

**MINUTES OF THE QUARTERLY MEETING OF THE  
SUSSEX INSHORE FISHERIES & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY  
on 23<sup>RD</sup> January 2025**

at Sussex Yacht Club, 85/89 Brighton Road, Shoreham-by-Sea

**PRESENT**

***Members***

Prof. Peter Jones (Chair)  
Councillor Noel Atkins (Deputy Chair, West Sussex County Council)  
Councillor Julia Hilton (East Sussex County Council) [Online]  
Councillor Theresa Fowler (Brighton & Hove City Council)  
Dr Corina Ciocan (MMO Appointee) [Online]  
Dr Paul Driver (MMO Appointee)  
Prof. Paul Leonard (MMO Appointee)  
Gary Edwards (MMO Appointee)  
Paul Johnson (MMO Appointee)  
Graham Furness (MMO Appointee) [Online]  
Mark Bennett (EA Representative)  
Julian Seaman (MMO Appointee)  
Kim Matthews (MMO Appointee)  
Danni Barrett (NE Representative)

***Staff***

Rob Pearson (Chief Fisheries & Conservation Officer)  
Angharad Purcell (Deputy Chief Fisheries & Conservation Officer)  
Rebecca Belleni (Committee Manager and Personal Assistant to SMT)  
Tim Dapling (Strategic Advisor & Clerk) [Online]  
Dr Geroage Balchin (Fisheries & Conservation Manager)  
Ruth Harrison (Finance Manager)  
Max Blighton (Inshore Fisheries & Conservation Officer)  
Emily Denton-Smith (Conservation & Research Officer)  
Dan Karpas (Conservation & Research Officer)

**1 CHAIR & CHIEF OFFICER'S INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The Chair, Prof. Peter Jones opened today's 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter principal Committee meeting by welcoming all those joining in person and online.
- 1.2 Rob Pearson informed Members that there was an update to the agenda with the addition of a presentation from Simon Pengelly, who works for AIFCA, and will be presenting on the Natural Capital and Marine Ecosystems Assessment Program.

## **2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Councillor Emma Evans (West Sussex County Council)  
Councillor Deborah Urquhart (West Sussex County Council)  
Sally Ashby (MMO Appointee)

### **Absent**

Councillor Tom Liddiard (East Sussex County Council)  
Councillor Sam Adeniji (East Sussex County Council)

## **3. DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

- 3.1 Julian Seaman as Harbour Master for Shoreham Port Authority, berthing providers for SxIFCA vessels and various inshore fishing vessels.
- 3.2 Cllr Noel Atkins as West Sussex County Councillor and for Worthing Borough Council. Member of Littlehampton Harbour Board. Chair of Worthing Royal Naval Association and Armed Forces Champion for Worthing.
- 3.3 Gary Edwards and Kim Matthews declared an interest as Commercial fishermen.

## **4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- 4.1 Prof. Peter Jones asked Members for any comments and corrections on the minutes from the previous Quarterly Committee Meeting.

ALL RESOLVED to approve the minutes.

## **5. MATTERS ARISING**

- 5.1 The Chair further asked if there were any matters arising from the minutes for Quarter 3.
- 5.2 Kim Matthews raised the matter of the amendment which he proposed at the previous Q3 meeting in consideration of the Netting Permit Byelaw, at item 6.53 of the minutes, which was seconded by Paul Johnson as per item 6.56, but raised that there was no vote on this amendment. He referenced the Standing Orders which state if an amendment is proposed in writing, accepted by the Chair, debated and seconded this should be voted on before the main motion is considered.

- 5.3 Rob Pearson advised that this was discussed and resolved at the previous meeting. He reminded Members that, as per the terms and conditions of their appointment by the MMO, where interests are such that a decision to be made by the committee would directly or indirectly affect an interest of a member as an appointee, the member may only participate in that decision to the extent permitted by the relevant IFCA Code of Conduct. He then referred to the Sussex IFCA Code of Conduct, and reminded Members that paragraph 12 of the code of conduct specifically dictates the effect of a Members prejudicial interest on participation.
- 5.4 Rob Pearson further added that as per paragraph 12 subsection 2, although Kim Matthews had a prejudicial interest in this specific item, as the meeting was considered public, he was therefore able to participate, submit evidence and contribute to further discussions. However, he was unable to vote, or exercise executive functions, including raising an amendment.
- 5.5 Kim Matthews questioned why this was not made clear at the time.
- 5.6 Rob Pearson confirmed that this was stated and referenced at item 6.71 in the minutes.
- 5.7 Kim Matthews added that he accepted he couldn't vote but stated it was not mentioned that he couldn't make an amendment.
- 5.8 Prof. Peter Jones advised that this is covered in the Code of Conduct, by which, if due to a prejudicial interest you are not permitted to vote, this also extends to raising an amendment, as this is a higher intervention than voting.
- 5.9 Rob Pearson further clarified that this is also explicitly covered by Section 12 subsection (1) (b), whereby a Member with a prejudicial interest, must not exercise executive functions in relation to that business. He then reminded Members that as an alternative, as per item 6.73 of the minutes, it was asked if another Member would be happy to be an alternative proposer to the amendment but that no Member came forward.
- 5.10 Kim Matthews questioned that, if this is the case, why in the past fishermen have voted directly on matters where they have prejudicial interest.
- 5.11 Prof. Peter Jones interjected to say that commercial fishermen have voted in the past on decision items but none with prejudicial interests relating to the item.
- 5.12 Kim Matthews said there is a fish merchant who is a committee member of Southern IFCA who is allowed to vote on matters of prejudicial interest.
- 5.13 Prof. Peter Jones advised that we cannot comment on what Southern IFCA allow but that we have our SxIFCA Standing Orders and Code of Conduct which we follow and decisions taken on the day, as recorded in the minutes, must remain consistent with the SO and CoC.
- 5.14 Rob Pearson added that the SxIFCA SO and CoC are consistent with local authorities', and we must conduct our activities in the principles of

