

Solent Bivalve Community Forum Minutes

03/11/2021 – 18:00

MS Teams

1. Introduction

Dr Antony Jensen welcomed participants to the landmark event and thanked participants for attending, Dr Jensen informed attendees that he is the current Chair of the Southern IFCA Technical Advisory Committee, he continued to explain that engagement is at the forefront of the IFCA as the authority develops management measures. He then handed over the IFCO Cooper who explained the format of the evening.

IFCO Cooper explained that this will be an annual event to update the local community in relation to the commercial harvesting of bivalves within the Solent.

2. The Solent Dredge Permit Byelaw

IFCO Ben Taylor briefed forum attendees on the Solent Dredge Permit Byelaw explaining that the season commenced on 1st November 2021 and the Byelaw was now in force, he went to explain that the Solent Dredge Permit Byelaw restricts the use of a dredge by fishing vessels within the Solent to those who hold a valid Southern IFCA Solent Dredge Permit or have a Dispensation issued by Southern IFCA. He informed the attendees that there were 21 successful applications for a Category A Permit for the 2021-2022 season. IFCO Taylor then provided detail on the regulation to which commercial fishing vessels now have to comply.

3. Scallop Fishing Byelaw 2019

IFCO Ben Taylor briefed forum attendees that the Southern IFCA Scallop Fishing Byelaw had been amended and the new Scallop Fishing Byelaw 2019 was now in place. This new by law has changed the curfew for Scallop Fishing within the Solent from 07:00 - 19:00 to 06:00 - 18:00 to align it with the Solent Dredge Permit Byelaw.

IFCO Taylor provided information on the Minimum Conservation Reference Sizes for key shellfish species being caught in the Solent.

IFCO Taylor and Dr Antony Jensen invited questions from the Forum Members.

4. Survey results

IFCO Patrick Cooper explained the components of the Southern IFCA survey programme and results to date which relate to dredging for bivalves in the Solent. IFCO Cooper informed Community Forum members that the reports were available on the Southern IFCA website. He also reported that the Southern IFCA had been conducting surveys since 2018; there was a slight gap in the Survey data during 2019 due to Covid-19. He explained that the Scallop Survey was a new addition, reacting to the emerging commercial fishery. The surveys now cover:

- a. Solent bivalve-
- b. Solent oyster-
- c. Solent scallop-

IFCO Cooper and Dr Antony Jensen invited questions from the Forum Members.

5. SDPB Access Policy update

IFCO Patrick Cooper explained that currently the SDPB Access Policy is undergoing a review with the view of implementing an amendment to the access policy for Category A permits, that would allow consideration of those that became reliant on fishery 2019-2021 until the implementation of the Solent Code of Conduct. This will be considered was being looked by the Technical Advisory Committee 4th November 2021.

6. Solent Code of Conduct review and next steps.

IFCO Ben Taylor updated attendees on the Solent Code of Conduct which had been a voluntary measure, he explained the details of the code of conduct for both closed season and gear, IFCO Taylor gave an overview of the non-compliance with the code of conduct.

IFCO Cooper explained next steps in relation to a review of the Solent Dredge Permit Byelaw including consultation required for a change in permit conditions. Decisions would be made at Technical Advisory Committees in March and September 2022, assuming the agreement to a review of management on implementation of the byelaw by the Southern IFCA Technical Advisory Committee when it discusses the effectiveness of the Scallop Code of Conduct on the 4th November 2021. The current recommendation to the committee is, that the Scallop Code of Conduct did not achieve its aims, and to consider inclusion of the code's key points as permit conditions. If this is agreed consultation will start in early November 2021 with permit holders and relevant stakeholders to inform the review.

Dr Jensen invited attendees to put forward any questions or comments for consideration at the TAC, No questions were asked.

IFCO Cooper explained further opportunity to engage directly through contacting him and highlighted other opportunities for people to engage.

7. Any other business

Environmental Health- Shellfish bed classification to contact Local Authorities. IFCOs will advise but commercial operators should contact the EHOs.