

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
SUSSEX INSHORE FISHERIES & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY**

Held at **The Adur Centre**, Brighton Road, Shoreham-by-Sea, West Sussex, BN43 5LT,
on **22nd July 2021**

PRESENT

Members

Dr. Peter Jones (Chair)
Councillor Leo Littman (Deputy Chair, Brighton & Hove City Council)
Councillor Julia Hilton (East Sussex County Council)
Councillor Sam Adeniji (East Sussex County Council)
Councillor Pieter Montyn (West Sussex County Council)
Councillor Emma Evans (West Sussex County Council)
Councillor Noel Atkins (West Sussex County Council)
Jo Brooksbank (Natural England)
Steve Hanks (MMO Appointee)
Graham Furness (MMO Appointee)
Prof. Paul Leonard (MMO Appointee)
Garry Walker (MMO Appointee)
Dr. Paul Driver (MMO Appointee)
Sally Ashby (MMO Appointee)
Dr Corina Ciocan (MMO Appointee)

Staff

Tim Dapling (Chief Fisheries & Conservation Officer)
Dr Sean Ashworth (Deputy Chief Fisheries & Conservation Officer)
Erin Lawes (Conservation & Research Manager)
Dr Jen Lewis (Senior Research Officer)
Stephen Jump (Finance Manager)

18 CHAIR'S INTRODUCTION

- 18.1 Dr Peter Jones welcomed all to the 2nd Quarterly Committee meeting of 2021-22, the first face-to-face meeting for eighteen months, due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The Chair introduced new members to all present and asked if they would individually introduce themselves with a short description of their interest in joining the Authority.
- 18.2 Cllr Julia Hilton, Dr Corina Ciocan, Cllr Sam Adeniji and Cllr Noel Atkins explained briefly their connection to and interest in Sussex IFCA for members' and the Authority's staff's benefit.
- 18.3 Tim Dapling was also very happy to welcome the new members and introduced his work colleagues present at the meeting and briefly described Sussex IFCA's work and the breadth of all current members' skills which informed the Authority's work and discussions.

19. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

James Partridge (MMO Appointee)
Andy Read (MMO Appointee)
Paul Johnson (MMO Representative)
Mark Bennett (Environment Agency)

20. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

20.1 The Chairman requested notification of any declaration of interests. Garry Walker, Steve Hanks and Graham Furness declared their interest in the Development of Minimum Size Management Item.

20.2 Sally Ashby declared her interest as Kelp lead at The Sussex Wildlife Trust, and Sean Ashworth added that he was a trustee of The Sussex Wildlife Trust.

21. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

21.1 The Chair, Dr Peter Jones, asked for any comments and corrections from members on the minutes from the Quarterly AGM Committee Meeting which had been held via Zoom in April.

ALL RESOLVED to approve the minutes.

22. MATTERS ARISING

22.1 None.

23. UPDATE ON COVID-19 AND ITS IMPACT ON OPERATIONS

23.1 Tim Dapling updated members on the working situation under Covid restrictions with many members of staff continuing to work from home where practically possible, although the office was being used when necessary, while the vessel continued to carry out sea patrols, as it had done throughout the last year.

23.2 The Government legislation for local authorities' meetings applied to Sussex IFCA too, Tim Dapling said, and no extension had been given for the ability to hold meetings remotely, hence this meeting was being held face-to-face in a suitable venue which complied with Government guidelines.

DECISION ITEMS

24 APPOINTMENT OF NEW MEMBERS TO FINANCE SUBCOMMITTEE

- 24.1 Tim Dapling explained that membership of various subcommittees were usually confirmed at the April Quarterly committee meeting, but due to council elections it had not been possible to confirm membership of the Finance Subcommittee, whose membership was made up of councillors from the three contributing local councils. Tim Dapling said that the Authority was seeking to add members at this meeting, as there were currently only two council members on the subcommittee, Cllr Leo Littman, as Chair of this subcommittee and Cllr Pieter Montyn, his deputy. It was important to have two members from each of the three councils, and at least one from each at the meetings to ensure the subcommittee is quorate Tim Dapling said.
- 24.2 Cllr Sam Adeniji, of ESCC, volunteered to be on the committee and Cllr Noel Atkins said that he was happy to act as 'back up' for Cllr Pieter Montyn of WSCC. Cllr Julia Hilton offered to be 'back up' for Cllr Adeniji. The membership offers were kindly accepted and the appointments confirmed.
- 24.3 The Chair explained that the Finance Subcommittee meetings were usually held shortly before the date of each Quarterly and new members would be contacted nearer the time.

