower for the preceding season.

This provided a driver for actioning a review of permit conditions, permit fees and limitations on the number of permits under a Category A Solent Dredge Permit for the 2025/26 season. Based on a consideration of the data at a Member Working Group in October 2025, Members determined that there was a need to explore ways to reduce effort in the Solent Scallop Fishery through the permit review process. The review was delivered through a staged approach as detailed in the graphic below:



At the Extraordinary Meeting of the TAC on 20th October 2025, upon reviewing all available evidence, Members resolved to adopt a new proposal, Co-Developed Proposal 3, which gave a reduction in fishing effort in the Solent Scallop Fishery for the 2025/26 season via a reduction in daily fishing hours from 08:00-16:00 to 08:00-14:00.

The fishing season for 2025/26 opened on 1st November 2025 with 49 eligible applicants invited to take out their Category A Permit head of the season. Throughout the season, 40 applicants paid for and took out their Categeory A Permit, a 17% decrease in the number of active fishers compared to the previous season. In total 26 Permit Holders were active within the Solent Scallop Fishery during the 2025/26 season (noting that a Category A Permit also covers fishing for other bivalves except Native Oyster), with 20 working consistently during the season (presence in the fishery for 3 months or more) and 10 working 5 days or more in each of 3 months or more. The highest number of Permit Holders working in a single month was in November 2025 (25) with participation then varying between 19 Permit Holders in December 2025 to 13 Permit Holders in March 2026.

During the season a total of 241.8 tonne of King scallop was landed from The Solent, a 39.5% decrease compared to 2024/25 and a 56.9% decrease compared to 2023/24. The catch data from the fishery during the season and anecdotal information from Permit Holders supported the intervention taken to reduce effort in the fishery in 2025/26. Southern IFCA work to monitor this fishery closely through a number of different mechanisms to ensure that where management intervention is taken, feedback can be provided to the fishing industry as to how this is relating to what is being seen on the ground in the subsequent fishing season.



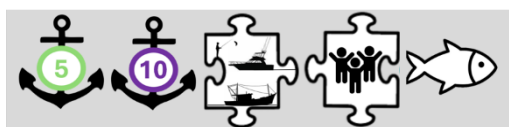
Under the Net Fishing Byelaw, netting is managed through Net Prohibition Areas, Net Restriction Areas and Net Permit Areas within the District's harbours and estuaries. There are three Net Permit Areas within the District; Southampton Water Net Permit Area, River Hamble Net Permit Area and Christchurch Harbour Net Permit Area. Permits are issued annually for these areas under a closed entry system based on maintaining net fishing effort at historic levels with technical measures as permit conditions specifying the type of net that can be used and a requirement to report any interactions with salmonids. An annual review is carried out each year on permit conditions, permit fees and limitations on the number of permits issued.

For Year 2 (1st March 2025 to 31st March 2026) 13 Net Permits were issued. During 2025/26 the Authority undertook a Year 2 review of permit conditions, permit fees and limitations on the number of permits ahead of the issuing of permits for Year 3 (1st April 2026 to 31st March 2027). The review considers all best available evidence including that from the [Net Fishing Byelaw Monitoring and Control Plan for Net Permit Areas](#) (M&CP) to ensure the Authority can understand any interactions between net fishing practices and migratory salmonids within the District's harbours and estuaries. The M&CP includes an On-Site Monitoring Programme which provides triggers for different control measures based upon the type of data collection, in addition to specified indicators of salmonid health over time, as provided by partner organisations.

In Year 2, based on the outputs of 5 Monitoring Variables under the On-Site Monitoring Programme, no Threshold Trigger Levels (TTL) were reached. Data providing information on salmonid health over time saw the adult run level decline for both Southampton Water and Christchurch Harbour, which as the basis for the calculation of the TTL for salmonid interactions resulted in no change to the Southampton Water TTL which remained at 4 and a decrease in the Christchurch Harbour TTL from 8 to 7. Information was also sought from permit holders through two stages of consultation. Based on the best available evidence the Authority resolved that no changes were required to the flexible permit conditions, permit fees or the number of permits for the upcoming Year 3 permit period.

The Authority also resolved to add a minimum cap of 4 interactions over time relevant to all Net Permit Areas. This recognised that the general decline in salmonid health is likely a result of multiple factors beyond that of the inshore fishing fleet and will allow 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. In determining a minimum cap level, the Year 2 TTL for interactions was considered and determined to be maintained in the Net Permit Area with the lower TTL for interactions. It was recognised that there is a need for the Authority 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 the District's harbours and estuaries. The introduction of a minimum cap ensures that, based on 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 and will monitor the suitability of the cap.

Year 3 Net Permits were issued in-year ahead of the start of the Year 3 Permit Period from 1st April 2026.



Working with Partners

Engagement during the year with ongoing programmes enables the Southern IFCA RPT to maintain and increase awareness of relevant projects within the District as well as providing the opportunity to feed in data and expertise on District species, habitats and fisheries, ensuring that the importance of the inshore fishing sector is represented. In this reporting year Southern IFCA have sat on the technical working group and recovery plan development workshops under the Solent Seascapes Project, run by the Blue Marine Foundation, and have worked with the AIFCA, other IFCAs, Cefas and other organisations on the Coastal Health Programme to facilitate a coordinated process in the event of a marine incident. Southern IFCA have also participated in a workshop run by the University of Gloucester to explore the development of a social survey for hand gathering activities seeking stakeholder perspectives. Southern IFCA have also been involved in the production of Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) for Hampshire, Dorset and the Isle of Wight, providing inshore fisheries insight for the intertidal area as the extent of the coverage of LNRS into the marine environment.

Through the Juvenile Fish Monitoring Programme, Southern IFCA have also worked with partners to help provide resource support for Juvenile Fish Surveys, working with the Solent Seascapes Project, the Environment Agency and BCP Council. In addition, Southern IFCA worked with the Bass Angler's Sportfishing Society to learn about analysis of European seabass data into age classes so that this can be applied to the data from the District surveys.

Also in relation to Southern IFCA's Monitoring Programme, officers worked with Cefas and other IFCAs including Cornwall IFCA and North Eastern IFCA as part of a 2-day scallop workshop to share survey methodologies and discuss how survey work in the inshore could be aligned with the national scallop survey undertaken by Cefas to provide a more complete picture of UK scallop stocks. This workshop also provided an opportunity for training and discussion on King scallop aging techniques which has since be trialled in the Solent.

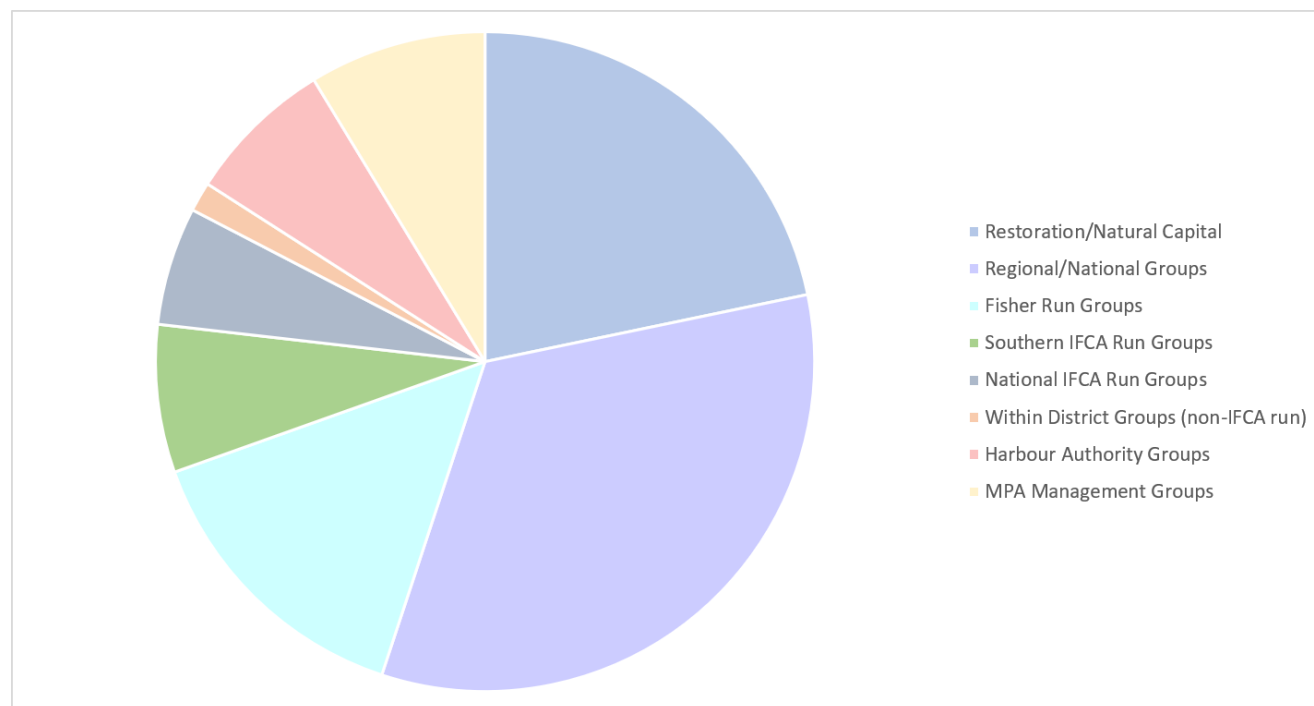


Community Engagement

During the year, Southern IFCA staff are in attendance at national, regional and local meetings across or related to the District. Officers attend fisher run groups within the District including the Poole & District Fishermen's Association, the Poole & District Sea Angling Association and the South Coast Fishermen's Council. Southern IFCA also administer two stakeholder led groups, the Dorset, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Marine Conservation Group and the Recreational Angling Sector Group. At a local level Southern IFCA have representation on the Poole Harbour Steering Group (an MPA management group), the Poole Harbour Study Group, the Hamble Estuary Partnership, the Langstone Harbour Committee, the Solent Forum (an MPA management group), the Solent Seascapes Project and the Solent Seagrass Network. At a regional level, Southern IFCA attend the MMO Regional Fisheries Groups for both the South (ICES area 7d) and the South West (ICES areas 7e,f,g) as well as any regional events hosted by the Regional Fisheries Groups. In 2025/26 Southern IFCA also attended meetings for the National Contingency Plan for the South East and regional meetings on the iVMS programme. At a National Level, Southern IFCA

sit on the IFCA Technical Advisory Group, technical working groups for whelk fisheries and science, the Shellfish Association of Great Britain Mollusc and Crustacean Committees, the MMO/IFCA Marine Licencing liaison group and the UK King Scallop Fisheries Improvement Project.

The below graphic provides a breakdown of the type of meetings attended during the year.



Fishery Specific Engagement

In the reporting year, specific to permitted fisheries in the District, Southern IFCA holds pre-season meetings for permitted fishers and/or applicants to provide an opportunity for open discussion ahead of the coming fishing season, give fishers the opportunity to speak to and ask questions of Officers and to present any relevant data ahead of the coming season including any updates to management and recent survey results.

In 2025, the pre-season engagement in Poole was carried out on the quayside to enable engagement with Permit Holders as they were gearing up for the season. Officers from across both the CET and RPT were present to answer questions about the upcoming season, conduct gear checks in line with Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Condition requirements and provide information from the 2025 Poole Harbour Bivalve Survey and the previous years' catch data. Fishers welcomed the opportunity to engage with Officers whilst also undertaking their preparations for the coming season.

Pre-season meetings in the Solent in 2025 were combined with the consultation undertaken on the Solent Scallop Fishery ahead of the 2025/26 season based on data which indicated further management intervention would be required to support a sustainable scallop fishery. Two pre-season engagement sessions were held, one in Warsash and one in Portsmouth to maximise opportunities for attendance. During these meetings applicants for a permit for the 2025/26 season were presented with survey data, catch data and all other best available evidence underpinning the review of Category A permit conditions. Attendees were invited to participate in active discussion on two initial options for additional management measures, providing feedback and evidence related to those options including any potential

socioeconomic impacts. In addition, attendees were given the opportunity to put forward alternative proposals and also have a general discussion with Officers about the Solent Scallop Fishery.