transparency and fairness that we should expect to see across the public sector.

- 5.15 Gary Edwards said he understands that, in his position as an authority member with a commercial fisheries background, he can help advise the committee using his experience and expertise. He added, having recently attending the Shoreham MMO Black Bream meeting that there were a high number of both commercial fishermen and anglers present, with anglers having more of a voice than in the past. He therefore raised a question as to whether anglers would also be classed as having a prejudicial interest in some matters, although not a commercial interest, but it would have an impact on commercial fisheries.
- 5.16 Rob Pearson acknowledged this point and clarified that a commercial or pecuniary interest is not the only interest that can be considered prejudicial. He advised that all Members need to consider and declare if they have a prejudicial interest, and there are some upcoming decision items where recreational fishing interests will need to be considered.
- 5.17 Kim Matthews highlighted his academic background as well as commercial fishing experience and stressed his objective is to take a balanced view on items. He referenced his SxIFCA biography and his aim to help scientists and fishermen work together. He added that he would like the Standing Orders and Code of Conduct to be reviewed by the MMO.
- 5.18 Rob Pearson accepted this and advised that Kim Matthews is free to raise this with the MMO. He also said that SxIFCA value his expertise and knowledge on the Committee, but we are tied to public sector principles, and we must safeguard the processes and decisions that we work to and make in this committee.
- 5.19 Dr George Balchin reminded Members that we provided an update on the Brighton Marina dredge license consultation at the previous meeting and stated that NE have now provided a response to the consultation, and this will be an agenda item for consideration at the forthcoming Technical Subcommittee.

## **DECISION ITEMS**

### **6 Annual Plan Objectives 2025/2025**

- 6.1 Rob Pearson introduced the decision item by reminding Members that the Marine and Coastal Access Act outlines our statutory responsibilities in regard to annual planning and reporting of IFCA work and activities. Section 177 of the Act states that prior to the new financial year, SxIFCA must set out its annual planning objectives and priorities for the forthcoming year. He directed Members to the report, and informed them that we seek Members approval of the plan, prior to submission to Defra. He added that the detailed work streams stem from our Defra set high level objectives, as outlined in the four year plan, of which we are currently

entering year 2. The 2024-2028 plan was presented to Members at the February Quarterly meeting last year, and is publicly available on our website.

- 6.2 Rob Pearson took time to briefly summarise some of the highlights, objectives and activities for the forthcoming year, stating that Sussex IFCA committed to a review of management measures that prioritised Byelaw development work streams for the Sussex district. This led to a sequential review and consideration of a range of appropriate management measures, which we have been gradually working through in previous years. Over the last year, the development and implementation of these still outstanding byelaws remained a considerable area of work. The Netting Permit Byelaw and Marine Protected Areas Byelaw are the two key notable outstanding byelaws for which we are waiting on confirmation. Remaining hopeful that confirmation may occur in the next planning year, we have allocated resource to ensure we can progress appropriate implementation, which will include communication, education and promotion across the District to ensure good stakeholder awareness and compliance. He added that there are further updates on the Minimum Size and Handgathering Byelaws which will be updated on later in the meeting.
- 6.3 Rob Pearson further highlighted the ongoing work to review existing byelaws and said the key focus for the coming year includes reviewing management measures for Kingmere MCZ, a proposal for which is presented for Members consideration today. It also includes commencing reviews of the Chichester Harbour EMS Prohibition of Fishing Byelaw, Fishing Instruments Byelaw, and Shellfish Permit Byelaw, all of which are considerable work streams.
- 6.4 Rob Pearson emphasised the wide range of work streams within the annual plan, including significant monitoring work, such as continued crab and lobster surveys across the district, in collaboration with fishers, to support the Shellfish Permit Byelaw Review and Crab and Lobster FMP. Ongoing monitoring of the Nearshore Trawling Byelaw impacts will continue, whilst also trialling a new flying array for towed video surveys to minimise seabed impacts. He outlined monitoring and recording of fishing effort activities across the district, including developing and implementing a control and monitoring plan for Kingmere MCZ and the novel utilisation of the SxIFCA drone for monitoring hand gathering activities, in partnership with Niall Burnside of the Scottish Association of Marine Science.
- 6.5 Rob Pearson added that we will continue to conduct a wide range of compliance and enforcement activities by sea, road and drone patrols, as well as premises and landing inspections. He continued to update members on the anticipated arrival of FPV Osprey, which should integrate smoothly with Watchful, with some staff and crew familiarisation required. He also said we will continue to work alongside key partners, including the MMO and EA, to share intelligence, assess risks and guide enforcement focus.
- 6.6 Rob Pearson stated that partnership activities are a key aspect of our approach to ensure we can influence and remain seen and heard, and that a range of partnership organisations are mentioned within the report. He

