

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

Held remotely with Zoom software by video conference
on **27th January 2022**

PRESENT

Members

Prof. 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 Noel Atkins (West Sussex County Council)
Mark Bennett (Environment Agency)
Paula Daghish (Natural England Representative)
Graham Furness (MMO Appointee)
Dr. Paul Driver (MMO Appointee)
Dr Corina Ciocan (MMO Appointee)
Andy Read (MMO Appointee)
Garry Walker (MMO Appointee)
Gary Edwards (MMO Appointee)
James Partridge (MMO Appointee)
Paul Johnson (MMO Representative)
Sally Ashby (MMO Appointee)
Prof. Paul Leonard (MMO Appointee)
Garry Walker (MMO Appointee)

Visitors

William Wade (Giving Presentation)
Felix Amaye (Regional Manager, Seafish)

Staff

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

49 CHAIR'S INTRODUCTION

49.1 Prof. Peter Jones welcomed all to the 4th Quarterly Committee meeting of 2021-22, including Felix Amaye, of Seafish, and William Wade, who would be giving a presentation to members.

- 49.2 Tim Dapling also welcomed Gary Edwards, a new MMO appointee member and fishing industry representative, to the meeting. Gary Edwards kindly provided an overview of his extensive background and experience within the Sussex inshore fishing industry.

50 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor Emma Evans (West Sussex County Council)
Charlie Hubbard (Marine Operations Manager & Master of Vessels)

51 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 51.1 The Chairman requested notification of any declaration of interests. Garry Walker and Jim Partridge both declared their commercial fishing interest.

52 APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- 52.1 The Chair, Prof. Peter Jones, asked for any comments and corrections from members on the minutes from the 3rd Quarterly Committee Meeting which had been held in October 2021.

ALL RESOLVED to approve the minutes.

53 MATTERS ARISING

- 53.1 Tim Dapling updated members on the latest news on the proposed Hand Gathering Byelaw, he said it was planned to go public with the consultation process in February.

54 OFFICER APPOINTMENTS

- 54.1 Tim Dapling gave a verbal update to members of recent appointments. Following the departure of Sean Ashworth from his role as Deputy Chief Fisheries & Conservation Officer, the vacancy had been advertised and an open recruitment process followed. He was delighted to inform members that the Acting Deputy Chief Fisheries Officer, Angharad Purcell, had been appointed following shortlisting and subsequent interviews involving himself the Chair and a senior County Council HR officer. Tim Dapling informed members that her internal move had resulted in a vacancy for a Senior Fisheries Officer, which Nick Rogers had been successful in filling, and in turn his previous role as Fisheries Officer would soon be advertised.

- 54.2 Two new IFCOs, Jake Wilson and George Balchin, would be joining the team by early April, following advertising and subsequent interviews. Their roles are specifically intended to strengthen the Conservation and Research team, and provide cover for Dr Jen Lewis' maternity leave. Garry Walker congratulated Angharad 'Haz' Purcell on her promotion.

DECISION ITEM

55 ANNUAL MANAGEMENT PLAN PRIORITIES 2022/2023

- 55.1 Prof. Peter Jones introduced this Decision Item, prior to handing over to Tim Dapling, who explained the report's contents in more detail. The report outlined the Authority's intended priorities going forward from April 2022 and, subject to members' approval, would be incorporated into a planning document to be supplied to Defra.
- 55.2 The legal duties were described in this report, Tim Dapling said, and the document was produced following Defra's statutory planning guidance. The Chief Officer highlighted key priorities for members' benefit. Two Byelaws were currently awaiting confirmation by Defra, the Minimum Size Byelaw and the Netting Permit Byelaw 2019, both of which would be implemented as soon as approval had been received.
- 55.3 In terms of the fisheries management workstream, the priority was the ongoing development of the proposed Hand Gathering Byelaw 2021.
- 55.4 Tim Dapling informed members that the Marine Protected Area management workstream would also provide a significant workload for the team. Work would commence on the management options for the large area encompassed within Beachy Head East Marine Conservation Zone. Natural England was currently finalising its advice to the Authority and, once this was received, discussions on future management options would commence and be supported by informal consultation and engagement work. This was the fifth MCZ that Sussex IFCA would be developing management options for, the previous four provided solid experience when considering this one.
- 55.5 Selsey Bill and the Hounds MCZ management was, for the most part, addressed through the Nearshore Trawling Byelaw, Tim Dapling explained. The Netting Permit Byelaw and the Handgathering Byelaw would also apply to the area and provide additional management measures, although both activities could continue, he said.
- 55.6 Some existing MCZ management already in place was now due its four year review, these included Kingmere, Pagham and Utopia MCZs. NE was expected to help inform this process through the provision of condition assessments, Tim Dapling added.
- 55.7 A Highly Protected Marine Area (HPMA) network was being developed by Defra but it was as yet unknown what level of impact it would have with regards to the Authority's workload.
- 55.8 Engagement with local and national issues also formed part of the Authority's plans, including work with the Government's Natural Capital eco-assessment, which was set to roll out over an initial three year period. The IFCA's involvement at this time consisted of assessing how to support the programme through partnership work and what future data could be

gathered and provided by the Sussex IFCA. The Development of Fisheries Management plans is also being pursued by Defra, an initial deadline for which was November 2023, national engagement for which was taking place via the Association of IFCAs. Tim Dapling added that national funding for IFCAs was not currently in place to provide specific assistance to this programme.