In addition to the consultation element, these meetings provided an opportunity to talk more generally about the Solent Dredge Permit Fishery, including fishing for Manila clams as the other main target species under a Category A Permit, and associated survey data such as that from the Solent Bivalve Survey. This also provided an opportunity for Officers to engage with attendees on the new Bottom Towed Fishing Gear (BTFG) Byelaw 2023, which had been ratified in July 2025, and any extensions or additional prohibition areas for BTFG which had been introduced and were relevant to the Solent Dredge Permit Fishery. Attendance across both meeting sessions was good and attendees provided good feedback and input to the consultation process as well as discussions on the fishery more widely.

Additional Functions

Fisheries Management Plans



A Project Officer is employed by Southern IFCA to coordinate the provision of information, evidence and data, as well as working with delivery partners, local and national colleagues and helping to coordinate communication and engagement with the inshore fishing community, to support the development, publication and implementation of Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs) relevant to the District. The Project Officer also represents Southern IFCA at local, regional and national FMP meetings and working groups, with Southern IFCA acting as SPOC for the Tranche 4 Defra led Wrasses Complex FMP and Seabream FMP as well as being an IFCA representative for the Channel North Sea and Channel Skates and Rays FMP. Additional support and expertise is provided by the DCO and Senior Management Team.

In addition to Defra led FMPs, during this reporting period Southern IFCA have reviewed and commented on an initial round of Scottish led Joint UK FMPs for demersal species where the geographic scope of those FMPs extends to part or all of the Southern IFCA District. Southern IFCA is also aware of the development of Scottish led Joint UK Pelagic FMPs, some of which will also have geographic overlap with the District, the Project Officer has attended initial development meetings for these FMPs.

The FMPs of relevance to the Southern IFCA District are:

Tranche 1 & 2

- King Scallop FMP (post-publication & implementation phase)
- Crab & Lobster FMP (post-publication & implementation phase)
- Southern North Sea & Eastern Channel Mixed Flatfish FMP (post-publication & implementation phase)
- Whelk FMP (post-publication & implementation phase)
- Bass FMP (post-publication & implementation phase)

- Channel Demersal Non-Quota Species FMP (post-publication & implementation phase)

Tranche 3

- Cockle FMP (post-publication & implementation phase)
- Queen Scallop FMP (post-publication & implementation phase)
- Southern North Sea and Channel Skates and Rays FMP (post-publication & implementation phase)
- North Sea and Channel Sprat FMP (post-publication & implementation phase)

Tranche 4 FMPs

- Celtic Seas and Western Channel Pelagic FMP (publication & public consultation phase)
- Celtic Seas and Western Channel Demersal FMP (publication & public consultation phase)
- Seabream FMP (publication & public consultation phase)
- Wrasses Complex FMP (publication & public consultation phase)

Scottish Led Joint UK Demersal FMPs

- Northern Shelf Cod FMP (publication & public consultation phase)
- Northern Shelf Hake FMP (publication & public consultation phase)
- North Sea and Eastern Channel Whiting FMP (publication & public consultation phase)

Scottish Led Joint UK Pelagic FMPs

- Northern Shelf Mackerel FMP (planning & preparation phase)
- North Sea Herring FMP (planning & preparation phase)
- Northern Shelf Whiting (planning & preparation phase)

Delivery across multiple FMPs

Southern IFCA provide links between FMP delivery partners and industry liaison groups including South Coast Fishermen's Council, Camber Docks Fishermen's Association, The Recreational Angling Sector Group, The Poole & District Fishermen's Association, The Poole & District Sea Angling Association, the Warsash Fishermen's Group and the South East Fishermen's Protection Society. Information is also provided directly to relevant fishers via Southern IFCA held contact details.

Southern IFCA have [a dedicated webpage for Fisheries Management Plans](#) which outlines general information, links to information sources and details of general engagement events which span all FMPs as well as details of any ongoing consultations. The webpage also hosts dedicated sections for each of the FMPs relevant to the District, broken down by Tranche for Defra led FMPs and including sections for the Scottish Led Joint UK demersal and pelagic FMPs relevant to the District. Each section provides a link to the relevant FMP (where published), information on the stage of each FMP, any FMP specific engagement opportunities and contact details for FMP leads. This webpage is continually updated as new information becomes available with any updates or engagement events also reflected across Southern IFCA's social media platforms. Southern IFCA has also continued to disseminate information from the Defra FMP Blog to all relevant channels and have continued engagement with the AIFCA,

responding to any requests to submit information, review evidence and provide data or details of current management. Southern IFCA submits quarterly reports to AIFCA on delivery under the FMP programme which is then collectively submitted to Defra to support delivery against FMP funding.

Southern IFCA have a standing item on the agenda for the quarterly public Technical Advisory Committee meeting, providing Members with an update on any matters relating to FMPs, allowing an opportunity for discussion and input from Members into FMP matters.

The Project Officer has attended meetings at a local, regional and national level covering multiple FMPs. This reporting period this has included attendance at the Tranche 4 FMP MMO and IFCA briefing in February 2026 as part of the launch of the Tranche 4 FMP Public Consultation and attendance at a Defra due diligence and government processes information sharing session.

Tranche 1 & 2 FMPs

During the **post-publication and implementation phase** of the Tranche 1 & 2 FMPs, Southern IFCA has continued to support these phases, including through the following specific actions:

- Participation and attendance at relevant meetings for the Bass Authorisation Review, including a meeting in Poole and online sessions. The FMP webpage was subsequently updated with information and initial outputs from the review as well as a link to the Bass Authorisation Review report.
- Southern IFCA have attended port drop-in sessions held by the MMO on whelk and cuttlefish, providing input on District fisheries and outlining Southern IFCA held datasets and delivery of relevant surveys through the Whelk Monitoring Programme. All drop-in sessions held across the District were attended by Southern IFCA representatives (Lyme Regis, Weymouth, Poole, Portsmouth). Information on these drop-in sessions was disseminated for stakeholders as well as a related questionnaire. Subsequently the outcomes of this process were also publicised. Southern IFCA have also promoted and provided information on The Cuttlefish Action Plan, including adding relevant links to the FMP webpage and social media and have promoted the Cuttlefish ID Guides and voluntary Code of Practice as well as providing links to the Market Sampling Report, all outputs of the Cuttlefish Roadshow.
- During the reporting year, Southern IFCA provided information to fishers for King scallop in the District regarding two open spaces on the King Scallop Implementation Group for inshore fishers (<15m). The DCO RPT also joined the King Scallop Project Steering Board as a representative for IFCA to provide input from the inshore sector and input on survey work and data collection being delivered by IFCA with the aim of furthering work to integrate IFCA held datasets into national datasets to provide a more holistic overview of King scallop stocks across the UK. As an initial output, Southern IFCA participated in a Cefas led workshop hosted by Cornwall IFCA which discussed survey methodologies, compared survey techniques and datasets between IFCA and against the Cefas national survey methodology and also provided an opportunity for training in aging of King scallop. This workshop has already led to updates to Southern IFCA methodologies for surveying King scallop, for example the inclusion of King scallop condition monitoring.
- Southern IFCA have continued to participate in meetings on whelk fisheries and data collection relevant to the Whelk FMP, providing input on the Southern IFCA Whelk Monitoring Programme as an example of data collection relevant to addressing evidence gaps for whelk identified through the FMP, this includes the Whelk Science Group and the Whelk Working Group. Southern IFCA

have also engaged with Bangor University in relation to the Whelk Monitoring Programme to understand work on LPUE/CPUE being undertaken in Wales linked directly to evidence gaps from the Whelk FMP.

- Southern IFCA attended two workshops run by the MMO to discuss whelk permit schemes as an output of the FMP.
- Southern IFCA engaged with the MMO in the development of the South West Crab Trials, commenting on the initial options paper and providing District input on relevant fisheries and management.

Provision of new Lobster Gauges to Industry

During the reporting year, ahead of the first incremental increase in lobster minimum conservation reference size (MCRS) on 1st March 2026 from 87mm to 88mm Southern IFCA sought to support the industry by providing new lobster gauges for the 88mm increased MCRS and running a gauge return scheme for old gauges to be recycled. This initiative was advertised across Southern IFCA communication channels and dedicated coastal engagement opportunities were provided across all major pot fishing ports in the District. The initiative was well received by industry who welcomed the support in complying with the incremental size increases in lobster MCRS. Southern IFCA has procured gauges for the next two incremental increases up to 90mm and will continue to operate this initiative in the 2026/27 and 2027/28 reporting years to support industry in adjusting to the increased MCRS.

Tranche 3 FMPs

- Following the publication of the Tranche 3 FMPs in December 2025, Southern IFCA updated the relevant sections of the FMP webpage to include links to the published FMPs, signposting stakeholders to this information from the News page of the Southern IFCA website and via social media channels.
- Through the **post-publication phase**, a review is underway of the published FMPs, collating the goals and actions and reviewing these against Southern IFCA management and data collection to identify alignment or monitoring which may help support the implementation of the Tranche 3 FMPs. In addition, the evidence gaps from the Tranche 3 FMPs are being reviewed against the Southern IFCA Monitoring Programme and datasets held by the Authority.
- Southern IFCA is prepared to participate in groups which are actioned to be formed through the implementation of this FMP such as the National Cockle Forum.

Tranche 4 FMPs

- During the **planning & preparation phase** for Tranche 4 FMPs, Southern IFCA continued to attend and contribute to working groups and engagement meetings, providing expertise and knowledge to FMP drafting. This included attendance at:
 - Partnership meetings for the Celtic Seas and Western Channel Pelagic FMP
 - An online stakeholder event for the Celtic Seas and Western Channel Demersal FMP
 - All Working Group meetings for both the Wrasses Complex FMP and Seabream FMP
- For each of the Tranche 4 FMPs Southern IFCA provided feedback on the draft FMPs to the MMO.

- During the **consultation phase** the FMP webpage and social media channels were updated with information on the public consultation and how stakeholders could participate, information on in-person and online engagement events and information and links to consultation webinar recordings. Information on the consultation was further disseminated to stakeholder groups in the District across both the commercial and recreational sectors.
- The Project Officer hosted two Authority Members Workshops in March 2026 to discuss each of the Tranche 4 FMPs, providing an overview of the content, goals and actions, and to seek Members feedback on the proposed FMPs for inclusion in Southern IFCA consultation responses.
- A Working Group Meeting for each of the Wrasses Complex FMP and Seabream FMP were attended, the meetings covering changes in the FMP since the previous draft and future engagement intentions during the public consultation.
- Responses to each of the Tranche 4 FMP consultations were prepared during the reporting year, to be finalised and submitted during the 2026/27 reporting year in line with the end of the consultation period.

Scottish Led Joint UK FMPs

- During the **planning & preparation phase** of the Scottish Led Joint UK Demersal FMPs, of which three have geographic overlap with the Southern IFCA District, Southern IFCA attended information meetings on the FMPs including content and proposed actions.
- The FMP webpage was updated with all relevant information for these FMPs, including details of the public consultation which ran until March 2026.
- Southern IFCA reviewed the three FMPs relevant to the District and submitted a joint consultation response.
- Southern IFCA attended a pre-consultation online workshop for the Scottish Led Joint UK Pelagic FMPs to gain an understanding of proposed content and the timeline for delivery with consultation planned for the 2026/27 reporting year.

FMP Specific Projects

Whelk LPUE Pilot Project

Through the 2025/26 year Southern IFCA continued to implement the Whelk LPUE Pilot Project, aiming to work collaboratively with the fishing industry to collect data on landings per unit effort from pot fishing for whelks to complement the Whelk Population Survey and further improve understandings of whelk fisheries within the District as well as helping to inform potential management measures for whelk fisheries. In combination with the Whelk Population Survey the Southern IFCA Whelk Monitoring Programme also aims to provide data to contribute to identified objectives in the Whelk FMP, including to assess catch per unit effort in the whelk fishery to facilitate improved modelling and assessment of stock status to improve the ability to implement evidence-based fisheries management which is responsive to changes in fishing activity and stock status. Additionally, the programme aims to support objectives to develop a national data collection programme, define stock boundaries for assessment and management, assess stock or exploitation status and develop a whelk harvest strategy with harvest control rules.