said this also includes regular attendance at forums with fishers, including representation on groups at Rye, Newhaven, Worthing and Chichester harbours. He added that it will also include continued work at local and national IFCA led forums, including COG, Technical Advisory Group and NIMEG, as well as local Tactical Coordination Groups's.

- 6.7 Rob Pearson stressed that FMPs continue to require significant resources, with staff time carefully allocated for the 2025-26 period. Key activities include calls for evidence, attendance at working and evidence groups, and reviewing emerging plans and documents to maximize benefits for inshore fishers. He reminded Members that over the past three years there has been additional funding from Defra to help support this workstream, which we have been able to use this year to provide a small amount of additional capacity within the conservation and research team through 2025 to 2026. He explained that funding beyond this forthcoming year is currently unclear, though we have supported an AIFCA led bid to continue this support until 2027.
- 6.8 Rob Pearson concluded by stating a key objective was to continue improving communications to highlight the Authority's activities and ensure stakeholder reach. He said SxIFCA intend to continue developing the stakeholder contact database, understanding how we can use it to best effect whilst operating within the confines of GDPR. We also anticipate updating key guidance and documents, including consideration of ideas such as producing wheelhouse cards for fishers, to enable them to stay up-to-date and informed on management.
- 6.9 Prof. Paul Leonard asked about the recording of the assessment of change in relation to climate change, extreme events and sewage discharge, which are outside our control, and how this data is accessed from the relevant third parties, ensuring it is scientifically robust, or is this an action to flag.
- 6.10 Rob Pearson accepted Prof. Paul Leonard's point and said this lack of evidence was a weakness in the past. He added we do have inhouse, longterm datasets which have proven useful but it is key that we utilise available third party data. We do have some agreements in place such as with the EA and Natural England, with whom we meet with regularly and share workstreams to enable us to consider future evidence requirements. He added that there is however an opportunity to review this across all our partnerships.
- 6.11 Prof. Peter Jones was in agreement and supportive of proactively seeking the appropriate data to help inform decisions but added that, there will often be occasions where we are required to take decisions under a degree of uncertainty.

### **Recommendations:**

- i. That Members note the legal requirements and guidance concerning IFCA annual plans and reports.**

- ii. **That Members agree to the management priorities described.**
- iii. **That Members agree that annual planning priorities are provided to Defra as part of the Sussex IFCAs four-year planning cycle, 2024 to 2028.**

**Proposer** Dr Paul Driver

**Seconder** Prof. Paul Leonard

ALL RESOLVED to accept the recommendations.

## **7 Kingmere MCZ – Management Review**

- 7.1 The Chair, Prof. Peter Jones, opened the item by reminding Members of the two recommendations today, firstly, to approve that the Kingmere MCZ management review is delegated to the Technical Subcommittee and secondly, that this subcommittee then come back to the Principal Committee with recommendations for consideration at the next quarterly meeting.
- 7.2 Dr George Balchin introduced this second decision item on Kingmere MCZ by explaining this being part of the Authorities Section 154 responsibilities under MACCA, to introduce management to MCZs which furthers the conservation objectives of the site, and our commitment to furthering conservation objectives across all SxIFCA MCZs, and other MPAs.
- 7.3 Dr George Balchin informed that Kingmere MCZ was designated in 2013 and is located 5-10km south off Littlehampton and Worthing, with an area of 47km<sup>2</sup>. He listed the key designated features of the site as subtidal chalk, moderate energy infralittoral rock, thin mixed sediments and spawning populations of black seabream, and highlighted the black seabream as the focus on today's report. He added that black seabream use Kingmere MCZ to breed in the spring, utilizing rock and sediment habitat to build nests. He noted the presence of subtidal chalk, an internationally extremely rare habitat, as well as the Worthing lumps, which are a key feature within Kingmere MCZ.
- 7.4 Dr George Balchin stated that general management for all features is to 'recover' due to their vulnerability, and specifically advice for black seabream is that the species should be protected from 'disturbance of a kind likely significantly to affect the survival of its members or their ability to aggregate, nest, or lay, fertilise or guard eggs during breeding'.
- 7.5 Dr George Balchin ran through the timeline from the initial consultation in 2015, which used the community voice method, and the further development of management, which SxIFCA felt supported good compliance with the management measures whilst furthering the conservation objectives. He said that this came into force in 2016 and



included management measures from April – June, with the restriction of all gear types to varying degrees in different zones, and also a voluntary code of conduct for recreational fishers.