- 55.9 In brief Tim Dapling highlighted NE's recent condition assessment of Chichester Harbour to members. This reported many issues with declining habitats, species and water quality. The Authority's commitment remained toward recover of native oyster populations and the associated fishery, which had not been fished for several years due to the low population levels. Sussex IFCA is working with partners, including the Chichester Harbour Conservancy, to address the harbour's various problems through the Chichester Harbour Protection and Recovery of Nature (CHaPRoN) initiative.
- 55.10 Over recent years the Authority had supported the MMO enforcement requirements at sea by making Watchful and officer crew available for charter needs. The Authority would continue to welcome requests for assistance and joint working, Tim Dapling reported.
- 55.11 Paul Driver queried whether the decline of the lobster fishery would be included in management priorities. Tim Dapling said that work was being carried out with partners and introduced Dr Jen Lewis to give more detail. Dr Lewis gave details of projects the Authority were involved with and said that lobster fishery research remained a priority. Jim Partridge reported that Dr Corina Ciorcan had been in the process of analysing lobsters he had donated to identify potential sediment contamination issues.
- 55.12 Concerns remained in respect to the impact of dredge material within Beachy Head West MCZ.
- 55.13 Cllr. Julia Hilton raised several queries she had received from local fishermen. Firstly, many fishermen were concerned about the number of large vessels entering the 6 to 12 mile area and would like to know if Sussex IFCA would be involved in addressing the problem. Cllr. Hilton acknowledged that their query concerned an area outside the Authority's District which extended to 6 miles off the coast. Secondly, Cllr. Julia Hilton mentioned the fishing industry's concerns regarding water quality: would Sussex IFCA support independent water quality testers, as fishermen questioned Southern Water's ability to carry out accurate tests.
- 55.14 Tim Dapling replied to both Cllr. Hilton's points. Firstly, he reported on joint patrols in the area, which were being carried out with the MMO. Paul Johnson added that large vessels were constantly monitored by the MMO and he was not aware of any recent illegal activity. Tim Dapling said that the Authority was aware of the fishing industry's concerns regarding the intensity of fishing activity by larger vessels in the 6 to 12 mile area, they were also aware of the political implications of this problem and continued to ensure no foreign vessels fished within the bounds of Sussex IFCA's District.
- 55.15 Prof. Peter Jones commented that these were genuine concerns expressed by the industry which were also shared by the Authority but which came under the wider Trade and Co-operation Agreement and did not come within Sussex IFCA's remit.
- 55.16 Secondly, regarding the water quality testing, Tim Dapling said that he and his colleagues would discuss the issue and report back to Cllr. Hilton and members.

- 55.17 Paul Leonard commented on water quality testing, which he held some expertise in. He thought it important to keep tabs on what Defra was asking Cefas to do. Cefas was involved in researching the detrimental effects of sediments and contaminants on different ecosystems, Paul Leonard informed members, and he would be attending a meeting with Cefas on 10th February in Lowestoft where he would investigate more.
- 55.18 Paul Leonard also highlighted the importance of cuttlefish, which currently had no associated catch restrictions, and asked whether this was something the Authority would be addressing. Tim Dapling replied that there had been a lot of discussion around cuttlefish management and reported that both Erin Lawes and Dr Jen Lewis had recently attended a cuttlefish symposium. Dr Jen Lewis pointed out that there was a link to more information about the symposium provided in the meeting papers.
- 55.19 Cllr Sam Adeniji requested more information on the study of lobster stock decline in Selsey. Dr Jen Lewis explained that the study had originally been limited to the area around Selsey, but the aim was to broaden the area to include the whole District in the future. Dr Jen Lewis confirmed that as soon as the draft report was completed it would be circulated to members at the next committee meeting.
- 55.20 Andy Read emphasised the need to engage fishermen as much as possible in any discussions. Tim Dapling said that his point was well made and would be taken on board, a new database currently being produced would include the ability for shellfish permit holders to log on and see for themselves their catches displayed.
- 55.21 Gary Edwards asked whether local lobsters had been checked for the disease which had been introduced by the Canadian lobster species. He also reported that there had been a massive increase in the number of conger eels which preyed on lobster and crab. Gary Edwards had watched the shellfish symposium and noted that no mention had been made of the price of fish, a factor which influenced the fishing effort and he believed should be taken into account alongside other factors.
- 55.22 Gary Edwards commented on the huge number of cuttlefish eggs that are being stripped from whelk fishers' pots, demonstrating the detrimental effects of other fisheries on the cuttle fishery. Tim Dapling thanked Gary Edwards for his contribution, and he hoped that the Nearshore Trawling Byelaw would help create more habitats for cuttlefish. In reply to Gary Edwards' report of increased numbers of conger eels. Prof. Peter Jones said that the complex natural dynamics of different species were difficult to identify and include in analyses. Jim Partridge said that Cefas had pointed out to him that crabs and lobsters had evolved to respond to natural dynamics, but not unnatural ones and he believed that the future was bleak for shellfish fishing until the kelp beds were re-established.
- 55.23 Paul Johnson commented that no disease had been found on the Canadian lobsters which had been tested by the MMO.