The Whelk LPUE Pilot Project consists of voluntary monthly catch return submissions detailing timing and location of a fishing trip (using a grided map system to maintain commercially sensitive data), the type of bait used, the number of pots and the total quantity of whelk landed. Volunteer packs were sent

out to initial volunteers at the start of the 2025/26 year and officers have been liaising closely with fishers to support provision of data.

The Year 1 outputs of the project were reviewed in February 2026 and demonstrated the potential for fishing effort and LPUE (as kg/pot/day) to be calculated and analysed at the level of defined Whelk Catch Zones and seasonally. Data collected also allowed for the spatial extent and distribution of whelk fishing areas both within the District and within Whelk Catch Zones to be determined, including analysis of spatial variations in LPUE. Spatial analysis of data was demonstrated to be able to be carried out for fishing activity (number of trips) and the number of pots worked, indicating that there are a range of parameters that could cumulatively, over time, provide a picture of whelk fishing effort and start to identify potential stock boundaries.

It is recognised that, during the pilot year, the amount of data received was limited, with coverage for two Whelk Catch Zones and seasonal data for only one Whelk Catch Zone. However, the pilot year did enable an analysis of the benefits and challenges of delivering such a project and identification of how the data provided could be used to support the project aims. Initiating fisher-dependent data collection through a Pilot Project offers the opportunity to review and refine the data collection process where necessary ahead of further data collection in subsequent years. The focus will now be encouraging participation over a wider area of the District and seeking to maximise participation from initial expressions of interest.

Solent Scallop Survey

In the 2025/26 reporting year, the new methodology to use a Queenie scallop dredge alongside the industry standard dredge as part of the Solent Scallop Survey was implemented. This allowed for sampling across a greater size range of the King scallop population in the Solent, to provide an understanding of juvenile scallops not captured by the industry standard dredge. Other additions included recording metrics for bycatch and King scallop condition, also implemented during the 2025/26 reporting year.

The aim of these additions and updates to the survey methodology is to ensure that Southern IFCA is maximising the potential for data collection on the King scallop stocks in the Solent and therefore the understanding of the population, the interaction between the fishery and King scallop stocks and how the population and fishery is changing over time. The aim of this work is to increasingly align the survey methodology with that conducted at a national level to potentially allow for the integration of inshore survey data to that wider dataset contributing to wider knowledge of King scallop stocks and to support addressing evidence gaps in the King Scallop FMP.

The main objective of the King Scallop FMP is to develop a science evidence base to inform the development of harvest strategies and harvest control rules for individual scallop stocks, with the provision of better data allowing for improved fisheries management as scientists, regulators, management, community and industry would have access to the information they need to make evidence based decisions, with better data moving away from precautionary management and supporting the sustainability objective in the Fisheries Act 2020. Additionally, there is an objective to develop harvest strategies and harvest control rules to ensure fishing effort is responsive to the status of stocks by developing appropriate fisheries management measures. This is already employed in the Solent fishery with the Solent Dredge Permit Conditions operating as harvest control roles that are responsive to the status of stocks as determined by the triannual survey and fisher provided catch data, the increasing development in this fishery in the provision of evidence through the survey and the process by which this

is related to the management under Permits aims to be a robust example of this method of management which can help inform other fisheries and the implementation of this objective under the FMP.

The aim during the reporting year to undertake a feasibility study relating to the use of drop-down cameras in the Solent was not able to be completed due to not being able to arrange a mutually convenient time to work with IFCA partners to train in the use of and trailing of the relevant camera equipment. Consideration was given to the overall feasibility of this project, and it was determined that the associated resource would be redirected to the delivery of the Scallop Research Project during the 2026/27 reporting year, including gear trial research within the Solent Scallop Fishery.

Pot Fishing Byelaw Implementation

During the 2025/26 reporting year the Pot Fishing Byelaw remained within the MMO quality assurance process for newly developed byelaws. During the year, two rounds of quality assurance were completed, one from the MMO seeking further information on the permit conditions for commercial and recreational permits under the Byelaw and a full round of QA completed between October and December 2025.

Once the Byelaw has completed the MMO QA process it will be sent to Defra for further QA and then subsequently to the Secretary of State. Only at the point of ratification will the Byelaw come into force therefore there were no actions on implementation taken in the 2025/26 reporting year.

Marine Consents



Southern IFCA's work on Marine Consents focuses on the marine licencing system administered by the MMO, for which Southern IFCA is a statutory consultee. Marine licencing covers a diverse range of activities from sea wall repairs through to large scale infrastructure developments. The MMO is responsible for issuing marine licences in English waters and applicants must go through a formal consultation process if the proposed activity requires a marine licence. In-year Southern IFCA act in the capacity of a statutory consultee 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.

A standing agenda item on marine licence applications received, including a summary of those requiring a response is provided at the quarterly Authority meetings. During the 2025/26 year Southern IFCA received 55 marine licence applications for review, a 10% decrease on the previous year, 22 of which were determined to require a response.

The graphic below shows a summary of marine licencing work for the reporting year, including common themes and applications for similar processes administered by other authorities which also require review and, where required, a response.

Southern IFCA Marine Consents 25/26

Marine Licencing



2024/25 to 2025/26 year

10% ↓
received applications

31% ↓
Applications requiring a response

For each licence application requiring a detailed response, approximately two days of officer time is required.

Common Response Themes:

The need to consider impacts at disposal sites as well as dredge sites

Provision of information on relevant Southern IFCA byelaws

Provision of information on relevant fisheries

The need for engagement with industry

Clarification on lack of representation of <12m fleet in VMS data

Communication of stakeholder sedimentation concerns

Licence applications in additional formats that were also received included:

- Environmental Permit Regulations (EPRs)
 - 3 received, none required comment
- Environmental Impact Assessment (EIAs)
 - 1 received, which required comment
- Marine Aggregates Scoping Study (ENQ applications)
 - 2 received, 1 required comment

In March 2026, a Marine Licence Application was received for consultation proposing dredging works in a defined area over Dolphin Sands and Shingle Bank to obtain sediment for beach replenishment in the region. This had been identified as a significant proposal with serious concerns raised by the local fishing industry on the potential for significant impacts on both commercial and recreational fisheries from the proposed works, that would result in negative social, economic, cultural and community effects and the overall sustainability of the inshore small-scale fishing fleet operating in the Poole Bay and Christchurch Bay areas. Southern IFCA will be developing a response into the 26/27 reporting year reflecting input in relation to the Authority's role and remit as well as providing the views of the local fishing industry.

Marine Protected Areas



The Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 and The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, as amended by The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019, sets out the legal duties placed on Southern IFCA for Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs), Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs).

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 Environmental Improvement Plan.

The Environmental Improvement Plans 2023, and the update in 2025, set out how Defra will deliver biodiversity targets and commitments by restoring 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. Deliverables for Southern IFCA, defined by Defra for this work are:

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 MPAs, to support the achievement of GES under the Marine Strategy.
- To support the development and coordination of management within MPAs in accordance with statutory MPA targets and with the GES 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.

Within the reporting year, Southern IFCA has delivered against each of the above points through the implementation and development of MPA management and through consistent reporting at a local and national level on MPA management within the District.

This has included the delivery of three priority workstreams:

- The implementation of the **Bottom Towed Fishing Gear Byelaw 2023**, ratified on 7th July 2025, introducing extended and new prohibition areas for BTFG within and adjacent to MCZs and within SPAs and SACs based on a review of best available evidence and following the MMO/Defra quality assurance phase of the development of the Byelaw which ran between 2023-2025. The introduction of this Byelaw increased the area of the District closed to BTFG from 25.5% to 27.2% and the restrictions on BTFG to 51.4% of the District's 21 MPAs. The Byelaw provided protection for habitats and species known to be sensitive to BTFG, including 100% of confirmed (rock) habitats, 99.1% of mapped seagrass beds, 100% of known maerl beds and 100% of identified black seabream nesting habitats. The measures significantly strengthen the resilience of priority habitats and species, supporting ecosystem recovery while maintaining sustainable fishing opportunities in appropriate areas.
 - As part of this implementation, Southern IFCA provided direct support to industry through development of a method of electronically adding prohibited area coordinates to vessel plotters and the development of a Google Maps Interactive Tool to provide location information relevant to prohibited areas. An infographic was also created and made available in hard copy as well as on the Southern IFCA website.
- Southern IFCA have maintained close communications with the MMO as the quality assurance phase for the **Shore Gathering Byelaw** continued through the reporting year. The Byelaw underwent two rounds of quality assurance with the MMO in 2025, which include updates to calculations for the Impact Assessment based on updated methodologies for using the IA

Calculator and additions to the IA to reflect the consideration of the Public Sector Equality Duty and the Environmental Principle Policy Statement.

- Subject to ratification of the Shore Gathering Byelaw, the proposed measures which include year-round and seasonal prohibition areas as well as definitions for shore gathering activities, will manage 24.2% of SPAs, 32.4% of SACs and 16.1% of MCZs within the District (up to the 2m contour), in total covering 23.1% of the relevant MPAs in the District.
- Southern IFCA finalised the process of developing **management for black seabream** as a designated feature of three MCZs in Dorset, working under parallel policy objectives to further the conservation objectives for the sites through existing and extended statutory protections for high-risk fishing activity and the development of the Co-Developed Principles to support statutory protections for lower risk fishing activities and aid understandings of black seabream populations and fisheries over time. This process involved close collaboration and co-development with partners and the Dorset Community, enabling Southern IFCA to meet its statutory conservation duties whilst ensuring that interventions remain justified, focused and proportionate. This approach also provides a mechanism for management to evolve as new evidence becomes available.
 - The delivery of the Bottom Towed Fishing Gear Byelaw 2023, introduced whole site protection for 12 months of the year (100% closure) to BTFG in the Southbourne Rough MCZ and an increase to 93% closure to BTFG for the Purbeck Coast MCZ for 12 months of the year (noting that this covers all feature data relevant to black seabream), as well as maintaining the 100% closure for 12 months of the year in the Poole Rocks MCZ.
 - The Co-Developed Principles cover 100% of all three MCZs and are operational during the defined breeding season for black seabream of April to July. The data collection programme is designed to run year-round to support understandings of black seabream and relevant fisheries both within and outside of the breeding season.
 - An annual review of the Co-Developed Principles is planned for after each breeding season for the first four years to ensure that management can be adaptive of any changes and consider data collected on the species and fisheries each year. A wider review is then planned for delivery post 2030 to ensure that all measures relevant to black seabream remain fit for purpose and continue to support the delivery of policy objectives.
- MPA management in the District and delivery of the defined deliverables for MPAs and GES is further supported by:
 - Annual reviews of Net Permit Area permit conditions under the **Net Fishing Byelaw**, linked to the conservation objectives for Atlantic salmon in the River Itchen SAC and River Avon SAC, ensuring that monitoring of salmonids under a Monitoring & Control Plan can inform management of net fisheries within Net Permit areas.
 - The implementation of a Monitoring & Control Plan for the **Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Fishery** which includes an SPA Monitoring Programme, linking specific monitoring variables to the Habitats Regulations Assessment for the issuing of permits to ensure that any changes in the Poole Harbour SPA, designated features or the fishery are appropriately considered and reflected in the HRA to ensure continued compatibility between this fishery and the objectives of the SPA.
 - Continued holistic management of the **Solent Dredge Fishery** under the Solent Dredge Permit Byelaw, including updates to monitoring and data collection to ensure that

understandings of the fishery and target species are furthered which aids in understanding the relationship between the fishery and MPAs in the Solent.