- 7.6 Dr George Balchin informed Members that as part of this management process, we committed to a review period every 4 years. Due to Covid19, staff turnover and higher management priorities, including the introduction of management in MCZ's which were yet to be addressed, the Kingmere MCZ review period has lapsed, but is now a priority.
- 7.7 Dr George Balchin advised that Kingmere does not have a formal MCZ assessment, as this process was developed after management was introduced. Sussex IFCA Officers are in the process of drafting an MCZ Assessment to sit alongside the management plan. This report focuses on how Sussex IFCA will review management for black seabream, the conservation advice for the other designated features hasn't changed and therefore it is assumed current management for those features is still appropriate.
- 7.8 Dr George Balchin explained that NE initially supported the current management, but Natural England's most recent advice is that angling activity within Kingmere MCZ continues to risk hindering the achievement of the Conservation Objectives for black seabream. He said that there are still significant data gaps and inconsistencies around the impact of angling on black seabream.
- 7.9 Dr George Balchin stated that under MaCCA there is a requirement to review the achievement of the Conservation Objectives for an MCZ. The ability to provide a current review of a feature's condition, through an appropriate condition assessment, is crucial to inform Natural England's conservation advice and evaluate management effectiveness against the Conservation Objectives. He noted that none of the Kingmere MCZ designated features currently have a condition assessment completed by Natural England.
- 7.10 Dr George Balchin confirmed that since 2016 SxIFCA has monitored fishing activity on Kingmere MCZ and the data, as presented, has shown a reduction in fishing activity, not only in effort, but also a spatial reduction in the areas in which fishing is active. Catch per unit effort (CPUE) data has also been recorded and is presented, along with Baited Remote Underwater Video surveys, which SxIFCA assisted in alongside the University of Sussex. Anecdotal reports to IFCOs from stakeholders also suggest an increase in seabream, both inside and outside of the MCZ. He concluded that this data suggests continued and additional monitoring of the site is required to better understand the impact of the existing management, something which we are proposing as part of this review.
- 7.11 Dr George Balchin updated Members on the advice from Natural England, which proposed the spawning seasonality for black seabream should be extended from the current period covering April to June, to covering March to July. SxIFCA have explored the evidence to support the proposal for an extended breeding season and, as yet, have not found sufficient evidence for reproductive behaviour in March, though there is some evidence of low



levels of spawning behaviour extending into July. He referenced the work by Matt Doggett which suggests some evidence of this behaviour in July but at a much more reduced scale, and this poses the question of whether light fishing pressure during this reduced breeding time could be compatible with the 'recovery' objective.

- 7.12 Dr George Balchin also updated on a second change to the conservation advice, with Natural England's position indicating that no level of angling during the spawning and breeding season is compatible with the conservation objectives. Natural England referenced the Pinder 2016 paper on catch-and-release, however, this paper did not focus on angling impact on reproductive behaviour, and noted that the effect of catch-and-release angling on seabream is still largely unknown. He explained that the advice from Natural England was to extend the restrictions in Zone 1 to Zone 2 and 4, making them no-take zones for all gear types during the breeding season.
- 7.13 Dr George Balchin also stressed the importance of compliance with the introduced management, which to date has been high with the existing management. Any proposed changes, such as further no-take zones, must be based on clear evidence, so that it can be justified to stakeholders and promote continued good compliance with the management measures.
- 7.14 Dr George Balchin advised that the next steps were to finalise the MCZ Assessment, which will include an impact assessment of fishing activity on seabream. In the absence of a Condition Assessment to review the effectiveness of current measures against the Conservation Objectives, Sussex IFCA is developing further monitoring of fishing activity and impacts on the site. We are in talks with the Angling Trust to aid collection of CPUE data from recreational anglers, and the University of Plymouth on extending the acoustic tagging project to support evidence of breeding in July. He said SxIFCA will continue to conduct inspections that feed into our CPUE data, and the monitoring and control plan will be developed in collaboration with NE.
- 7.15 Dr George Balchin reported on recent communications with Natural England, thanking Danni Barratt for the quick response to a copy of this draft report that was shared with NE at the end of December. NE's response was shared in time for inclusion with this report at today's meeting, confirming Natural England's position that the current management doesn't meet the Conservation Objectives for the black seabream feature of Kingmere MCZ. It also provides a further update to the conservation advice; that the management for Zone 1 be extended not just to Zones 2 and 4, but also to Zone 3. This would make the entirety of Kingmere MCZ a no-take zone for all gear types for 5 months of the year.
- 7.16 In conclusion, Dr George Balchin stated that the lack of a condition assessment to act as a baseline for understanding the effectiveness of management on the designated features is significantly hindering the ability of Sussex IFCA to complete a fully informed review of management within Kingmere MCZ. The absence of this information requires us to utilise the data we currently have, in the form of CPUE records, the acoustic

tagging project and Matt Doggett's work in monitoring seabream nests within the MCZ. These confirm a trend of increasing seabream within the district since management was introduced.

