

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE
SUSSEX INSHORE FISHERIES & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY
on 25th April 2024**

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 Theresa Fowler (Brighton and Hove City Council)
Councillor Emma Evans (West Sussex County Council) [Online]
Dr Corina Ciocan (MMO Appointee)
Dr Paul Driver (MMO Appointee)
Gary Edwards (MMO Appointee)
Graham Furness (MMO Appointee)
Paul Johnson (MMO Appointee)
Mark Bennett (EA Representative)
Julian Seaman (MMO Appointee)
Kim Matthews (MMO Appointee)
Danni Barrett Substitute for Becca Turley (NE Representative) [Online]

Staff

Rob Pearson (Chief Fisheries & Conservation Officer)
Angharad Purcell (Deputy Chief Fisheries & Conservation Officer) [Online]
Rebecca Belleni (Committee Manager and Personal Assistant to SMT)
Vanessa Simons (Fisheries & Conservation Research Officer)
Dr George Balchin (Conservation & Research Manager)
Tim Dapling (Strategic Advisor & Clerk) [Online]

Visitors

Ella Garrud (Wild Coast Sussex / Sussex Wildlife Trust)

1 CHAIR & CHIEF OFFICER'S INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Prof. Peter Jones welcomed members, staff and guests to the AGM for 2024/25 and declared the meeting open, advising we have a full agenda planned in light of being the AGM.
- 1.2 Prof. Peter Jones took a moment to say farewell and thank you in absence to Councillor Pieter Montyn from West Sussex County Council.

Peter explained that his appointment to the role of council Chair meant he had to relinquish other responsibilities, including his position on Sussex IFCA Committee. Prof. Peter Jones thanked Pieter for his dedicated service to the Authority over the years. It was noted that we are still waiting on WSCC Democratic Services to inform on his replacement.

- 1.3 Rob Pearson welcomed Ella Garrud to the meeting on behalf of Wild Coast Sussex and said she will be presenting mid-way through our meeting today on the WCS project.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor Julia Hilton (East Sussex County Council)
Prof. Paul Leonard (MMO Appointee)
Sally Ashby (MMO Appointee)
Becca Turley (NE Representative) Danni Barrett as Substitute online.

Absent

Councillor Tom Liddard (East Sussex County Council)
Councillor Sam Adeniji (East Sussex County Council)
Garry Walker (MMO Appointee)

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 appointed Arm Forces Champion for Worthing.
- 3.3 Gary Edwards and Kim Matthews declared an interest as active members of the fishing industry.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

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

ALL RESOLVED to approve the minutes.

5. MATTERS ARISING

- 5.1 Rob Pearson advised of one matter arising, which was submitted prior to the meeting in his absence by Prof. Paul Leonard. In relation to the discussion of BHE MCZ management under item 8.21 - 8.23 in the previous minutes, where he made reference to the marine aggregate levy data which could be relevant to habitat mapping, and questioned if this had now been found and considered against NE's most recent data.
- 5.2 Danni Barrett responded to inform that Becca Turley has actioned this request internally and provided a holding response at present.

DECISION ITEMS

6 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR & DEPUTY CHAIR

- 6.1 Rob Pearson explained that due to it being the AGM and before further business, it was necessary to make the annual appointments for both the Chair and Deputy Chair. He added that the Clerk, Tim Dapling had circulated an email on 28th March seeking nominations for the positions by 18th April, and following this we have received several nominations for Professor Peter Jones to remain as Chair and similarly several for Councillor Noel Atkins to continue in the role of Deputy Chair.
- 6.2 Rob Pearson asked the Committee Members present to kindly vote for this re-election.
- Prof. Peter Jones – 10 votes
- Cllr. Noel Atkins – 7 votes

ALL RESOLVED to approve the appointments both with majority votes.

7 Appointments to Subcommittees

- 7.1 Rob Pearson introduced this procedural item by stating that to ensure the Authority's function and activities work effectively, the subcommittees were established. Details of each subcommittee are included in the meeting pack and the constitution for each is set out in our Standing Orders. He added that these are reviewed annually at the Authority's AGM, that membership to Subcommittees can only be derived from the Committee membership, and that the Chair and Deputy Chair are ex-

officio members of all subcommittees, with the exception of the Appeals Subcommittee.

7.2 Rob Pearson then explained that he would run through the present membership for each Subcommittee and ensure all members are happy with where they have been included.