- Continued management of **The Poole Fishery Order 2015**, with the delivery of a new 5-year tranche of leases within the reporting year. As part of this process a thorough review of the Habitats Regulations Assessment underpinning the issuing of leases for aquaculture in the Poole Harbour SPA was undertaken with additional supporting documents developed for Tranche 3 including a Pacific Oyster Monitoring Report and a literature review on ecosystem services provided by bivalve aquaculture in Poole outlining how the sustainable management of aquaculture in the Harbour supports both the MPA and the delivery of GES.

PART 5: DELIVERING THE COMPLIANCE & ENFORCEMENT TEAM PLAN

Horizon Priorities

Driving Operational Effectiveness

a) Refocusing the delivery of the marine operations function to align with evolving landscapes culminating in identification & introduction of operational efficiencies.

Marine Assets: FPV Vigilant: Year 1 of active service



The 2025/26 reporting period marked the first full year of FPV Vigilant in active service, following her successful procurement and introduction to Southern IFCA's marine operations fleet in late 2024. The vessel represents a significant step forward in refocusing the Authority's operational capability, providing a safer, more efficient and increasingly flexible platform from which officers can deliver statutory fisheries management, monitoring and enforcement functions across the District.

The introduction of Vigilant has enabled a fundamental change in the way marine operations are delivered. Her enhanced range, capability and crew protection allow officers to remain operational at sea for longer periods and move efficiently between different areas of the District. This provides greater flexibility to respond to emerging priorities and enables patrol activity to be targeted where it can have the greatest regulatory and operational impact.

Importantly, the vessel enables officers to spend more of their working time within the fisheries they regulate. Greater use of marine transit has reduced reliance on road travel between coastal locations, enabling officers to move directly between operational areas while maintaining a regulatory presence at sea. This has generated efficiencies in staff time, contributed to a reduction in reliance on the Authority's vehicle fleet and associated emissions, and increased the proportion of operational time dedicated directly to frontline delivery.

The benefits are reflected in an enhanced presence across the District's fisheries. Time at sea enables officers to undertake a range of complementary activities during a single deployment, including monitoring spatial closures, gathering vessel sightings and fisheries intelligence, undertaking commercial and recreational vessel inspections, engaging directly with fishers and responding to emerging compliance risks. This ability to combine multiple operational objectives within individual patrols represents a more efficient use of both staff and marine assets.

A significant development has also been the ability for officers to work effectively while at sea. Onboard connectivity enables access to relevant monitoring, control and enforcement systems during patrols, allowing officers to review information, assess intelligence and support operational decision-making. This has strengthened the Authority's ability to deliver increasingly intelligence-led and responsive marine enforcement and represents an important evolution in operational working practices.

During 2025/26, Vigilant provided an important platform for monitoring fisheries subject to changing management requirements. This included supporting compliance following the introduction of revised

permit conditions within the Solent Dredge Fishery, where a sustained presence within the fishery provided assurance that new measures were being implemented effectively across the fleet.

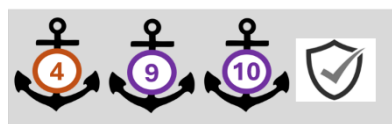
The vessel has also delivered significant improvements to the working environment for officers. Enhanced weather protection, more comfortable seating, welfare facilities, access to hot water and onboard connectivity enable crews to operate safely and effectively for longer periods. These improvements support officer endurance and wellbeing while meeting health and safety requirements, directly contributing to the Authority's ability to maximise productive operational time at sea.

Beyond Southern IFCA's own operations, Vigilant provides opportunities for greater intergovernmental and partnership working, including the potential to support or be chartered for appropriate operations by other government organisations. This increases the wider public value that can be derived from the asset and provides opportunities to share capability and strengthen collaborative marine operations.

The Marine Operations Team has fully embraced the introduction of Vigilant, continuing to refine operating practices to maximise the vessel's capability. Following her first full year in service, the benefits are increasingly clear: greater presence within fisheries, more productive patrols, improved access to operational systems at sea, reduced reliance on land-based travel and a safer and more effective working environment for officers.

FPV Vigilant therefore represents more than the replacement of a marine asset. Her introduction has enabled Southern IFCA to refocus how its marine operations function is delivered, providing a modern and adaptable operational platform that improves efficiency, strengthens frontline delivery and ensures the Authority is better equipped to respond to an evolving fisheries and marine management landscape.

Increased Use of Drone Technology – Smarter, More Efficient Marine Operations



During 2025/26, Southern IFCA continued to increase the integration of drone technology within its Monitoring, Control and Surveillance programme, providing an increasingly important, efficient and resource-light means of delivering fisheries management and enforcement across the District.

The expanded use of drones reflects the Authority's commitment to refocusing marine operations in response to an evolving regulatory landscape. As the number and complexity of spatial fisheries management measures increase, particularly within Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), the ability to monitor large and sometimes difficult-to-access areas efficiently has become increasingly important. Drone technology provides officers with a flexible surveillance capability that complements traditional shore-based and vessel patrols and enables resources to be directed according to risk.

Drone deployments provide officers with a rapid overview of fishing activity across significant areas of coastline and inshore waters. Observations can directly inform subsequent compliance activity, enabling officers to identify where fishing is taking place, distinguish between authorised and potentially non-compliant activity and target inspections or patrol assets accordingly. This has strengthened Southern IFCA's intelligence-led approach, ensuring that higher-resource interventions, including patrol vessel deployments, can be focused where evidence indicates they are most required.

The technology has become particularly valuable in monitoring compliance with spatial fisheries management measures. Drone observations can identify potential incursions into closed areas, including within MPAs, while georeferenced imagery provides an accurate record of the location and nature of observed fishing activity. This provides greater assurance that spatial protections are effective in practice and enables the Authority to respond quickly and proportionately where potential non-compliance is identified.

Importantly, drone-derived information has developed into a reliable evidential resource supporting enforcement investigations. Georeferenced imagery and observations can be cross-referenced with other sources of fisheries intelligence and positional information, strengthening the evidential basis of case files and providing a clearer understanding of activity at the time of an alleged offence. This ability to combine multiple sources of evidence supports robust, transparent and proportionate regulatory decision-making.

The increased use of drones has also generated tangible operational efficiencies. Deploying a drone can, in appropriate circumstances, reduce the requirement to deploy a patrol vessel or undertake extensive vehicle-based surveillance, reducing fuel consumption, officer travel time and associated operational costs. This represents a responsible use of public resources while enabling the Authority to maintain—and in some circumstances enhance—its regulatory presence across the District.

Drones do not replace traditional patrol activity; rather, they enable the Authority to deploy the right asset for the right task. Intelligence gathered remotely can inform whether subsequent intervention is required by officers ashore or aboard FPV Vigilant, allowing marine and land-based resources to be deployed more strategically. This integrated approach increases operational reach while maximising the value derived from staff time and the Authority's wider asset base.

The technology also provides an important mechanism for demonstrating responsible fishing activity. Surveillance around closed and sensitive areas provides evidence not only of non-compliance but, importantly, of the high levels of compliant activity taking place across the District. This supports recognition of the positive role that inshore fishers play as custodians of the marine environment and provides confidence that sustainable fishing can continue alongside effective conservation protections.

The operational value of Southern IFCA's approach has also received wider recognition, demonstrating how innovative technology can be applied successfully within small-scale inshore fisheries. The Authority's experience provides a practical example of how modern surveillance tools can simultaneously improve regulatory efficiency, strengthen environmental protection and support legitimate sustainable fishing activity.

Through the increasing integration of drone technology into routine operations, Southern IFCA has developed a more agile, intelligence-led and cost-effective approach to fisheries monitoring and enforcement. By combining drones with vessel patrols, shore-based activity and other sources of intelligence, the Authority is improving operational effectiveness, reducing unnecessary resource deployment and ensuring that public resources are focused where they can deliver the greatest benefit.

Workboat Code Edition 3 – Adapting Marine Operations to Evolving Standards



Maintaining an effective marine operations function requires Southern IFCA to continually review and adapt its working practices in response to evolving national standards, operational requirements and technological developments. During 2025/26, a significant focus was the transition of FPV Endeavour to

compliance with the Maritime and Coastguard Agency's Workboat Code Edition 3 (WBC3), ensuring that the Authority's marine operations continue to meet recognised standards for the safe and effective operation of small commercial vessels.

Workboat Code Edition 3 establishes the technical, operational, equipment and procedural requirements applicable to small commercial vessels operating in UK waters. Although transitional arrangements allow existing vessels certificated under Workboat Code Edition 2 to meet the new requirements by their next renewal examination or within the prescribed transitional period, Southern IFCA took a proactive approach to implementation, reviewing its operational procedures and introducing the necessary changes ahead of the full transition.

A significant operational change related to safe vessel manning during boarding operations. Historically, Southern IFCA operating procedures allowed the patrol vessel skipper to remain onboard alone while other officers transferred to and boarded another vessel. Under WBC3, single-handed operation is not permitted where a vessel is involved in the transfer of personnel at sea. Consequently, boarding operations now require an additional appropriately trained officer to remain aboard the patrol vessel alongside the skipper.

While this represents a significant change to historic working practices and increases the personnel requirement for certain patrol activities, Southern IFCA has successfully incorporated the requirement into operational planning. Relevant Health and Safety policies, risk assessments and internal operating procedures have been reviewed and updated to ensure that the new manning arrangements are consistently embedded across marine operations. This provides a stronger and more resilient framework for the safe delivery of at-sea inspections while ensuring that regulatory functions continue to be delivered effectively.

WBC3 also places increased emphasis on ensuring that Masters and crew responsible for navigation hold qualifications and competencies appropriate to the vessel, its operating area and the nature of the activity being undertaken. Southern IFCA therefore reviewed its existing training provision against the requirements of the Code and identified opportunities to strengthen capability across the Marine Operations Team.

Importantly, the Authority successfully secured external funding through the Fisheries and Seafood Scheme (FaSS) to support these additional training requirements. This funding enabled five Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officers to undertake specialist electronic chart system and radar training, strengthening navigational competence while reducing the financial impact of the transition on the Authority. This investment also increases the number of appropriately trained personnel available to support marine operations, contributing to greater operational resilience and flexibility.

During the reporting period, FPV Endeavour successfully underwent the required survey process and formally transitioned to Workboat Code Edition 3 compliance. This milestone reflects the coordinated work undertaken across marine operations, health and safety, staff training and organisational policy to ensure that both the vessel and the way in which it is operated meet the enhanced national standard.

The transition to WBC3 demonstrates that operational effectiveness is not solely about reducing resource requirements, but about ensuring that resources are deployed safely, efficiently and sustainably. By anticipating regulatory change, adapting operating models, securing external investment in staff capability and embedding new requirements across organisational policies, Southern IFCA has

maintained operational delivery while strengthening the safety and resilience of its marine operations function.

The successful transition of FPV Endeavour provides a strong foundation for applying the same learning across the Authority's wider marine asset base, ensuring that Southern IFCA remains equipped to deliver its statutory functions safely and effectively as national maritime standards and operational requirements continue to evolve

CLUE – Integrating Intelligence to Support Smarter and More Proportionate Regulation



During 2025/26, Southern IFCA continued to embed the CLUE intelligence, investigation and case-management system into the business-as-usual activities of the Compliance and Enforcement Team, supporting ongoing effective management of intelligence, improved coordination with partner agencies and ensuring that compliance resources are directed proportionately according to evidence and risk profiling.

CLUE provides a shared intelligence platform used by a range of government regulators and enforcement bodies. For Southern IFCA, its value lies in bringing together information, observations and incidents into one shared platform. This provides officers with a more comprehensive intelligence picture enabling marine and shore-based resources to be targeted proportionately where they are most likely to deliver meaningful outcomes.

Importantly, the benefits extend directly to the fishing industry. Improved information sharing between government departments provides opportunities to deconflict regulatory activity, reducing the likelihood of fishers being subject to unnecessary or repetitive inspections and reducing avoidable disruption to legitimate fishing businesses and operations. This is particularly important within the inshore sector, where small businesses and single-handed operators can experience a disproportionate impact from repeated regulatory interventions. A coordinated intelligence picture enables Southern IFCA and its partners to distinguish more effectively between compliant operators and areas where additional regulatory attention may be justified.