25 MINIMUM CONSERVATION REFERENCE SIZES MANAGEMENT

- 25.1 Tim Dapling introduced the item by explaining again, for the benefit of new members, how the development of a proposed Byelaw timetable worked and the extensive process involved: from its initial inception to the recommendation now that members approve the final draft at this meeting. The Byelaw had been 'made' at the previous Quarterly Committee Meeting and the formal statutory consultation had taken place which had allowed stakeholders to comment. Their comments had then been considered and analysed for possible amendments at a recent Technical Subcommittee before coming back to this Principal Committee for final approval prior to the Byelaw being submitted to the MMO and Defra for quality assurance and confirmation respectively.
- 25.2 Tim Dapling said that through the new Byelaw and existing national regulation there would now be a set of common sizes applied to both recreational and commercial fishers. Prior to the meeting Garry Walker had circulated a proposal for two further amendments: one amendment involved a technical interpretation, a request to include the meaning of the acronym ICES in the interpretation section, which, it was agreed, would be included, and secondly, and more importantly, an amendment to increase the size of conger eel minimum size from 88cm (880mm) to 1 metre (1000mm). The latter amendment would be for members to discuss and agree. There was unanimous agreement between the members was that this increase was a good proposal and so it would be changed.

- 25.3 Dr Peter Jones asked for any questions or comments from members. Steve Hanks queried how many Angling Clubs had been contacted directly as he felt not enough had been contacted. Tim Dapling explained that a comprehensive list of stakeholders had been contacted, including The Angling Trust and numerous recreational fishers. Sean Ashworth said that many and varied methods of spreading the word to the fishing community had been employed, from posting on social media and emailing, to posters being distributed by hand by Fisheries Officers. The Angling community, the Authority believed, were very conversant with all forms of social media: Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. The modest number of responses for the formal consultation were in line with previous byelaws, Sean Ashworth explained, as the issues had now been addressed which had been raised in the many responses received previously, via the informal consultation.
- 25.5 Steve Hanks believed there were 45 angling clubs in Sussex who had not received emails including one of which he was chair. The Chair thanked Steve Hanks for his valid and important point which would be noted for future consultations and added that it was always a challenge to reach all relevant organisations but he believed that Sussex IFCA Officers had managed to find a balance in reaching all those who were logistically feasible to contact.
- 25.6 Tim Dapling pointed out that the The Angling Trust who had submitted a response, had a very large membership. Sean Ashworth said that The Angling Trust had 346 local members and 4,400 national members. The Mullet Club had also responded, which also had a large membership, Tim Dapling added.
- 25.7 Garry Walker commented on how important it was that the Authority inform all fishing communities, both commercial and recreational, when the Byelaw had been confirmed by Defra. Tim Dapling assured members that existing email lists would be reviewed and updated as necessary to include relevant stakeholder groups.
- 25.8 Paul Leonard asked why some species were not included, Tim Dapling explained that this was a stepped approach and further species would be included following an ongoing review and work with Southern IFCA. Presently the Sussex IFCA Byelaw largely mirrored the species and sizes in the Southern IFCA minimum size Byelaw.
- 25.9 Cllr Julia Hilton queried why individual IFCAs were producing byelaws and there was not a national response. Tim Dapling said that the national regulatory body, in this case the MMO, had not chosen to pursue management at a national level, but IFCAs thought it important that this management be put in place especially since certain EU regulations had been revoked and those replacing them had not included management of recreational fishers, the exception concerned the minimum size of bass. Cllr Hilton asked whether the fact that so many IFCAs had felt it necessary to create their own byelaws would result in the MMO acting nationally on the management themselves. Tim Dapling agreed that that would be a positive and welcome outcome.
- 25.10 Members discussed issues which had been addressed in the draft byelaw since the informal consultation had taken place. All technical details had been discussed fully at the recent Technical Subcommittee meeting and Dr Peter Jones reassured members that any further amendments would be addressed by the MMO review process.

ALL RESOLVED to accept the following Recommendations
with amendments as shown:

- i. That, following the statutory consultation process, consideration of responses and amendments considered, agreed and recommended by the Technical Subcommittee, the proposed Minimum Size (Fish, Crustacea and Mollusc) Byelaw 2021 is approved.**
Subject to the amendment in minimum size of conger eels from 88cm to 1m as suggested by Garry Walker. Graham Furness expressed his support of this and all agreed.
- ii. That, following the statutory consultation process, the associated Byelaw Impact Assessment is approved.**
Garry Walker asked for clarification of use of 'licence conditions' in the supporting material. He requested that it be replaced by 'licence as a whole'. Sean Ashworth and The Chair noted that this would also be checked in the IA document itself.
- iii. That the approved Minimum Size (Fish, Crustacea and Mollusc) Byelaw 2021 and Impact Assessment are submitted to the MMO and Defra for quality assurance and confirmation.**
- iv. That, members approve the continuing development and drafting of voluntary measures, with regard to elasmobranch (sharks, skates and rays) management.**