ALL RESOLVED to accept the following 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, 2020 to 2024.**

INFORMATION ITEMS

56 Conservation & Research Update

- 56.1 Erin Lawes said that most of the report could be taken as read, but gave members highlights from this Item and its annexes.
- 56.2 Firstly, regarding Beachy Head East MCZ, the team had addressed the need for further surveys to improve feature confidence within the site, and had conducted video surveys over summer 2021. Funding had been received prior to this meeting and this would enable the analysis of data gathered.
- 56.2 Re Kingmere MCZ, Erin Lawes said that two targetted meetings had been planned for February, covering black sea bream, offshore cable issues and noise mitigation. Paula Daghish added that an evidence review by NE was likely to be finished in mid-March, which would be followed by a condition assessment of the site.
- 56.3 Sussex IFCA had continued to support the Wild Coast Sussex partnership project, in particular the Wild Beach, ghost gear and net recycling scheme elements. A survey (Annex III) had been produced in partnership with Sussex Wildlife Trust and Erin Lawes urged members to circulate the survey amongst their own networks. The survey aimed to generate a better understanding of the amount of fishing gear disposed of off Sussex. The information gathered would help ascertain what was needed to set up a self-sustaining, long term net recycling scheme in Sussex that could benefit the fishing community and the environment.
- 56.4 Dr Jen Lewis highlighted a number of collaborative projects, including work with FishIntel, Sussex Kelp Restoration Partnership and Sparsholt College.
- 56.5 Cllr Julia Hilton requested that a link be provided for circulation, Erin Lawes confirmed that this would be circulated to all members as soon as possible.

Recommendations:

That members note the report and associated Annexes:

Annex I Beachy Head East MCZ draft conservation advice package consultation feedback

Annex II Rampion Expert Topic Group presentation slides

Annex III Wild Coast Sussex Fishing Gear Disposal Survey.

ALL RESOLVED to approve the Recommendations.

57 Will Wade Presentation: MSc Kingmere Angling Management Thesis

57.1 Will Wade gave members his presentation and took questions afterwards.

58 The Compliance Report

58.1 Angharad Purcell asked members to take this Item mainly as read but drew members' attention to a few points within the Report.

58.2 Angharad Purcell highlighted the fact that there had been no vessel boardings in the Quarter nor any road patrols in November and December. This was not only due to the effects of Covid-19 but also the reduced capacity within the compliance team with her own change of role and the illness of a Fisheries Officer. The resulting focus in the Quarter had been on the issuing of 34 advisory letters with regard to catch returns and following up on a successful action involving illegal drift netting in Rye.

58.3 Graham Furness queried whether it would be a good idea to arrange a meeting of the Compliance Subcommittee in order to discuss and review current enforcement priorities. Tim Dapling agreed that this was a good suggestion at this time when two new byelaws would soon require enforcement.

ALL RESOLVED to approve the report.

59 The Communications Report

59.1 Tim Dapling said that it had been a busy quarter involving many events, both online and in person. Tim Dapling took the opportunity to congratulate Sally Ashby on the successful Kelp Summit which she had organised in Shoreham-by-Sea. The event had been led by The Wildlife Trust and the Kelp Partnership and its aim had been to raise the profile of Kelp restoration in the District. The event had been recorded and uploaded to YouTube and contained many interesting talks which Tim Dapling recommended watching.

59.2 Tim Dapling had also given a talk at the Institute of Fisheries Management conference in Southampton about the Nearshore Trawling Byelaw and its development.

59.3 Adur & Worthing District Council has been developing a project to raise awareness within the community of inshore fish species and sustainability through supporting local sales. Jim Partridge had been contacted directly by the Council's Director and the Authority would be supporting the project.