- 7.17 Dr George Balchin voiced, on behalf of SxIFCA, the concerns of reputational damage from introducing management proposals to make Kingmere MCZ a no take zone for a portion of the year to all gear types, without sufficient evidence to make this case. He added that, based on the current evidence, the existing management introduced by SxIFCA is fulfilling our statutory duties, specifically towards the recovery of black seabream.
- 7.18 Prof. Peter Jones thanked Dr George Balchin for this thorough update on a complex situation and, prior to opening the item to questions, reminded Members that today we are looking to approve the delegation of this to the Technical Subcommittee for consideration and to provide a recommendation to be brought to the subsequent Principal Committee meeting.
- 7.19 Dr Paul Driver thanked managers for their work on this and stated that, at this stage, our own scientific evidence seems more reliable and robust than that provided by Natural England, and hopes that the review will progress on the SxIFCA evidence based recommendation for Kingmere MCZ.
- 7.20 Prof. Paul Leonard reminded Members that NE advised they would like to present evidence at today's meeting as per the minutes.
- 7.21 Danni Barratt from NE advised that she had provided the high-level evidence which is within the report and any further discussion can be taken at the Technical Subcommittee.
- 7.22 Prof. Paul Leonard believes this evidence could be more scientifically robust but more crucially we need to consider how we work together from both the NE high level evidence and SxIFCA strong scientific case.
- 7.23 Gary Edwards stated that black seabream are not just arriving in March but a percentage of them are remaining on the site throughout the winter months. He added that he has seen no evidence of breeding in March but definitely in April and due to rising sea temperature, their breeding period has expanded. A big change he has experienced last year was a large stock of tope arriving late June which then pushed seabream offshore. He mentioned the MMO FMP breem meeting he attended the week previous, and the data presented there he felt was inaccurate when compared to the amount of seabream caught per day from his charter boat in the same areas, with a good day seeing 1000 fish caught. He said that he believes the biggest impact on rising breem numbers has been the removal of pair trawling on Kingmere.
- 7.24 Gary Edwards referred to NE adding more restrictions on Kingmere and raised the detrimental effect on other areas within the District due to increased pressure, if people cannot fish Kingmere. He suggested spreading the effort out over other areas whilst continuing to keep the no take areas that are currently in place and increasing the catch limit to 20

fish per rod rather than 4, which acts as a reward for returning fish but coming home with a substantial catch and therefore better fishery.

- 7.25 Gary Edwards further raised the impacts of global warming and the impacts on fish stocks over his lifetime. He also reminded Members of the large populations of predators including conger eels, tope and seals now present, which have a huge impact on populations of fish including seabream. He stressed the issue of high numbers of top predators and added that this needs to be reviewed in the same way commercial fishing and anglers have been.
- 7.26 Dr George Balchin clarified that the data presented at the MMO bream meeting Gary Edwards attended was the sea angling diary data and not data from SxIFCA. He also said that Kingmere anglers could typically be spilt into two groups, the sport fishing visitors specifically hoping to catch a seabream on Kingmere reef as it is regarded as a famous fishing mark, and fishers on charter boats who fish outside of Kingmere where there is no bag limit and can catch a big bag of fish to take home.
- 7.27 Gary Edwards raised that he is against catch and release with seabream and believed a better method of management instead of bag limit is a boat limit. He stated that if you catch one male fish, all the eggs in the nest it was guarding will be gone by the time he is released due to other males eating the eggs. He therefore thinks a boat limit would minimise the number of bream taken from a specific area and protect their nests.
- 7.28 Prof. Peter Jones stated that these are valid points which we will be able to consider in greater depth at the Technical Subcommittee.
- 7.29 Danni Barrett directly responded to Gary Edwards and said she was very interested in hearing more, particularly about winter stocks of seabream remaining present in the MCZ.
- 7.30 Danni Barrett responded to the comment on adding pressure to stocks outside of Kingmere MCZ. She said that seabream are atypical as a feature due to being a commercial species and the conservation objectives of the site are specific in terms of protecting breeding features as they occur within the boundaries of the MCZ. Although positive to hear there are increasing numbers, NE must follow their conservation objectives.

### **Recommendations:**

- i. **That Members delegate to the Technical Subcommittee consideration of the significance and implications of changes to black seabream conservation advice since the original advice was published at the time of designation in 2015.**
- ii. **That Members delegate to the Technical Subcommittee the development of recommendations to the Principal Committee in respect to the Kingmere MCZ management review process.**

ALL RESOLVED to accept the recommendations.

**Presentation by Simon Pengelly** – Association of IFCA’s work on marine Natural Capital & Ecosystem Assessment, in support of Defra’s 3year NCEA programme.