Systems such as CLUE, allow Southern IFCA to continue to improve operational effectiveness while maintaining a strong regulatory presence, ensuring that public resources are deployed efficiently and that compliance and enforcement activity remains fair, evidence-led and proportionate for the fishing communities it regulates.

b) Assisting inshore fishers in their adaptation to a changing world

Online Permitting – Modernising Services While Maintaining Accessibility



As fisheries management and wider public services increasingly move towards digital delivery, Southern IFCA recognises the importance of supporting inshore fishers through this transition. During 2025/26, the Authority continued to modernise its permitting processes through the introduction and expansion of

online permitting, providing a more efficient and accessible service while remaining responsive to the differing needs and circumstances of individual fishers.

A significant development during the reporting period was the introduction of the online application process for Fish for Sale Permits. The new system has been designed to reduce administrative burden, simplify access to District fisheries and provide fishers with greater visibility and control over their permit applications. In addition, the Poole Harbour Dredge Permit was added to the online system with fishers applying digitally for their permits for the 2025/26 fishing season, enabling them to submit the required supporting documentation along with their application through one platform. Work has also commenced in year on the development of electronic submission of catch returns by permitted fishers in the Poole Harbour Dredge Permit fishery, internal testing has taken place on the initial digital interface for this feature with a view to rolling this out within the fishery for the 2026/27 fishing season.

The move towards online permitting has received overwhelmingly positive support from industry, demonstrating a willingness within the inshore fleet to embrace new ways of working where these deliver practical benefits. Applicants are now able to submit applications electronically through an individual online portal, monitor the progress of their application and, once issued, access their permits and associated guidance documentation in one place.

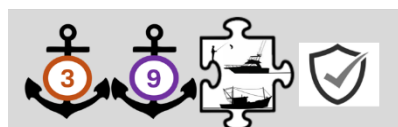
Importantly, Southern IFCA recognises that digital transformation must not result in digital exclusion. The inshore fishing community encompasses a diverse range of businesses and individuals, and not all fishers have ready access to the internet, email or the confidence to use online systems. The Authority has therefore maintained a flexible and supportive approach, making alternative arrangements where necessary and working directly with individuals to ensure that changes in administrative processes do not become barriers to participation in District fisheries.

A dedicated Permitting Officer, assisted by one of the RPT IFCOs, has continued to provide a clear point of contact for fishers, producing guidance on using the system, offering practical assistance with applications, responding to queries and troubleshooting where the online system does not readily align with an individual's circumstances or way of operating. This combination of digital efficiency and personalised support has been fundamental to the successful transition for both the Fish for Sale and Poole Harbour Dredge Permits.

The development of online permitting demonstrates Southern IFCA's wider approach to helping the inshore sector adapt to a changing operating environment. Modernisation is being introduced not simply for organisational efficiency, but with consideration of how new systems affect the people who use them. By listening to industry feedback, retaining flexibility and providing direct support where required, the Authority is ensuring that technological change remains an enabler rather than a barrier.

Moving forward, Southern IFCA will continue to refine its online permitting processes in partnership with industry, identifying and resolving practical challenges as they emerge. Through this approach, the Authority is supporting fishers to embrace new ways of working while ensuring that access to sustainable inshore fishing opportunities remains straightforward, inclusive and responsive to the needs of the communities it serves.

Digital Mapping – Helping Fishers Navigate a Changing Management Landscape



The operating environment for inshore fishers continues to evolve, with increasing spatial management, environmental protections and changing regulatory requirements influencing where and how fishing activity can take place. Southern IFCA recognises that supporting fishers to adapt to this changing landscape requires more than introducing effective management measures; it also requires providing clear, accessible and practical tools that enable people to understand and navigate those changes with confidence.

During 2025/26, with input from across both the CET and RPT, Southern IFCA rolled out an interactive digital mapping tool, using Google Maps to bring together spatial fisheries management information from across the District in an accessible and user-friendly format. The tool enables fishers and other marine users to understand their location in relation to different spatial regulations and provides a practical means of interpreting an increasingly complex marine management environment.

As spatial fisheries management continues to evolve, Southern IFCA recognises the importance of ensuring that those affected by regulatory change are provided with the information and tools needed to adapt their activities accordingly.

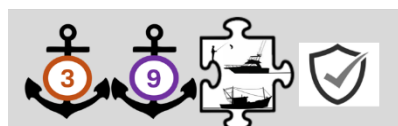
The mapping tool currently incorporates five Southern IFCA Byelaws, including measures supporting Marine Protected Area (MPA) conservation and Bass Nursery Areas. Further information relating to the Poole Harbour and Solent permit fisheries is being incorporated, progressively developing the tool into a more comprehensive source of spatial fisheries management information for the District.

Alongside the digital map, Southern IFCA has developed dedicated online guidance explaining how stakeholders can access and use the tool. This combination of technology and practical guidance is intended to ensure that innovation remains accessible to the widest possible audience, including commercial fishers, recreational fishers and other marine users.

The initiative complements Southern IFCA's wider programme of practical support for fishers adapting to new management requirements. Rather than expecting industry to navigate an increasingly complex regulatory landscape unaided, the Authority is seeking to identify where technology and improved communication can make compliance simpler and reduce unnecessary uncertainty and administrative burden.

By embracing digital innovation and making fisheries management information easier to access and interpret, Southern IFCA is helping adaptation to a changing marine environment. The mapping tool represents a practical example of how the Authority can support adaptation through information rather than regulation alone, enabling fishers to make informed decisions, supporting voluntary compliance and helping maintain sustainable fishing opportunities alongside an evolving framework of marine protection and fisheries management.

Plotter Initiative – Practical Support to Adapt to Changing Spatial Management



As fisheries management evolves, inshore fishers are required to adapt to an increasingly complex operating environment, including changes to spatial management and marine conservation measures. Southern IFCA recognises that introducing new management measures must be accompanied, wherever possible, by practical support that enables fishers to understand and adapt to change while continuing to operate safely, efficiently and sustainably.

This approach was demonstrated during 2025/26 following the ratification of the Bottom Towed Fishing Gear Byelaw 2023 on 7 July 2025. The Byelaw introduced an update to the previous iteration of the Byelaw, with additional and extended closed areas introduced. While these measures deliver important conservation protections, Southern IFCA recognised that their implementation also presented a practical challenge for the fishing industry.

For many inshore fishers, particularly those operating single-handed or with small crews, manually entering large numbers of coordinates into vessel navigation systems would have been both time-consuming and susceptible to human error. Recognising this challenge, the Authority sought a practical solution that would make it easier for fishers to incorporate the new management areas into their everyday operations.

Southern IFCA subsequently converted the spatial closure information into digital files that could be transferred directly onto compatible vessel plotters using USB memory sticks and SD cards. This significantly reduced the administrative burden associated with manually entering coordinates while improving confidence that regulatory boundaries were represented accurately and consistently onboard fishing vessels.

Importantly, Southern IFCA did not simply make the data available and expect industry to implement it independently. Officers worked directly with fishers during routine patrols and other engagement opportunities, offering to install the closed-area information onto vessel plotters and providing practical assistance where required.

The diversity of equipment used across the inshore fleet presented a further challenge, with different plotter manufacturers, models, software versions and file formats requiring different approaches. Officers therefore worked collaboratively with industry to understand these compatibility issues, troubleshoot problems and progressively develop solutions for a wider range of navigation systems. This iterative approach demonstrates the value of working alongside industry when introducing new ways of working, recognising that a single solution will not necessarily meet the needs of every vessel or operator.

Demand for the service increased during the reporting period as fishers recognised the practical benefits of having management boundaries clearly displayed alongside their navigational information. Southern IFCA successfully installed the data aboard a growing number of vessels and continued to expand its application to a range of compatible systems.

The initiative has been extremely positively received by the fishing industry. It demonstrates that supporting adaptation does not always require large-scale intervention; relatively simple solutions, developed in response to a clearly identified industry need, can make a meaningful difference to the day-to-day operation of small fishing businesses.

By making it easier for fishers to identify closed areas while operating at sea, Southern IFCA is reducing the risk of inadvertent spatial incursions and enabling fishers to make informed operational decisions in real time. This benefits both industry and the marine environment, supporting legitimate fishing activity while strengthening the effectiveness of conservation protections.

As local and national fisheries management continues to evolve, Southern IFCA will continue to listen to industry and identify where practical interventions can make adaptation easier. The Plotter Initiative provides a strong example of this approach: recognising a challenge created by regulatory change, working with fishers to understand its practical implications, and developing a straightforward solution that reduces burden, supports compliance and helps the inshore fleet adapt with confidence.

2. Piloting Remote Electronic Monitoring

a) Implementation of a pilot of a small-scale Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) solution focusing on high resolution spatial management and the provisions to quantify salmonid interactions in MPAs.



During 2025/26, Southern IFCA continued to explore how Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) could provide innovative and proportionate solutions to some of the monitoring challenges associated with small-scale inshore fisheries. A particular focus was the potential application of REM to support high-resolution spatial management and improve understanding of salmonid interactions within Marine Protected Areas (MPAs).

The original objective of this element of the pilot was to investigate whether REM technology could strengthen the monitoring and control provisions associated with the Net Fishing Byelaw. Existing management requires fishers to report interactions with salmonids, providing important information to support assessment of the fishery. Southern IFCA sought to build upon this by working collaboratively with permit holders to determine whether REM could provide an additional, independent evidence source to demonstrate the nature and frequency of interactions between net fisheries and salmonids.

This was particularly relevant to understanding whether interactions remain rare and whether existing management continues to provide an appropriate level of protection. If successful, REM could provide a more robust evidence base from which to assess interactions over time, strengthening confidence in both industry reporting and future management decisions.

The project was intentionally developed as a voluntary pilot, recognising the importance of testing new monitoring technologies collaboratively with industry. However, securing a suitable volunteer vessel from within the specific permit fishery proved challenging during the reporting period. Consequently, the intended trial focusing directly on salmonid interactions could not be completed as originally designed.

Rather than allowing this to prevent progress, officers adopted a flexible and adaptive approach, identifying an opportunity to install and trial REM equipment aboard a small inshore netting vessel operating in Lyme Bay. Although this vessel was not operating within the target permit fishery, the trial enabled Southern IFCA to test many of the fundamental technological capabilities that would be required for the original management application.

The results were encouraging. REM footage demonstrated the capability to identify the type of net being deployed, the location of fishing activity and the composition of catch as fish were removed from the nets. Species identification, including the observation of discarded catch, was possible from onboard camera footage. These are important findings for the original objective, demonstrating that REM has the potential to provide an independent record of where fishing occurred, how fishing gear was being operated and what was caught.

When combined with high-resolution positional information, these capabilities could have particular value for managing net fisheries within and around spatially managed areas. The ability to cross-reference vessel location, gear deployment and observed catch provides a potentially powerful evidence base for

understanding whether interactions with protected species are occurring and whether spatial management measures are operating as intended.

Learning from this trial was further strengthened by Southern IFCA's wider REM work undertaken during the reporting period. Collectively, the pilots demonstrated the value of combining high-resolution positional data with deck-mounted cameras, allowing fishing activity observed spatially to be interpreted alongside information on gear deployment and catch. This provides opportunities to move beyond knowing simply where a vessel has travelled towards developing a much richer understanding of the fishing activity taking place.

The pilot also generated important lessons about the practical delivery of voluntary technology trials within the small-scale inshore fleet. Recruitment of suitable vessels remains a significant consideration, particularly where projects require participation from a relatively small or specialised group of fishers. Consequently, the AI component of this specific project could not be explored to the extent originally intended. This experience has nevertheless provided valuable learning for the design, communication and delivery of future collaborative REM projects.

Importantly, the inability to secure a volunteer within the original target fishery did not remove the value of the pilot. By adapting delivery and testing the technology in a comparable inshore net fishery, Southern IFCA was able to establish proof of capability for several of the core requirements necessary to monitor salmonid interactions. This represents an important step towards determining whether REM could ultimately supplement existing reporting arrangements and provide greater confidence in the evidence underpinning management.