7.3 **The Finance Subcommittee's** function was to consider expenditure reports and specific financial decisions requiring Committee approval, and to make necessary recommendations to the Principal Committee. The finance Subcommittee was delegated (*Art. 17*) with the authority to approve various financial matters and was currently comprised of representatives from the three contributing local authorities:

West Sussex County Council
Cllr Noel Atkins (Chair)

Professor Peter Jones (Deputy Chair)

East Sussex County Council
Cllr Sam Adeniji, Cllr Julia Hilton (deputising)

Brighton and Hove City Council
Cllr Theresa Fowler

7.4 Prof. Peter Jones clarified that Cllr. Noel Atkins was the Chair of the Finance Subcommittee.

7.5 Rob Pearson advised we are awaiting a new WSCC Councillor to be appointed from Democratic Services and then they will be added to this Subcommittee.

7.6 **The Technical Subcommittee**
Rob Pearson expressed the importance of this for the technicalities of byelaw development and for members with expertise in areas of fisheries, practical experience and knowledge. He added that this year will be busy for the Technical Subcommittee due to outstanding byelaw work streams. Alongside the Chair, Prof. Peter Jones and Deputy, Cllr. Noel Atkins the current members for the Technical Subcommittee are:

Membership:

Sally Ashby
Mark Bennett
Dr Corina Ciocan
Dr Paul Driver
Gary Edwards

Graham Furness
Paul Johnson
Prof. Paul Leonard
Garry Walker
Julian Seaman
Kim Matthews
Becca Turley
Theresa Fowler

- 7.7 **The Compliance Subcommittee** function is to provide input and support to officers on delivery of sustainable fisheries through the application of management intervention including regulatory advice and enforcement activities. It meets on an ad-hoc basis.

Membership: (minimum 4 members)

Prof. Peter Jones
Cllr. Noel Atkins
Mark Bennett (EA)
Paul Johnson (MMO)
Graham Furness
Prof. Paul Leonard
Becca Turley

- 7.8 **The Staffing Subcommittee** function is to support staffing matters e.g. senior officer recruitment process. It meets on an ad-hoc basis.

Constitution (3 members)

Prof. Petr Jones
Cllr. Noel Atkins

- 7.9 Rob Pearson advised we have a vacancy on this Subcommittee for a member to nominate themselves that would be welcome.

No members present put themselves forward for the vacancy.

- 7.10 **The Appeals Subcommittee** function is to consider issues relating to employment appeals procedures (knowledge and experience with a public service could be considered desirable). It meets on an ad-hoc basis.

Constitution (3 members)

Graham Furness
Prof. Paul Leonard

- 7.11 Rob Pearson stated that there is a current vacancy for this Subcommittee and asked members present if there was anyone happy to volunteer for

this position and with a note that in the event of requiring this meeting without sufficient members, we would call on members to stand in.

No members present put themselves forward for the vacancy.

- 7.12 Prof. Peter Jones concluded that all appointments for Subcommittees had now been confirmed and stated that the Technical Subcommittee was by far the most active, but most were ad hoc. He gave thanks to members and asked if there were any questions.
- 7.13 Gary Edwards suggested with regards to the Technical Subcommittee for the benefit of attendance if we can have it scheduled for a certain date monthly.
- 7.14 Rob Pearson acknowledged Gary Edwards suggestion but explained that they are usually recommended at a Principal Committee meeting, so set up solely when required and not routinely. He continued to explain at today's meeting we will propose to hold a Technical Subcommittee meeting with regards to BHE MCZ and once this has been recommended by members, we will send out a Doodle poll with date options and hold the meeting on the most popular date.
- 7.15 Gary Edwards further asked if there was a way we could advise on a certain Friday a month for example to keep clear in the event of a Technical Subcommittee.
- 7.16 Prof. Peter Jones explained that they are far too irregular to have members keep a day clear per month with an example of 9 months without a Tech Sub meeting at times and then 3 in the space of 4 months depending on progress of byelaws. He said he understands this suggestion but believed we would be better using Doodle polls and maximising the date with most availability.
- 7.17 Cllr. Theresa Fowler asked if there was space to join the Technical Subcommittee.
- 7.18 Prof. Peter Jones advised we would add Cllr Theresa Fowler to this Subcommittee list.

All RESOLVED to accept the appointments proposed.

