

Recreational Angling Sector Group

AGENDA

Monday 11th September 2023

19:00 – 21:00

Meeting location:

Virtual meeting on MS Teams

1. Welcome and Apologies

Apologies: Alan Deeming and Mike Spiller

Attending: Emily Condie (Southern IFCA), Fred Harris (Southern IFCA), Chris Holloway, Alan Green

Apologies from Emily Condie for having to rearrange the original meeting at short notice.

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting (12th April 2023)

One amendment regarding the targeting of porbeagles. The restrictions stated by the Shark Trust in item 5b refers only to commercial vessels, but the Sharks Trust suggest not targeting porbeagles from April to August as the pregnant females move through the British isles at this time.

These amendments were agreed.

3. FMP Update – from SIFCA Project Officer Celie Mullen, delivered by IFCO Emily Condie

Emily Condie gave a brief overview of the FMP frontrunner consultations that are running until 1st Oct 2023 (Channel Demersal Non-Quota, Bass, Whelk, Crab and Lobster, King Scallop, and Southern North Sea and Eastern Channel Mixed Flatfish) and expanded on the crab and lobster and bass FMPs.

The Crab and Lobster FMP looks to collate existing evidence and react to evidence gaps such as stock boundaries, spatial inconsistencies in data collection and quality; to standardize or increase the lobster and crawfish minimum landing sizes across English waters to harmonise with existing IFCA measures; to prohibit landing of soft brown crab for bait; to pilot management regimes for brown crab and European lobster in certain areas and develop and refine measures for long term sustainability, including seasonal closures, effort limits, pot and catch limits. Members engaged in brief discussion on the use of shore crabs as bait.

The Bass FMP looks to ensure stock continue to be fished within sustainable limits; address evidence gaps on the number of bass being discarded by commercial fishers; how many are being caught by recreational and the socioeconomic benefit of the stocks to coastal communities. It will address which of the current measures requires improvement (timing and duration of closed season, current ass authorisation system and reference period) as well as mitigate risk of bycatch of marine mammals, seabirds, and other fish.

One member raised that during a meeting with the MMO, commercial and recreational sectors had been in agreement that bass should be rod and line caught only in the Southern IFCA district.

Another member hoped that the bass FMP would align the bass nursery area closed seasons with the bass closed season as it brings confusion to anglers. Fred Harris informed members that the bass closed seasons have been updated for 2023 so as to align recreational fishers with commercial fishers whereas the nursery areas align with the spawning season. He also confirmed that the schematic included in the Poole Tide table is for the nursery areas and not the updated 2023 Bass legislation. Fred Harris gave an overview of bass management in the nursery areas and confirmed he would check that notice boards on Poole Quay are up to date.

4. Southern IFCA Updates/Ongoing Items

a. BTFG Consultation

Emily Condie provided members with an update on the bottom towed fishing gear consultation.

Following a decision to make the byelaw at the authority meeting on the 8th of June 2023. Southern IFCA undertook a period of consultation that ended on the 28th of July. The feedback is currently being reviewed by the Executive Sub-Committee who will consider whether to recommend that the Authority submit the Byelaw to the Secretary of State to seek confirmation.

b. Net Fishing Byelaw

Fred Harris provided Members with an update on the Net Fishing Byelaw (NFB).

The NFB was signed by the Secretary of State in August 2023 and is now active. Stakeholders have been informed and Southern IFCA are engaging with industry. The new management includes Net Permit Areas, with interested fishers having until 9th November to apply for a permit. There are also both Net Restriction Areas and Net Prohibited Areas included under the NFB.

Due to the interests of the members present Fred Harris spoke specifically about the management in Poole Harbour which includes both Net Restriction and Net Prohibition Areas. The NFB includes a provision to prevent the carriage of bass on board a vessel within a Bass Nursery Area (BNA) if using a net.

A Member raised concerns on the illegal recreational trawling for bass in BNAs. Fred Harris said this is something he is aware of and has been carrying out engagement to make anglers aware of the regulations as well as planning patrols around this issue.

A Member questioned what happens if a fisher catches a bass in a net outside of the nursery closure. Fred Harris reiterated that the NFB includes a provision to prevent the carriage of bass on board a vessel within a bass nursery area if using a net.

Members asked how IVMS and REM will be used to help implement this management and how the roll out is progressing. Fred Harris will update Members as this is an MMO matter.

c. Pot Fishing Byelaw

Emily Condie provided members with an update on the Pot Fishing Byelaw (PFB).

No progress on the PFB since the last meeting. The Authority agreed in September 2022 to send the PFB to the MMO to enter the QA process. The Byelaw has been received by the MMO and a first round of QA has been carried out.

Emily Condie and Fred Harris confirmed the draft byelaw includes a commercial whelk pot limit of 600 (with provision for 900 based on track record), commercial and recreational permits, and a recreational limit of 5 pots as well as a landing limit.

d. Minimum Conservation Reference Size (MCRS)

Emily Condie provided members with an update on the MCRS review.

No change from the last meeting. The review is ongoing with more data gathering activities being carried out at the request of the Authority.

A Member asked for confirmation on the MCRS of live bait as they had heard a length of 8 inches for any live bait in a DEFRA meeting. Fred Harris and another Member confirmed that the Southern IFCA MCRS Byelaw applies to all retention of a mentioned species, including fish to be used as live bait.

e. Angling for Sustainability Project

Before the update, a Member stated that Black bream and Gilthead bream in Poole Harbour are plentiful and stocks thriving. They are found all along the shingle bank to Mudeford and that the recreational sector will oppose any suggested management.

Fred Harris gave an overview of his experience on the Bream and Shark tagging trips with the project.

The Angling for Sustainability project is ongoing with over 100 bream tagged in 2023 aiming for a further 100 in 2024. As far as we know, no bream has been confirmed as recaptured so far, although there was a suspected recapture off of Portland.

During the shark tagging trip, two tope were tagged however they were surprised at the lack of Undulate Ray.

5. Additional Requested Items

a. Thresher Shark satellite tagging project

The Member that requested this item was not present.

6. Any Other Business

A Member raised concerns on the sightings of tuna in the Southern IFCA District. They believe that Southern IFCA or DEFRA should discourage the targeting of tuna to prevent injury, damage or death to one of the species.

Another Member raised the potential catch and release fishery that is being discussed for the next year.

Fred Harris informed members the first two commercially caught tuna had been landed to Brixham in the last week.

7. Date of the Next Meeting

To be confirmed.