ALL RESOLVED to note the report.

60 Financial Performance Report Quarter 2 2021/2022

- 60.1 Stephen Jump presented detailed analysis of expenditure and income in the third Quarter, along with a comparison against the budget. A surplus of £20,115 was achieved in the 3rd Quarter, a net gain against the budget of £18,890.
- 60.2 Steve Jump highlighted some points in his report for members' benefit.
- 60.3 Regarding income, the Finance Manager reported that 'Watchful' had carried out 4 patrols on behalf of the MMO in November 2021, for which a charge of just over £12,100 has been made in respect of charter fees and to recover the cost of fuel used..
- 60.4 Steve Jump reported that the total reduction in employee costs against the budget, £23,565, reflected the impact of variations in staff in post. A provision in the budget for a 2% pay increase has not yet been called on. Local Government National Employers and the Trade Unions had yet to reach agreement over the level of the national pay increase for 2021/2022 (the offer of a 1.75% increase has been rejected).
- 60.5 Regarding the Marine Ops budget, the cost of fuel has risen significantly across the three month period, from 48.5p per litre in September to 56.9p in December. The diesel budget for the Quarter had therefore been exceeded by £3,890.
- 60.6 Steve Jump explained that forecast of expenditure and income for the whole of the financial year 2021/2022 showed a potential overall gain of £40,900 against the budget and ran through the reasons for the gain.
- 60.7 The Finance Subcommittee had met that morning and approved the Authority's Budget for 2022 – 2023. The increase of 2% in levy amounts from contributing authorities plus other income resulted in a projected total of £1.1m, Steve Jump said. This figure was balanced by a projected expenditure of the same amount.

ALL RESOLVED to approve the report and expenditure to date.

61 Vessel & Vehicle maintenance log 1st October to 31st December 2021

This Item was taken as read.

62 Chief Officers Group

- 62.1 Tim Dapling reported that COG's chief workstream recently had been working with AIFCA's CEO on the 2021 spending review all IFCAs had collectively submitted to Defra. The aim had been to provide Defra with a well-evidenced case for a substantial uplift in funding in the form of additional New Burdens funding, which was distributed via local authorities. There has been no increase in this funding amount for the last ten years, Tim Dapling informed members. As this review had now been presented to Defra, it remained to be seen whether the increases would be agreed.

- 62.2 Tim Dapling commented on the reduction in the effects of Covid-19 and was hopeful that Sussex IFCA working methods would return to what he regarded as 'normal', as they had been prior to the pandemic.

ALL RESOLVED to note the report.

63 Association of Inshore Fisheries & Conservation Authorities

- 63.1 Tim Dapling briefly updated members on AIFCA activities over the recent Quarter and introduced the minutes to the most recent meeting.
- 63.2 The Chief Fisheries Officer reported that he had been working collaboratively with Robert Clark, AIFCA's CEO, on several national strategic issues.
- 63.4 The national strategic issues included involvement with an MCA working group, set up to discuss proposed improvement in marking of static fishing gears and also engagement with The Angling Trust on various angling issues.
- 63.5 Tim Dapling said that the Authority paid an annual subscription of £13k to AIFCA which contributed to Rob Clark's salary. 'Fishing News' supported the AIFCA and Tim Dapling thanked Andy Read for his contribution to that support.

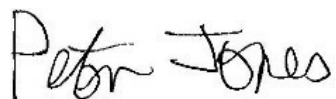
ALL RESOLVED to note the report.

64 A.O.B.

- 64.1 Cllr Julia Hilton flagged the subject of Rampion II and said she had read the minutes of their last meeting with interest, she queried whether Sussex IFCA was able to respond to the issues raised. Erin Lawes said that the discussions which had already taken place had been tabled and two further focus group meetings were scheduled to take place. Black Sea Bream was an important topic under discussion, which would be included in another public discussion group.
- 64.2 Cllr. Sam Adeniji asked for clarification on how effective the MPAs were and queried whether they were monitored. Tim Dapling had already replied to Cllr Adeniji's queries by email and said that the primary purpose of the MPAs was to protect the conservation features for which they were designated and in so doing improve biodiversity. The condition assessments post implementation were undertaken and published by NE.
- 64.3 Erin Lawes added that the Authority also carried out some assessment work. Cllr. Sam Adeniji requested access to these assessments to enable him to share them with his local fishing group. Erin Lawes said the assessments were all on line and possibly difficult to interpret, but all were available.
- 64.4 Sam Ashby suggested that Cllr. Sam Adeniji contact her at the Wildlife Trust for further research data about kelp restoration.

65 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

65.1 Thursday 28th April 2022.

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

Professor Peter Jones, Chair Sussex IFCA.