Southern IFCA intends to build upon these findings and continue exploring opportunities to work with industry on the application of REM and AI. Future work will seek to translate the technological capability demonstrated through the pilot into practical applications within relevant fisheries, while continuing to recognise the importance of proportionality, industry participation and the operational realities of the small-scale fleet.

The project demonstrates the value of an adaptive approach to innovation: where the original delivery route proved challenging, officers identified an alternative opportunity, continued to test the underlying hypothesis and generated transferable learning. In doing so, Southern IFCA has strengthened its understanding of how REM could contribute to more effective, evidence-led and proportionate monitoring of inshore fisheries and Marine Protected Areas in the future.

b) continuing to explore the capability of these technologies in the management of pot restrictions.

During 2025/26, Southern IFCA continued to explore the capability of REM and AI technology to support the effective and proportionate management of inshore pot fisheries. This work has particular relevance to the proposed Pot Fishing Byelaw, which includes the introduction of pot limits as a mechanism for managing fishing effort within the District.

A central consideration in developing any new management measure is not only whether it can deliver the intended fisheries outcome, but also whether it can be effectively monitored and enforced in practice. Traditional approaches to monitoring pot limits could require officers to spend considerable periods aboard vessels manually observing deployment or hauling of pots. Southern IFCA therefore used the REM pilot to explore whether technology could provide a more efficient, reliable and less resource-intensive alternative.

As part of the trial, GPS, onboard cameras and gear sensors were installed on an under-10 metre potting vessel operating in Lyme Bay, with the equipment subsequently transferred to a comparable replacement vessel.

The trial demonstrated that REM can provide high-resolution information on vessel and fishing activity with gear sensors positioned to identify the beginning and end of a string of pots, which subsequently were capable of triggering video recording as fishing gear was hauled and shot. When functioning effectively, this enabled fishing activity to be linked to vessel position and provided information on the number of pots being operated.

This creates the potential for a much more detailed understanding of potting effort. Combining vessel location, gear sensors and onboard imagery, information can be gathered which can provide evidence of where fishing takes place, when gear is being actively worked, and the number of pots associated with fishing activity.

The project also explored the potential application of Artificial Intelligence to automate pot counting. The concept is for AI to analyse video footage as a string is hauled aboard and identify and count individual pots sequentially. Used alongside gear sensors identifying the beginning and end of each string, this could provide an automated record of the number of pots operated by a vessel.

Such an approach could have significant future application in supporting compliance with pot limitations. Rather than relying solely on resource-intensive physical inspections or officers manually counting gear, REM could provide a continuous and independently verifiable record of fishing activity. This could enable compliance resources to be targeted according to risk while providing compliant fishers with an objective means of demonstrating adherence to management requirements.

The technology also demonstrated wider potential for improving the evidence base available for pot fisheries. Camera footage provides opportunities to determine the quantity and composition of catch, including commercially important crab and lobster species, potentially allowing fishing effort and catch information to be considered together. Over time, this could provide valuable evidence to inform both compliance activity and wider assessments of fishery performance.

Importantly, the pilot has also identified areas where further technological development is required. REM systems have the potential to generate significant volumes of data, creating considerations around data storage, processing and the level of automation required to make the approach operationally efficient. During deployment on the second trial vessel, the automatic recording system also occasionally failed to capture the beginning of a haul. Understanding these limitations is an important part of the pilot process and will inform future refinement of equipment and operating protocols.

The work demonstrates the importance of considering monitoring and enforceability alongside the development of management measures. As Southern IFCA progresses its approach to pot fisheries management, the REM pilot is helping the Authority understand whether emerging technologies could provide a proportionate and efficient mechanism for demonstrating and monitoring compliance with future pot restrictions.

Rather than replacing officers, the technology has the potential to enable their time to be used more effectively. Automated monitoring could reduce the requirement for resource-intensive onboard observations, allowing compliance activity to focus on areas of greatest risk while simultaneously generating a richer evidence base for fisheries management.

The pilot has therefore demonstrated promising potential for REM, AI and gear sensors to support the future management of pot fisheries. By continuing to test these technologies alongside the development of regulatory measures, Southern IFCA is exploring new ways of delivering effective monitoring and enforcement that are proportionate, evidence-led and operationally efficient, while ensuring that future management measures can be practically implemented across the small-scale inshore fleet.

Core Functions

High Risk Intelligence Led Work

The Authority is committed to a fair, effective and proportionate enforcement regime. The Compliance and Enforcement Framework (CEF) sets out the Authority's approach to achieving compliance and provides information about the general principles the Authority will follow and our enforcement actions available. The CEF establishes a framework from which risk-based enforcement plans may be developed in the form of a Compliance Risk Register (CRR). For access to these documents please follow the link to the Southern IFCA Website: [Compliance & Enforcement : Southern IFCA \(southern-ifca.gov.uk\)](https://www.southernifca.gov.uk/compliance-enforcement)

Intelligence reports (IRs) are the Authority's method of recording, storing, collating and the dissemination of intelligence that complement our risk-based approach.

The TCG process provides managers with a decision-making mechanism in which to manage their business both strategically and tactically. Decisions based on a full understanding of the problems faced enables the PDCO to prioritise the deployment of resources at their disposal.

Southern IFCA's TCG meets every two weeks and is informed by the Tactical Assessment (the document which supports the meeting). The Lead intelligence Officer or Intelligence Officer shall be responsible for the preparation of the tactical assessment document. Southern IFCA is also represented at two regional TCGs with external agencies that is coordinated by the MMO.

The TCG reflects on the previous two weeks priorities and considers identified emerging issues or specific problems and proposes tactical activity for the next period. It ensures that the resources are aligned to the priorities. Additional priorities can be set, or specific intelligence requirements may be needed. The group decides when appropriate tactical action will be taken and by whom.

Between April 2025 and March 2026 12 TCGs were held by Southern IFCA, to include representation from the Marine Management Organisation (MMO), UK Border Force (BF), Port Health Officer from Bournemouth Christchurch & Poole Council (BCP), Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority (GLAA), Sussex IFCA, Devon & Cornwall Police, Dorset Police, Deven & Severn IFCA, Environment Agency (EA), Maritime & Coastguard Agency (MCGA), Officers from the Fish Health Inspectorate at Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (Cefas) and Port Health Officer from Southampton City Council.

Monitoring & Control of Statutory & Non-Statutory Measures

Compliance Inspections undertaken

Category	Metric	Details	2024/25	2025/26
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Inspections of sea	Vessel patrols	Any patrol vessel or survey (mother /daughter boat combination as one patrol)	61	78
	Fishing vessel boarding	Any fishing vessel (including unregistered / unlicensed) inspected at sea, where boarding was in pursuit of any relevant duty	175	274
	Fishing gear inspections	Store pots, tiers / strings etc. of fishing gear found deployed in sea, where inspection was in pursuit of any relevant duty. Do not count gear inspected onboard a vessel	0	0
Inspections ashore or in port	Shore patrol	Excursion/visit of any length to any part of the coast for an inspection observation of fishing related activity	125	134
	Port visits	Individual port/cove/beach visits within the shoreline	207	267
	Premises inspections	Markets, merchants refrigerated units, retailers, food producers/outlets etc	29	16
	Fish/shellfish landing inspections	Observations of fish/shellfish as landed ashore from a vessel. Does not include inspections of fish in market or in storage unless landing observed	140	115
	Other inspections	Vessel gear/fish checks in port/ashore, diver and shore angler catches, vehicle contents, shellfish on lay areas etc.	100	42
Drone	Drone Flight	No. of times drone has been deployed for operational purposes.	38	90

Enforcement Actions

***Please note** that in instances where an offence covers both byelaw and national measures offences, they are reflected in both sections e.g. an ongoing prosecution includes byelaw offences e.g. SDPB & BTFG and a national measure e.g. Tech Con offence, they are included in both tables.

Southern IFCA Byelaws: Non-Compliance identified and Enforcement Actions Taken.

Verbal Warning	14	13 x MCRS byelaw 1 x SDPB (Gear)
Advisory Letter	3	2x BTFG Byelaw 1x Net Fishing Byelaw

Official Written Letter/Warning	5	2x MCRS Byelaw 2x BTFG Byelaw 1x SDPB (Catch Returns)
Fixed Administrative Penalty	7	2x PHDP (Spatial) 1x MCRS Byelaw 3x BTFG 1x SDPB (Curfew)
Ongoing investigations	5	2x BTFG Byelaw 1x PHDP (Spatial) 1x SDPB (Curfew), Fishing for Cockles Byelaw, BTFG Byelaw 1x SDPB (Curfew), BTFG Byelaw

National Measures: Non-Compliance identified and Enforcement Actions Taken.

Verbal Warning	10	9x MCRS (Tech Con) 1x Bass regulations – MCRS & over rec limit
Advisory Letter	1	1x Bass regulations – BNA & IUU
Official Written Letter/Warning	4	3x MCRS offences (Tech Con) 1x Bass regulations – Over Rec Limit
Fixed Administrative Penalty	2	2x Bass regulations – Over Rec Limit & BNA
Ongoing Investigation	1	1x MCRS offence (Tech Con)

Working with Partners

Working with other fisheries regulators: compliance & enforcement



The Southern IFCA Compliance & Enforcement Team (CET) work in partnership with a number of other organisations, including law enforcement agencies and local authorities. Section 174 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act places a 'Duty of Co-operation' on an IFCA to work with its adjoining IFCA district and any other public authority who exercises regulatory functions relating to the sea. **Between 1st April 2025**

and 31st March 2026, Southern IFCA officers were involved in 11 joint patrols, both at sea and on land.

- 16/05/2025 – joint patrol with MMO SMT in Lyme Regis, covering dolphin disturbance (Land)
- 01/06/2025 – joint patrol with MMO SMT in the Solent (Sea – Vigilant)
- 28/07/2025 – joint operation with Police, GLAA, Fareham EHOs, MMO SEMT, Immigration, covering hand gathering at Hill Head (Land)
- 11/08/2025 – joint operation with Police, GLAA, Fareham EHOs, Immigration, covering hand gathering at Hill Head (Land)
- 06/08/2025 – joint patrol with Langstone Harbour Masters, to haul and inspect gear at Langstone Harbour (Sea)
- 09/09/2025 – joint operation with MMO SMT & Ops, to target suspected illegal fishing activity 40nm off IOW (Sea – Vigilant)
- 08/10/2025 – joint patrol with MMO SMT in the Solent for towed gear and bass inspections (Sea – Vigilant)
- 05/11/2025 – joint patrol with MMO SEMT at Camber docks, for scallop landings (Land)
- 08/12/2025 – joint patrol with MMO SEMT at Camber docks, for scallop landings (Land)
- 29/01/2026 – joint patrol with Southampton EHOs in Southampton water (Sea – Vigilant)
- 15/01/2026 – joint patrol with MMO SMT at Camber docks, for scallop landings (Land)

Working with other fisheries regulators: Systems

Focus during this year has been a continued smooth transition to the new intelligence system, CLUE. Officers attended weekly CLUE update meetings. These meetings were designed to fault find, develop the system and support operational officers. They also provide an opportunity to communicate with IFCA colleagues across the country and the MMO intelligence team to ensure the system is fit for purpose. Some of the developments included dashboard improvements: These enhancements allow officers to view relevant intelligence for our region (IFCA & MMO) and neighbouring IFCAs, helping to direct our enforcement priorities. Improvements were also made to the outcomes register: this allows other agencies to access more detailed information on our ongoing investigations and the sanctions provided, and vice versa. Both the Southern IFCA Lead and Intelligence officer have been training new officers on how to search and create intel and incident records on CLUE.

National IFCA Training

PDCO has been involved in the development and delivery of the IFCA Enforcement Course in Brixham. This course is intended for Enforcement Officers from any of the Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities (or other agencies or authorities) who have a basic knowledge of Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 (MaCAA) Legislation.