26 Sussex Kelp Restoration Partnership Membership

- 26.1 Sean Ashworth briefed members on the history of the Nearshore Trawling Byelaw, where an ecosystems approach to management of the fishery had been taken. The evidence base had included detailed evidence of the kelp beds that existed along the West Sussex coast until the late 1980s and early 1990s.
- 26.2 As the officers engaged with local partners and the community, the story of the disappeared kelp gained attention; this had resulted in the making of the Sussex kelp film by Big Wave TV Productions and the formation of a coalition of organisations under the 'Help Our Kelp' brand in 2019. The organisations involved included the Sussex Wildlife Trust, Marine Conservation Society, Blue Marine Foundation and Big Wave TV. Sussex IFCA had liaised with this campaign group, who took the name 'Help Our Kelp' with regards to the Authority's evidence base. Sussex IFCA felt that it would be inappropriate to join what was, at that point, essentially a lobbying organisation.
- 26.3 Help Our Kelp had changed as an organisation subsequent to the confirmation of the Byelaw, Sean Ashworth said. The partners, plus additional academic research organisations, had now formed a new collaboration group to focus on monitoring, research and communications around the regeneration of habitats, including kelp, in the Nearshore Trawling Byelaw prohibition area. This new partnership was called the Sussex Kelp Restoration Project (SKRP).

- 26.4 Sussex IFCA Officers believed that it was pertinent to be a part of the Sussex Kelp Restoration Project as a formal partner. This involvement would ensure that the Authority had influence and would be able to learn from the partnership.
- 26.5 Sally Ashby, kelp lead for The Sussex Wildlife Trust, added that she was involved in developing the partnership into a more formalised structure of governance for restoration not only of kelp beds but the complete ecosystem. Protection of essential fish habitats was essential and the IFCA's involvement was important.
- 26.6 Paul Leonard fully supported the aims of SKRP and said it was important to remember that the geology drove the biology and was not just a quick fix.
- 26.7 Cllr Leo Littman asked what challenges there were in restoring kelp beds as described in no3 of SKRP's priorities: 'Use an evidence-based approach to tackle challenges to the restoration of Sussex kelp.' Sally Ashby said that more access to funding was now possible following the implementation of the Byelaw and research work streams were involved in filling any gaps in evidence gathering, for example, in monitoring the carbon flow and effects of sedimentation.
- 26.8 Dr Peter Jones asked members to not confuse SKRP with any information they might receive regarding The Sussex Bay Project by Adur & Worthing Council, which was independent to SKRP's or the Authority's work.

ALL RESOLVED to agree to Sussex IFCA's full partner status in the Sussex Kelp Restoration Project.

There was a five minute comfort break following this Item.

INFORMATION ITEMS

27 Conservation and Research Update Presentation

- 27.1 Erin Lawes, Conservation & Research Manager, and Dr Jen Lewis, Senior Research Officer, gave a presentation on Conservation and Research work carried out by the Authority, including use of the newly acquired ROV, for the benefit of new members. The presentation accompanied their quarterly report which provided an update on the Conservation and Research Team's work progress over the 1st Quarter of this financial year, April to June 2021, and a report on the proceeding year's work 2020-2021.
- 27.2 Erin Lawes and Dr Jen Lewis invited discussion and fielded questions following their presentation.

ALL RESOLVED to approve the report and appendices.

28 The Compliance Report was taken as read, but several issues were raised by members.

- 28.1 Dr Paul Driver queried why there was now no fishermen operating out of Bognor Regis. Sean Ashworth replied that some fishermen had either retired

or passed away and no new fishermen had joined the small fleet. Sean Ashworth said that two individuals, however, had expressed interest in reviving the fleet and that both he and Alberto Kavadellas, Senior Fisheries Officer, had met with the individuals plus an Arun District Councillor to discuss the possibility, even though, as Sean Ashworth explained, the fleet's composition did not come under Sussex IFCA's remit. Tim Dapling said that there had been a decline in beach launched boats in the District over recent decades and most vessels operated from the District's ports.

28.2 Tim Dapling reported that there had been no compliance issues for Fisheries Officers since the introduction of the Nearshore Trawling Byelaw in March.

28.3 Garry Walker expressed surprise that there was still an issue with bass drifting. Sean Ashworth said that Fisheries Officers continued to receive intelligence reports that specific boats were involved in the activity, and the Authority was working with the MMO to resolve the issue and through evidence collection. Garry Walker said that it was dangerous for his fishing vessel and others because their propellers could become entangled in the nets employed.

ALL RESOLVED to note the report.

29 The Communications Report

29.1 Sean Ashworth gave a brief overview to members of this item.

29.2 Dr Jen Lewis added that the Sussex IFCA website was currently being redesigned, which was greeted with interest by members. Cllr Julia Hilton was happy to hear that this was taking place as she believed the current website did not do justice to the breadth of interesting work produced by the Authority and said that she felt less use of jargon would be preferable in a new design. Cllr Hilton suggested that it would be a good project for input from local college students, for example Sussex Coast College in Hastings media department; she had contacts within the college and was happy to put Sussex IFCA in touch with Erin Lawes and Dr Lewis.