### **INFORMATION ITEMS**

#### **8 Marine Protected Areas Byelaw 2023**

- 8.1 Rob Pearson provided a brief update on actions taken since Members approval of the final Byelaw at the July principal committee meeting in 2024 and informed that the byelaw and supporting documents were submitted to the MMO for Quality Assurance on 12th August, ahead of Defra confirmation. He also said that all 99 consultees to the formal consultation were provided with written responses which were provided for Member information in Annex II.
- 8.2 Rob Pearson informed that since then, SxIFCA were notified that the MMO team were unlikely to make the target 45-day turnaround for the initial review of the MPA Byelaw documents, as they were experiencing a particularly busy period of submissions to meet Defra’s 2024 deadline for MPA management. He said that we received the first review and set of recommendations from the MMO team on the 16th October 2024, but advised that SxIFCA had not anticipated the review would extend to the existing four schedules for marine conservation zones that were introduced, quality assured and confirmed in previous iterations of the MPA Byelaw, rather than focusing solely on the additional Schedule 5 and Impact Assessment for Beachy Head East. He added that although unexpected, it provided an opportunity to work towards consistency and clarity across the Byelaw and with other instruments, regarding structure, grammar, language and clarity of interpretation and he confirmed that no recommendations accepted by SxIFCA were considered substantive.
- 8.3 Rob Pearson reported that the MMO did challenge SxIFCA on the inclusion of provisions relating to the use of ‘vessel monitoring systems’, within both the new schedule for Beachy Head East MCZ, and previous schedules. There is a concern within the MMO as to how provisions relating to vessel monitoring may interact with the soon-to-be introduced statutory instrument for IVMS. Rob Pearson raised the issue on the removal of this provision and the impact on the Authority’s ability to ensure compliance and enforce the Byelaw. As such, SxIFCA have rejected the recommendation and provided a supplementary letter justifying their

position for Defra's consideration with an expectation to hear back in February.

ALL RESOLVED to approve the report and appendices.

## **9 Netting Permit Byelaw**

- 9.1 Rob Pearson introduced this information item update by reminding Members that at the previous principal committee meeting in October they resolved that the additional supporting information, documenting the actions taken to conduct a further formal consultation on amendments made to the Byelaw, and the outcome of subsequent consideration by the Authority, should be submitted to Defra. He confirmed that as per Members' approval, this was provided to Defra on the 13<sup>th</sup> December 2024.
- 9.2 Rob Pearson informed that Members also resolved to accept the recommendation that the authority would formally respond to all consultees and confirmed that written responses had since been distributed to all 32 consultees and a copy of the covering letter and FAQ document were provided in Annex III.
- 9.3 Rob Pearson advised that, to date, we have had no formal response from Defra since submission which would indicate how Defra are intending to consider or process this supporting information and added that SxIFCA will update Members when this is received.

ALL RESOLVED to approve the report and appendices.

## **10 Financial Performance Report Quarter 2 & 3 2024/2025 and Annual Budget 2025/2026**

- 10.1 Rob Pearson took a moment to apologise for the delay in the presentation of the second quarter financial performance reports, adding that Ruth Harrison, the new Finance Manager, had worked exceedingly hard to get up to speed and we were happy to be able to present reports for quarters 2 and 3 today.
- 10.2 Ruth Harrison informed that the reports were discussed in detail earlier in the morning at the Finance Subcommittee meeting and the budget was approved.
- 10.3 Ruth Harrison explained the financial report covers quarters 2 and 3 and the final budget for 2025-26, for which a 3% increase on the local authority levy was agreed for next year's budget.
- 10.4 Ruth Harrison advised that there had been a greater deficit than budgeted in quarter 2 and 3 but this is to be corrected by the year end and was in relation to the significant purchase of FPV Osprey, for which we are

receiving £150,000 from Defra, but that this funding was not confirmed by Q3 and therefore not included in the figures. She updated Members that we have since had confirmation of the Defra funding and the forecast shows this correction.

- 10.5 Ruth Harrison highlighted various significant changes in quarters 2 and 3. She stated we are underbudget on patrol activities and court fees, expenditure is overbudget for quarter 3 on salaries due to the pay award granted in November, back-paid to April 2024. Staff expenses are also slightly over budget.
- 10.6 Ruth Harrison stated there had been an overspend on marine operations due to equipment and repairs to the vessels, though this was offset slightly due to an underspend on fuel.
- 10.7 Ruth Harrison concluded that the year-end has a planned deficit but with a positive variance on this deficit to the sum of £27,500. She reiterated the planned deficit is due to the purchase of the new FPV Osprey and represents the use of reserves.
- 10.8 Ruth Harrison presented the budget for 2025/2026, including a 3% levy increase that was agreed at the Finance Subcommittee and required to achieve a balanced budget. She continued by stating that this is balanced except for £38,000 with the planned replacement purchase of a new electric van. She also said we expect £140,000 in the form of additional Defra Resource Delivery grants that support work towards Marine Protected Areas, Fishery Management Plans and Sustainable Development (spatial prioritisation, marine planning & licencing) work streams. She finally said that a 3% increase has been incorporated to cover an inflation based pay rise to salaries.
- 10.9 Ruth Harrison explained that the depreciation of FPV Osprey has been included through the earmarked capital finance reserves.
- 10.10 Gary Edwards questioned line 'other income' and what this represents.
- 10.11 Ruth Harrison advised the main portion of this is the sale of the old daughter vessel 'Delta 1'.
- 10.12 Gary Edwards asked the Chief and Deputy Chief for an update on his previously supplied question on the number of FPV Watchful's total patrols per year.
- 10.13 Angharad Purcell informed since 2022, up to January 2025, 259 sea patrols were conducted, so an average of 2-3 sea patrols per week.
- 10.14 Dr Paul Driver questioned that the latest figures show 1 per week for the past year.
- 10.15 Rob Pearson explained that FPV Watchful was out of the water for an extended period this summer.
- 10.16 Gary Edwards raised from the figures that FPV Watchful is out 125 sea days per year on average and against costs, he questioned if this was viable or