During this course officers are provided with a good understanding of the role of IFCAs, fisheries legislation, basic fish identification and gear technology, health and safety at sea and on the quayside, rules of evidence and disclosure, investigative techniques and case file management.

Shellfish Sampling for Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole Council

Southern IFCA have for many years assisted BCP Council and the Food Standards Agency (FSA) with Shellfish classification and water sampling in Poole Harbour. Southern IFCA secured a 5-year contract

with BCP Council to provide a vessel and staff to carry out this work in 2024. The sampling is coordinated by the BCP Environmental Protection Officer and the Senior Inshore Fisheries & Conservation Officer, who match suitable dates, tides and weather with resource requirements. The Southern IFCA vessel Endeavour, a skipper and 2 crew are required for this task. The sampling is carried out monthly. There are currently 10 sample sites in Poole Harbour. Sampling is mainly of mussels, which are previously harvested from an area of leased aquaculture seabed in Poole Harbour. Officers bag the mussels up into roughly equal amounts. The mussel samples are deposited at each of the sample sites after the previous month's classification samples have been removed. The classification samples go to the UKHSA laboratory for analysis. In addition, a biotoxin water and shellfish sample are collected and sent to CEFAS for testing.

The classification samples are tested for *Escherichia coli* (E. coli). Test results of the samples determine the classification for the various species of shellfish that are harvested within the designated shellfish classification zones. Poole Harbour contains the following shellfish classification zones: Brands Bay, Poole Harbour North, Rockley, Southwest Brownsea Island, Wareham Channel, Whiteley Lake, Wych Lake, the West Brownsea Relay Area and the South Deep Relay Area.

'A' classification means that the shellfish within that zone can be harvested direct for human consumption. 'B' Classified shellfish can be supplied for human consumption after either purification in an approved establishment, relaying for at least one month in a classified Class A relaying area, or after an approved heat treatment process.

Working Cross-Government Nationally: National Inshore Marine Enforcement Group

The main purpose of the National Inshore Marine Enforcement Group (NIMEG) is to bring together expertise in the field of regulation and enforcement within inshore fisheries and marine conservation in order to develop and support joint working and consistency; identify and share best practice; and to promote professionalism and competence. Between 1st April 2025 and the 31st March 2026 the Southern IFCA attended 2 national meetings. The PDCO has been involved in a Mobile Working App Working Group which is a task and finish group that has been set up to adapt the MMO's existing Mobile Working App so that IFCA officers could use it. The Mobile Working App is a digital inspection recording system.

Case Study 1: Poole Harbour Clam & Cockle Fishery

INPUTS

SOUTHERN IFCA INTERVENTIONS

OUTPUTS

Poole Harbour Clam & Cockle Fishery



Poole Harbour SPA

Saltmarsh as supporting habitat for bird species



MANAGEMENT

Byelaw

Minimum Conservation Reference Size

Byelaw

Poole Harbour Shellfish & Handgathering

Permit Byelaw

Poole Harbour Dredge

Code of Conduct

Saltmarsh

- Limited entry permit fishery (45 issued)
- Spatial restrictions
- Seasonal opening (25th May – 23rd December)
- Temporal restrictions
- Gear specifications (type & construction)
- Catch reporting requirements (days, hours, quantities, buyers, location of catch)

MONITORING

Poole Bivalve Survey



Catch Returns



Monitoring & Control Plan



- Combined data indicates that current management is maintaining a sustainable stock of target species.
- Harvestable populations of Manila clam and common cockle remain stable, the Authority determined, in reviewing relevant monitoring variables under the Monitoring & Control Plan that no management intervention was required for the 25/26 season.
- The populations of both species appear to be robust to the current level of fishing effort with harvesting remaining sustainable.

CONTROL

boarding inspections: 78

Drone flights: 58

sea patrols: 24

shore patrols: 46

port inspections: 42



Verbal Warning

6

MCRS

Official Written Warning

2

MCRS

Fixed Administrative Penalty

3

MCRS, spatial

Ongoing Investigations

1

Spatial

ANNUAL REVIEW OF MANAGEMENT MEASURES



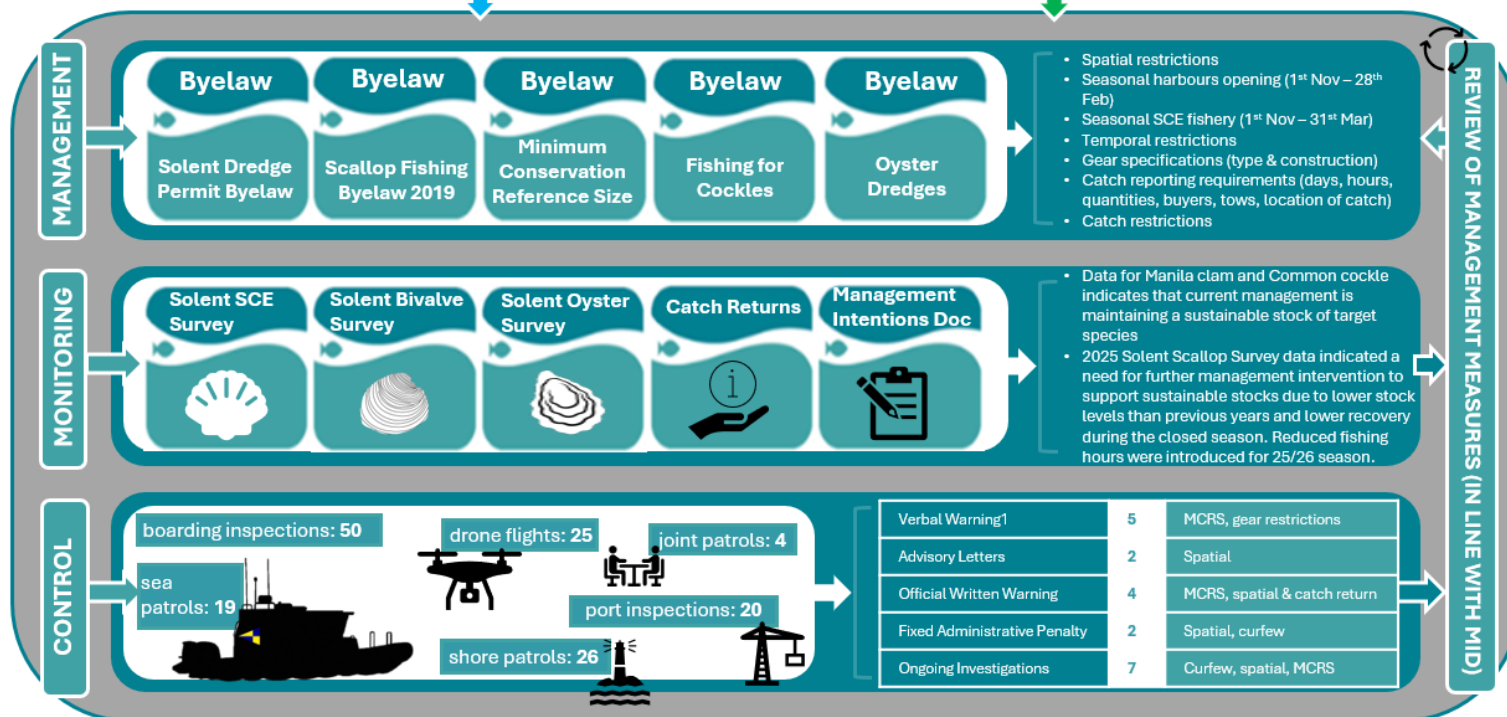
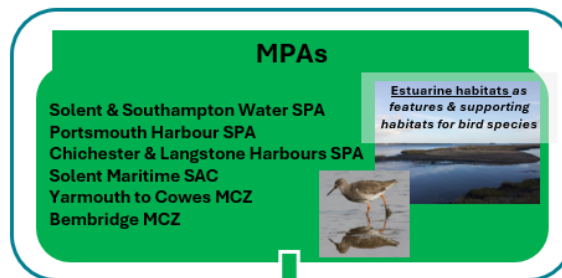
'championing prosperous inshore fisheries founded upon thriving marine environments'

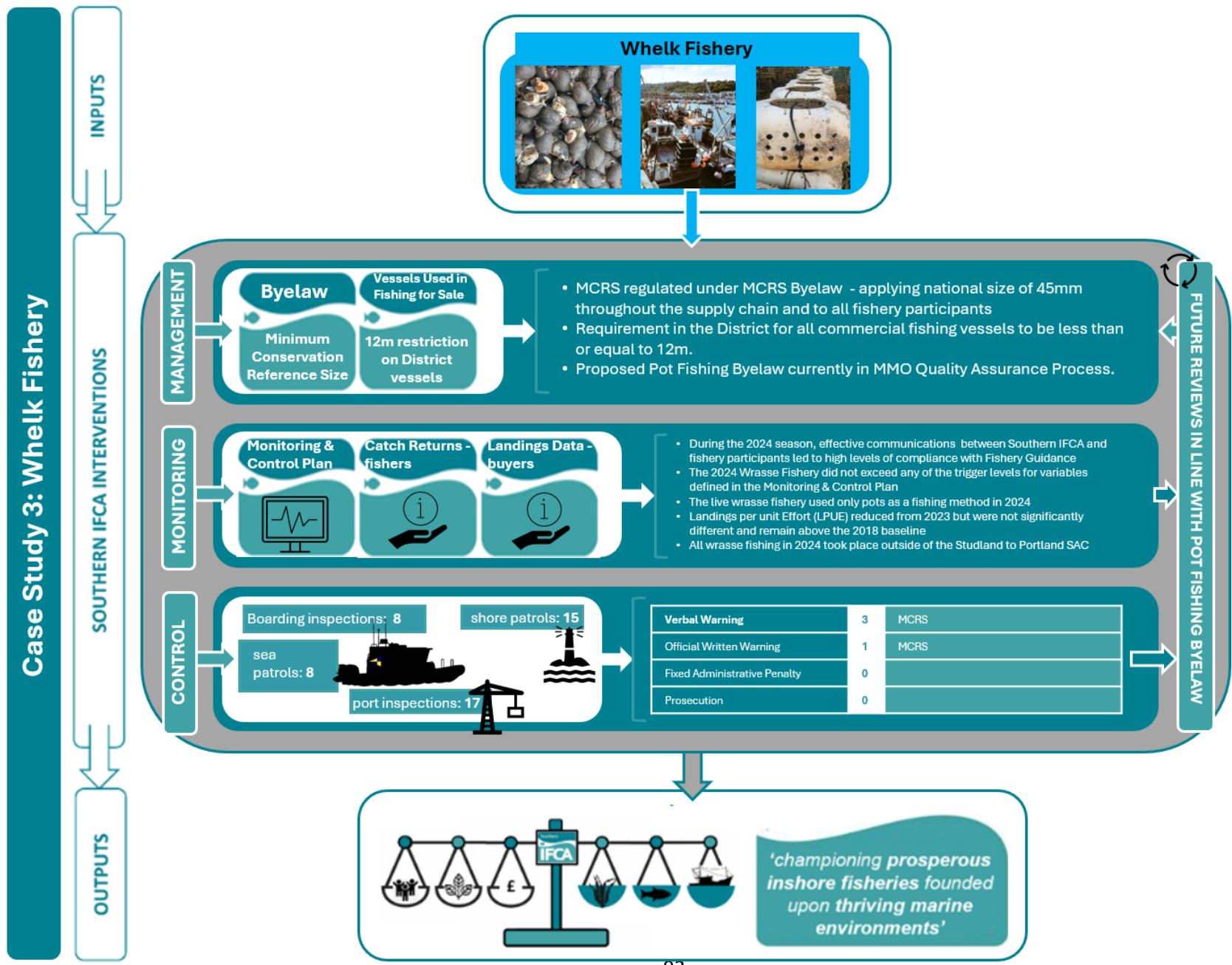
Case Study 2: Solent Bivalve Fisheries

INPUTS

SOUTHERN IFCA INTERVENTIONS

OUTPUTS





Updates to Operational Policy & Procedures



Marine Assets: FPV Vigilant continued Service

Vigilant has improved endurance both for the crew in line with health and safety requirement as well as the vessel including some wellbeing benefits including a water boiler, toilet, more comfortable seating, connectivity and more. It can go further for longer periods due to the added protection and capability covering more of the district, the Officers now spend more time at sea as opposed to being held up on the road network which in turn has seen reduction in emissions and the Authority's vehicle fleet. This means that the Officers are essentially spending more time delivering our regulatory functions including but not limited to monitoring spatial closures, gathering sightings data and getting more time to engage and inspect both commercial and recreational vessel, in terms of new ways of working one of the significant changes is Officers can access control and enforcement systems on the patrol vessel as it has connectivity onboard. The team have embraced the introduction of Vigilant and are continuing to ensure its success.