8 Affirmation of Standing Orders

- 8.1 The Chief, Rob Pearson introduced this Item by explaining that the Affirmation of Standing Orders is required annually and was a form of due process. He explained that these Standing Orders are included in the annex for this report and are always made available in the public domain through the SxIFCA website.
- 8.2 Rob Pearson updated members that as part of the AGM and governance process we look to reaffirm the internal regulations and consider any proposed amendments. However, he confirmed there had been no proposed amendments other than updating the documents with the name and signature of the new Chief Fisheries Officer.
- 8.3 Prof. Peter Jones asked the members present if they were happy to reaffirm the standing orders with the update on name and signature of Chief Fisheries and Conservation Officer Rob Pearson.

ALL RESOLVED to accept the recommendation and Standing Orders.

9 Annual Planning: Focus and Priorities 2024/2025

- 9.1 Rob Pearson advised that the purpose of the report was to inform members of the final agreed planning priorities for the forthcoming financial year. He explained that these plans were previously presented and approved by members in the final quarterly meeting of 2023.
- 9.2 Rob Pearson highlighted that prior to 31st March 2024, the following priorities were submitted to Defra, as part of SxIFCA's Four Year Plan with the associated annual objectives for 2024/25. Therefore, he added, these priorities have now been adopted and are being implemented.
- 9.3 Rob Pearson directed members to the brief reminder which highlights the most significant work, including completion of BHE MCZ Management, the outstanding byelaws that are still in development which are Handgathering, Netting Permit and Minimum Size byelaws. He also added the review process for Kingmere MCZ and other workstreams such as Fisheries Management Plans.
- 9.4 Kim Matthews raised concern in regard to the Netting byelaw and wanted to bring to the Committees attention a paper by the University of East Anglia's Environmental Science Department, titled 'Trust in Fisheries Governance' which concluded the lack of trust from the fishing community in Defra, MMO and IFCA's based on lack of trust and communication although noted that IFCA's were regarded slightly better than the others.

He would like, within our planning year, an effort to be precise and open with the fishing community.

- 9.5 Kim Matthews informed members that when reading the Netting Permit byelaw and in specific the mention of sea trout and quoted MaCCA 2009 Section 153 subsection 11, 'to protect salmonids and other species', that the list is not specific to salmonids and therefore there is a bias with specific protection to salmonids in this byelaw. He further quoted MaCCA, 'there should be balance in the evidence.' He stated he would like SxIFCA to honour this statement as he said that when looking through the evidence, he found it to not be sufficiently balanced.
- 9.6 Kim Matthews continued to state that in reference to Salmonids there are only sea trout in Sussex and no Atlantic salmon. He said that he contacted the EA for totals for migratory fish licences and how many were caught within Sussex rivers which the EA calculated as 17.
- 9.7 Rob Pearson explained that the figures Kim had stated were the angling permits that people purchase to then recreationally fish for salmon but as part of our evidence package, we rely more on the EA fish survey data where they carry out fish population surveys on the Sussex rivers, as a more accurate reflection of fish populations.
- 9.8 Mark Bennett spoke on behalf of the EA and confirmed the EA survey Kim had been given is the recreational angling survey throughout a 1 year period and the variables on the frequency, skill and input from the anglers is variable and not representative of the species population size.
- 9.9 Kim Matthews responded to say his concern is for the sake of a minimal number of anglers, SxIFCA are looking to altering the working practices of roughly 100 of the fishing community. He stated that the economic argument for the Sussex fishing fleet outweighed the anglers due to communities who buy from the beach lockers, restaurants who are supplied with local fish. He said therefore the economic argument does not hold weight with protecting sea trout when hundreds in the fishing fleet will suffer.
- 9.10 Prof. Peter Jones explained if the Netting Byelaw restrictions were then ceased, we would see the decline of the sea trout.
- 9.11 Kim Matthews asked if there was any evidence on sea trout declining in Sussex.
- 9.12 Gary Edwards raised a question to Mark Bennett from the EA and questioned whether the stocks were healthy.
- 9.13 Mark Bennett responded to say that salmon stock is not healthy and the Netting Byelaw in Sussex will aid the protection salmonids in other areas through their feeding and migration patterns.