if smaller RIBs located at various points of the district would be more economical and more productive.

- 10.17 Rob Pearson said there have been recent internal discussions on this, considering whether FPV Merlin could be utilised in a different location and we will consider a review of our assets and enforcement program.

ALL RESOLVED to approve the report and appendices.

## **11 Conservation and Research Update**

- 11.1 Dr George Balchin provided an update on the Conservation and Research Team's report and work progress over the quarter. He referred to key work streams in the report, including the Bream and Whelk FMP's. He took a moment to highlight a piece of work, led by Nick Rogers and Vanessa Simons, on Whelk socioeconomic data from fishers on the impact of a potential entitlement scheme within the district for which we hope will feed into the FMP.
- 11.2 Dr George Balchin continued to inform that a large proportion of work has been carried out on the marine case management system.
- 11.3 Dr George Balchin referred to the continued, extensive, collaborative work with Dr Naill Burnside at SAMS, developing a novel project using drones to monitor intertidal hand gathering.
- 11.4 Dr George Balchin took time to highlight a new report written by one of the new C&R officers, Dan Karparis, regarding the current knowledge on scallop potting and its feasibility withing the District. He added there is potential to trial this method in April.
- 11.5 Dr George Balchin informed that the interactive map hosted on our SxIFCA website has now been updated by Emily Denton-Smith and recognised the advantage of now having these development and data input skills in-house.
- 11.6 Dr George Balchin finally reported that two officers attended training at the Cefas laboratories in Weymouth to gain skills to enable a faster response to marine mortality events and support the government's response to such incidents.
- 11.7 Prof. Paul Leonard responded to this point, noting the Cefas lab as the fish and shellfish disease lab and stating it is important officers have the direct phone number to speed up process of sampling.
- 11.8 Prof. Paul Leonard explained that he was involved in the Isle of Man scallop fishery and observed the vital effort from fishermen there to respect the female scallops, which were returned due to the large amount of spat produced.

- 11.9 Prof. Paul Leonard finally confirmed he would like to attend the Kelp Summit.

ALL RESOLVED to approve the report.

## **12 Compliance and Enforcement Update**

- 12.1 Angharad Purcell introduced this report advising on the various enforcement activity and intelligence reports that had been generated, along with various inspections, including vessel boardings and premises.
- 12.2 Angharad Purcell made Members aware that the table which presents road, drone and sea patrols is now broken down into further detail, showing each vessel on patrol.
- 12.3 Angharad Purcell advised most sea patrols over the last quarter were focused on the Shellfish Byelaw, scallop dredging, national bass regulations and the MPA Byelaw.
- 12.4 Angharad Purcell gave an update on the ongoing investigation regarding a scalloping vessel operating within the 3 mile limit, which concluded on 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2024 in Brighton Magistrates Court with a successful prosecution.
- 12.5 Angharad Purcell outlined the higher risk fishing activities for the next quarter, which officers will primarily focus on.
- 12.6 Angharad Purcell finally advised that training had continued, specifically for those new Members of staff who recently completed their STCW training and ENG1 medicals.
- 12.7 Gary Edwards asked if the 8 reported offences were all separate or the same person.
- 12.8 Angharad Purcell confirmed that this was 8 separate offences.
- 12.9 Gary Edwards raised the new Minimum Size measuring stickers which he said have been well received by the fishing community.
- 12.10 Angharad Purcell mentioned thanks to Rebecca Belleni for her work on this.

ALL RESOLVED to approve the report and appendices.

### **13 Vessel Maintenance Log**

- 13.1 Prof. Peter Jones advised that this report would be taken as read however made a special mention and thanks to Charlie Hubbard, who on 1<sup>st</sup> March after 30 years in service to SxIFCA, is retiring.

ALL RESOLVED to approve the report and appendices.