30 Financial Statements 2020/2021 and Financial Performance Report Quarter 1 2021/2022

30.1 Stephen Jump presented the Authority's Financial Statements 2020/2021, following the independent examination by Plummer Parsons, the internal auditors, and supplied an overview of actual income and expenditure for Quarter 1 2021/2022 compared with the budget.

30.2 Stephen Jump was happy to inform members that the positive outcome of the internal audit had been reported to the Finance Subcommittee on 21st July 2021. Plummer Parsons had only made two observations regarding the Authority's internal control procedures. The auditor was pleased to note that steps had been taken in the last year to improve the recording of assets in an asset register and to confirm existence. Stephen Jump said that Plummer Parsons recommended that the register should be expanded to include all significant assets, with an existence check taking place at least annually.

- 30.3 Plummer Parsons had also reported that, while recognising that project account systems for recording financial activity in respect of externally funded projects were appropriate for the very limited amount of project work undertaken in the year, the auditor recommended that a more structured approach should be undertaken in the event that project income increased in future periods.
- 30.2 Stephen Jump presented detailed analysis of expenditure and income in the last Quarter, along with a comparison against the budget. A surplus of £23,378 had been produced in the Quarter, a net gain against the budget of £24,748.
- 30.3 Total income in the Quarter had been £10,700 below the budgeted amount, Stephen Jump reported. Including contributions to Reserves, expenditure in the Quarter had been £35,448 below the budgeted amount and Stephen Jump explained the chief expenditures over the Quarter, including those related to the Authority's vessel, 'Watchful', and its annual lift out and maintenance.
- 30.4 Premises and administrative costs were lower than budgeted and reflected the continued limited office use, Stephen Jump said. A vacant Fisheries Officer post was reflected in the reduction in employee costs.
- 30.5 Regarding a forecast for the coming year, Stephen Jump said that he assumed that expenditure and income would be in line with the budget in most areas of activity, although savings in travel and subsistence, office cleaning and utility costs as a result of covid-19 measures would be remain.
- 30.6 Dr Peter Jones thanked Stephen Jump for the clarity and accuracy of his reports.
- 30.7 Garry Walker queried the price paid by The Authority for vessel fuel, which Tim Dapling and Sean Ashworth explained in reply. Garry Walker also asked about payment of expenses and loss of earnings incurred by attending these meetings including Zoom meetings. Tim Dapling reassured Gary and all MMO appointees that their travel costs would be met by the Authority and an expenses form was available to them, further loss of earnings costs would be a matter of eligibility.
- 30.8 Cllr Sam Adeniji asked whether the reduction in income, from Shellfish Permits particularly, was an ongoing trend. Tim Dapling replied that income from MMO charters and funding was difficult to forecast and he believed that the Authority's income was likely to increase over the financial year.

ALL RESOLVED to approve the report and expenditure to date.

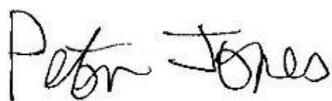
- 31** The 3 Agenda Items: **Vessel & Vehicle maintenance log 1st January to 31st March 2021, Chief Officers Group and Association of Association of Inshore Fisheries & Conservation Authorities** were taken as read.

32 A.O.B.

- 32.1 Dr Paul Driver raised the issue of the continued dredging discharge into Brighton Marina and the fact that the Authority had received no response to the strong and persuasive response paper which had been sent to the MMO recommending that they not renew the dredging licence. Dr. Driver asked whether Erin Lawes had received any response yet as she had been chasing up a response from them.
- 32.2 Erin Lawes replied that the MMO had informed the group that they were going through a dredging re-evaluation process, involving scientific advice from Cefas and NE, and would be consulting Sussex IFCA among others about the resultant process. It had been recognised by the MMO that there was an issue with the dredging discharge but dredging had recommenced since March this year.
- 32.3 Erin Lawes was still trying to get response to further questions which she had emailed the MMO. Tim Dapling said that dredging of Brighton Marina was not the issue in itself, but how that discharge was disposed of had changed. Previously, it had been taken offshore, he said, and disposed of in authorised areas but now it was being pumped out adjacent to the MCZ, and was impacting upon the MCZ chalk reef feature.
- 32.4 Erin Lawes said it was an issue of concern in the wider community and a group had been set up which included Wildlife Trust and other conservation societies, Sean Ashworth added that BHCC were also becoming interested in the issue.

33 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 33.1 Thursday 28th October 2021.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Peter Jones'.

Dr Peter Jones, Chair Sussex IFCA.