Workboat Code 3 Compliance

Small commercial vessels operating in UK waters must comply with the MCA (Maritime Coastguard Agency) codes of practice, "Workboat Code Edition 3 must, from the date of entry into force (13 December 2023), be used for new workboats" (FPV Vigilant). Workboat Code Edition 3 provides details of the technical requirements for equipment, practices and procedures to be followed.

Although the code states "Existing vessels (FPVs Endeavour and Protector) that are certificated under Workboat Code Edition 2 shall meet the requirements of Workboat Code Edition 3 by the vessel's next renewal examination or three years after the date of entry into force of the Code, whichever is later" Southern IFCA have started to implement the codes of practice. Section (28) of Workboat Code Edition 3 refers to Manning "The purpose of this section is to set out the minimum safe manning requirements for the number of the crew members and their qualifications necessary to ensure the safe operation of a vessel".

Under (28.2.1) it states "Single handed operations are not permitted where a vessel is involved in the transfer of personnel at sea" single handed operations were previously permitted and it was normal operating procedure at Southern IFCA to leave the patrol vessel skipper (without crew) onboard whilst boarding operations occurred, this is no longer permitted under the code, therefore there is a increase in manning requirement of one additional officer when conducting boarding operations, this is a significant change. The changes in manning requirement have been implemented through the Southern IFCA Health and Safety Policy and operation are now compliant with the new Workboat Code.

Under (28.1.2) "All licences and Certificates of Competency (CoC) shall be appropriate to the vessel's area category of operation and type of operation" and "that all Masters and crew responsible for navigation shall complete the required training". Southern IFCA was successful in securing external funding under the Fisheries and Seafood Scheme (FASS) for these training requirements under the Code which includes electronic chart systems & radar training for five IFCOs, this training is due to be completed in 2026.

Within the reporting period FPV Endeavour has been subject to survey and has now transitioned and sits under WBC3.

PART 6: FEEDBACK

Southern IFCA are committed to providing an exemplary service. If you are not satisfied with an aspect of our service, we encourage you to let us know and we will do our best to resolve the matter as quickly as possible. Please refer to the [Customer Complaints Procedure](#) for further information or contact enquiries@southern-ifca.gov.uk.

Annexes

Annex 1: Achieving National Success Criteria

Performance Indicators for Success Criteria 1

IFCAs are recognised and heard, balancing the economic needs of the fishery whilst working in partnership and engaging with stakeholders

IFCAs will be visible, respected and trusted regulators within coastal communities and will maintain and deliver a strategy to communicate their vision and duties effectively. IFCAs will engage with policy makers, industry, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), recreational and commercial users; and other regulators. They will work jointly and collaboratively with partner organisations across boundaries; will participate and contribute to the development and implementation of regional and national marine policy, including the marine planning regime; will take long-term strategic decisions and manage risks effectively. IFCAs may maintain a national body to co-ordinate the activities of authorities that are party to arrangements

Outcomes	Performance Indicators	Status
The IFCA will maintain and implement an effective communication strategy. The IFCA will maintain its website, ensuring public access to current fisheries and conservation information for the District, including management requirements and byelaws. Non-reserved IFCA Committee papers will be published. The IFCA will contribute to co-ordinated activity at a national level. The IFCA and its principal partners will have a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities. Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) with the MMO, Natural England, Environment Agency and CEFAs will be maintained. Opportunities for greater efficiencies, effective joint working and collaboration will be explored and implemented when feasible.	The IFCA will maintain a database of stakeholder contacts (in accordance with General Data Protection Regulations 2018 [GDPR]) that will have been reviewed and updated by 31 March each year.	
	The IFCA will have completed a review of its communication strategy and implementation plan by 31 March each year.	
	The IFCA will have reviewed its website by the last working day of each month	
	The IFCA will have reviewed its website and ensured it meets the objectives of its communication strategy, by 31 March each year.	
	The IFCA will have reviewed all MoU's by 31 March each year. There will be a clear plan in place to update MoUs where necessary, to an agreed timescale.	
	By 31 March each year, the IFCA will have participated appropriately, proportionately and at the right level of delegation, in regional and national fisheries and conservation activity identified in the annual plan	

Performance Indicators for Success Criteria 2

IFCAs implement a fair, effective and proportionate enforcement regime		
The IFCA enforcement regime is risk-based, makes appropriate use of intelligence, meets legislative standards and complies with the Regulators Code. It should make effective use of the resources available to regulators; complement and align, if possible, with the regimes in adjacent IFC Districts and management by other organisations including the MMO and Environment Agency. Consistency and fairness are important. Regulatory compliance is promoted. Enforcement action is carried out by trained, professional officers working to clear standards of conduct.		
Outcomes	Performance Indicators	Status
The IFCA will publish its Enforcement Risk Register and Strategy, clearly setting out its approach to achieving regulatory compliance and potential sanctions that may be applied for infringements and/or offences. The IFCA will have developed consistency in regulations (byelaws) with other organisations The IFCA will manage operational activity (e.g., through a Tasking & Co-ordination Group) and capture, record, evaluate and disseminate intelligence that is compatible with partner organisations. It is engaged in joint working with partner organisations. Warranted Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officers will be trained and accredited to nationally agreed standards. They will maintain professionalism and make appropriate interventions to deliver efficient, effective enforcement activity	The IFCA will ensure its Enforcement Risk Register and Strategy are published and available on its website from 1 April each year.	
	The IFCA will demonstrate in its Annual Report how it has worked with other regulators to achieve consistent quality, application and enforcement of management measures.	
	The IFCA will compile records of enforcement activity in a standard format; provide them to the National Inshore Marine Enforcement Group (NIMEG) and publish them on its website.	
	The IFCA will adopt the national Code of Conduct for IFCOs, which will be reviewed annually and published on its website by 1 April.	
	The Code of Conduct for IFCOs is reflected in work objectives and annual appraisals for all Warranted Officers.	
	Warranted Officers attain accreditation. All undertake Continuing Professional Development (CPD)	

Performance Indicators for Success Criteria 3

IFCAs use evidence based and appropriate measures to manage the sustainable exploitation of sea fisheries resources and deliver marine environmental protection within their districts

The IFCAs were created as statutory inshore regulators by the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009. They are relevant authorities for implementing international environmental commitments including the Birds, Habitats, Water and Marine Strategy Framework Directives and make an important contribution to securing a network of well managed marine protected areas, including European Marine Sites and Marine Conservation Zones. Fisheries Management Plans identify local management measures which should be based on evidence; be timely; subject to appropriate consultation and in step with national initiatives and priorities. An IFCA should balance the social and economic benefits of exploiting sea fisheries resources with the need to protect the environment. It should make a contribution to sustainable development.

Outcomes	Performance Indicators	Status
The IFCA will identify issues likely to affect sustainable management of the marine environment in the District; undertake risk assessments and gap analysis; review appropriateness of existing measures; evaluate management options and develop and implement proportionate marine management solutions. The IFCA will support implementation of a well-managed network of marine protected areas by: developing a range of criteria-based management options; implementing management measures to ensure that inshore fisheries activities comply with the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 and the revised approach to managing commercial fisheries in European Marine Sites; and that local management contributes to delivery of targets for the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, Water Framework Directive and Marine Plans. The IFCA will develop Fisheries Management Plans for priority species where appropriate. Shared objectives will be developed with identified partners; actions identified, and best practice reflected so that management makes a contribution to sustainable development.	The IFCA will record site-specific management considerations for Marine Protected Areas and report progress to the Authority	✓
	The IFCA will publish data analysis and evidence supporting new management measures, on its website	✓
	Management information (e.g., sampling and/or survey results) will be collected periodically after new management measures have been implemented, to demonstrate the extent of effectiveness of the intervention	✓
	The IFCA will have developed a range of criteria-based management options that are explained to stakeholders through the IFCA website, and reviewed by 31 March each year	✓
	New IFCA management measures selected for development and implementation are delivered within agreed timescales	✓
	The IFCA will include shared agreed objectives and actions from Fisheries Management Plans in its own Annual Plan, which will be published by 31 March each year.	✓

Performance Indicators for Success Criteria 4

IFCAs have appropriate governance in place and staff are trained and professional

IFCAs are statutory authorities and sit within the local government family. Authority members may be either general members or local councillors. They comply with Codes of Conduct and the Standing Orders that apply to meetings of local government committees. General members are appointed on merit, through open competition and for a term. They are subject to an annual performance appraisal. An IFCA is funded by levy, charged to its member councils. Funding originates in local taxation. An IFCA is accountable for its use of public resources and should ensure that a proper auditing regime provides confidence in its commitment and spend of public money. It should make effective use of its resources, including staff and assets. An IFCA has a statutory obligation to prepare and publish Annual Plans and Annual Reports.

Outcomes	Performance Indicators	Status
The IFCA will demonstrate its long-term strategic approach to sustainable marine management by having appropriate plan-making, review, update and amendment procedures in place. The IFCA will record its performance against corporate outcomes and indicators as soon as practically possible following the end of the financial year. Staff performance management systems will be in place that link to the IFCA success criteria. There will be an induction procedure for new joiners. Staff training and development needs will be identified. Performance will be managed and, where necessary, improvement procedures will be followed. The IFCA Committee will be supported by an organised, efficient and effective secretariat. New members will receive an induction pack and briefing from the Authority. There will be a rolling twelve-month schedule of quarterly Authority meetings. Notices of meetings and documentation will be made available in line with Standing Orders. IFCA Committee meetings will be held in public unless material is either confidential, or exempt within the meaning of the Local Government Act 1972	The IFCA will publish a Plan on its website by 31 March, setting out the main objectives and priorities for the next financial year. A copy will be sent to the Secretary of State.	
	After the end of each financial year, the IFCA will publish a report on its website describing its activities, performance and a summary of audited financial information in that year, by 30 November. A copy will be sent to the Secretary of State.	
	IFCA staff will have annual performance management plans in place. Annual appraisals for all staff will have been completed by 31 March each year.	
	An efficient secretariat of IFCA staff support IFCA Authority meetings which are held quarterly and are quorate. Meeting documentation will meet Standing Orders.	
	The IFCA will have demonstrated, in its Annual Report, how marine, land and water management mechanisms in the Inshore Fisheries & Conservation District have worked responsively and effectively together.	

Performance Indicators for Success Criteria 5

IFCAs make the use of evidence to deliver their objectives

IFCAs are statutory regulators for their Inshore Fisheries and Conservation District. Decision-making should be based on evidence. All IFCAs are supported by officers who pool their expertise and share best practice as a Technical Advisory Group (TAG). A programme of research activity and monitoring is planned, developed and updated in consultation with partners. The programme informs management decisions and supports justification for additional research and evidence gathering.

Outcomes	Performance Indicators	Status
A strategic research plan that contributes to greater understanding of the marine environment and delivery of cost-effective management of sea fisheries resources	The IFCA will demonstrate progress that has been made towards identifying its evidence needs by publishing a research plan each year	
Standard Operating Procedures describe how data is captured and shared with principal partners	The IFCA will publish a research report annually that demonstrates how evidence has supported decision making	
A list of research databases held by the IFCA and the frequency of their review	The IFCA's contribution to TAG and progress that has made towards a national evidence needs programme will be recorded in the IFCA's Annual Report	