### **14 Communications Report**

- 14.1 Angharad Purcell stated in the interest of time we are happy to take this as read; she said it is worth noting the SxIFCA Annual Report has been published with copies for Members to take away and is also on the website and as required, was sent to the SoS.
- 14.2 Angharad Purcell asked Members to please send an update on their individual biography for the website.
- 14.3 Angharad Purcell highlighted the new feature on the SxIFCA website, in the form of a social media widget which links SxIFCA social platforms to visitors on our website.
- 14.4 Prof. Peter Jones gave a thanks to Rebecca Belleni for our increasing successful communication over the social media platforms.

ALL RESOLVED to accept the report.

### **15 Chief Officers Update**

- 15.1 Rob Pearson introduced the item by informing the Minimum Size Byelaw had now been confirmed in December. He said that he hopes Members have seen the communications which have been distributed regarding the introduction of the Minimum Size Byelaw and reported on efforts taken towards the introduction of the new Byelaw, including national press releases in Sea Angler and Fishing News, the tacklebox stickers, poster boards, website information and communications campaign. He also mentioned the Code of Conduct that was produced alongside this for the handling of Elasmobranchs and distributed with the Byelaw guidance.
- 15.2 Rob Pearson informed that SxIFCA have also had confirmation of the Hand Gathering Byelaw but to enable stakeholders time to focus on one new byelaw at a time, SxIFCA have taken a staggered approach. Work on the

introduction of the Hand Gathering Byelaw has now begun and we anticipate a detailed update of this introduction at the next Principal Committee meeting.

- 15.3 Rob Pearson stated that the Section 167 agreement with SIFCA had also been confirmed in December for a further 10 year renewal.
- 15.4 Rob Pearson advised that the Bass Management Group had its inaugural meeting prior to Christmas and Defra has proposed five task and finish groups to look at objectives that were identified through the development of the Bass FMP.
- 15.5 Rob Pearson took time to update Members on SxIFCA recruitment including Jen Lewis and Vanessa Simons commencing Maternity Leave from January. Sol Lucas has been recruited as Senior Conservation and Research Officer in a full time 12 month position.
- 15.6 Rob Pearson further added that with the notification of Charlie Hubbard's retirement, recruitment for a Senior Skipper was conducted and after a competitive recruitment process, Christopher Hubbard was awarded the position. He further said that once we were aware of this family link from the application, we utilised ESCC Human Resources to safeguard the interview process, with K&E IFCA Skipper and Deputy assisting in interviews and the practical assessments.
- 15.7 Rob Pearson informed that Matt Wiseman, First Mate, left on 13<sup>th</sup> December after his notice period to take up an engineering role with Tate Marine and therefore recruitment for a Senior IFCO (Skipper) will commence in Q4.
- 15.8 Rob Pearson concluded by making Members aware that Garry Walker's committee term came to an end in December and due to logistics of attendance from Rye he has not extended his appointment, he stated that the authority is grateful for Garry's time and contributions over the years. He added that this results in the authority having 2 vacancies for Membership and SxIFCA have been in regular contact with the MMO Governance team who advised there is currently a further round of advertising and anticipate interviews soon.
- 15.9 Angharad Purcell took a moment to congratulate four Members of staff on the safe and healthy arrivals of four babies, Holly, Grace, Hazel and Finley.

ALL RESOLVED to accept the report.

## **16 Chief Officers Update**

ALL RESOLVED to accept the report.

**17 Association of Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities**

ALL RESOLVED to accept the report.

**18 AOB**

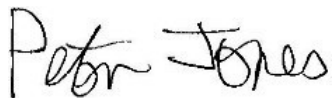
- 18.1 Dr Paul Driver raised the matter of ESCC, WSCC and Brighton & Hove are merging as a strategic authority and asked if this will have any affect on our funding.
- 18.2 Cllr. Theresa Fowler advised B&HCC have put in a bid.
- 18.3 Cllr. Noel Atkins advised WSCC have applied to be a priority as this could result in more funding, though this wouldn't affect SxIFCA funding.
- 18.4 Tim Dapling gave an overview on the funding for SxIFCA as stated in the statutory instrument 2010 which sets out each council's percentage of funding and suggested that devolution plans should not have any impact.
- 18.5 Gary Edwards asked in regard to Kingmere if the layers could be added to charts to enable fishers to know where exactly you are when you fish and likewise with the Nearshore Trawling Byelaw contour to aid reporting and specifics on fishing vessels in an area.
- 18.6 Dr George Balchin informed that SxIFCA have shape files of these but would have to investigate further on if these shape files could be uploaded to a fishing boat plotter but will investigate.
- 18.7 Kim Matthews informed that Tony Delahunty is now the new interim Chair for the MMO. Tony was a local Selsey fisher and formerly a Sea Fisheries Committee member and SxIFCA Chair. Kim Matthews read out an excerpt from an article written by T Delahunty and asked for a formal letter of congratulations to be sent to him from SxIFCA.

**19 To confirm the Technical Subcommittee meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> March 2025.**

- 19.1 Meeting confirmed for 13<sup>th</sup> March 2025.

**20            DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

20.1        24<sup>th</sup> April 2025.

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

Prof. Peter Jones, Chair Sussex IFCA.