- 9.14 Rob Pearson advised that the byelaw is to help the ecological state of rivers and not solely looking at economics.
- 9.15 Gary Edwards asked Mark Bennett how many salmon were caught in nets in Sussex.
- 9.16 Mark Bennett responded to say he did not have this figure to hand.
- 9.17 Kim Matthews directly asked Gary Edwards how many he has caught in his lifetime as a commercial fisherman.
- 9.18 Gary Edwards informed that he hadn't ever caught a salmon and further said for a method of fishing to be regulated there must be a statistic to prove the number of salmon being caught by commercial activity.
- 9.19 Rob Pearson explained that the Netting Byelaw is not excluding netting completely.
- 9.20 Gary Edwards replied to say restrictions are excluding areas of netting.
- 9.21 Rob Pearson added that the netting consultation will be looking at specific amendments that are less restrictive than the initial Byelaw proposal, and spoke through some of them in detail. He said that these amendments were based on guidance from the fishing community responses in the initial consultation.
- 9.22 Gary Edwards repeated his ask to the statistics and numbers of fish to support this evidence.
- 9.23 Rob Pearson said he did not have them to hand and that the Game and Wildlife Trust have statistics and recently presented to the All Party Parliamentary Group for Game and Wildlife Conversation.
- 9.24 The Chair, Prof. Peter Jones brought the meeting back to the initial publication that Kim Matthews raised and stated his experience in survey design and that the report is grossly flawed. He continued to say that there is always a balance to try and attain, between working with the industry that we then have to regulate. He said he is not convinced that this study alone is sufficient evidence on lack of trust by the fishing industry on SxIFCA.
- 9.25 Kim Matthews said that he thinks its distrust and the feel within the fishing industry is that they are being regulated out of business. He added the decline from 400 fishing boats in Sussex to 195 in present day in the space of 15 years. He noted our duty under s153 with regards to balance between social and economic benefits of exploiting the sea fisheries resources of the district and seek to balance the persons involved in exploitation and concluded that the balance is not there at present and weighted more in favour of conservation.

- 9.26 Dr Paul Driver asked if there was evidence to confirm the decline in fishing fleet numbers is a direct result of regulations.
- 9.27 Gary Edwards supported the comment that Kim Matthews made on the fishing industry feeling regulated out of business. He said there is continued door shutting on opportunities and methods of fishing which have killed communities.
- 9.28 Rob Pearson clarified this was an overall comment on regulations across the industry not specifically just those from SxIFCA.
- 9.29 Gary Edwards confirmed this was correct and he stated not specifically SxIFCA but the general government legislations and management, however he added the continued rules and regulations have impacted livelihoods within the fishing industry.
- 9.30 Prof. Peter Jones argued that examples of management and legislation had improved fishing stocks and their profitability and sustainability.
- 9.31 Gary Edwards asked for one example.
- 9.32 Prof. Peter Jones stated the Nearshore Trawling Byelaw as an example and made reference to Gary Edwards informing on Black Bream stocks on the rise.
- 9.33 Kim Matthews informed that there are draconian measures already in place to protect sea trout therefore there is no requirement for more with £50,000 for landing fine.
- 9.34 Prof. Peter Jones said that each individual byelaw is subject to a consultation from a broad range of stakeholders and therefore covering the balanced approach.
- 9.35 Rob Pearson voiced his awareness on the issue of trust from the fishing community on regulators at present and it is SxIFCA' s duty to build those bridges and recognises there is work to be done.
- 9.36 Kim Matthews final point on the matter was the top-down model of management which he feels builds on distrust.
- 9.37 Rob Pearson advised that we have implemented this with recent consultations such as BHE MCZ where we carried out informal consultation workshops which is above what we are statutorily required to conduct.
- 9.38 Tim Dapling provided additional history of this byelaw, mentioning the Fixed Engine Byelaw and the vulnerability generally of salmonoids. He further stated that if we were to have taken the full conservation advice for salmonids, there wouldn't be a netting fishery and reiterated Rob Pearsons comments in terms of the significant amendmants to the byelaw,

removing the spatial restriction provisions which resulted in threat of judicial review by the angling sector due to their strong view on netting. He stated that the upcoming consultation will give stakeholders another chance to review the amendments.

- 9.39 Gary Edwards raised that there is no statistics to justify the requirement for netting management in Sussex, based on the evidence of targeted salmonid net fishing on the east coast. He said hypothetically, if fishers in Sussex caught 100 salmon and there is evidence that seals were catching more than this, then there should be a cull on seals in the area rather than further restrictions on fishers' livelihoods.
- 9.40 Prof. Peter Jones said he takes the point for there to be an evidence approach but SxIFCA has delivered an evidence-based approach, byelaw by byelaw. He further mentioned the bottom-up approach argued for by Kim and raised that it wouldn't solely be the fishing community that would put proposals forward, conservationists and recreational anglers also would be within their rights to do so, with a question to the committee on how to reconcile the conflicts.
- 9.41 Kim Matthews again stated the argument should be based on evidence.
- 9.42 Cllr. Theresa Fowler spoke up on her concern on overfishing for so many years that has led to this situation and therefore the laws are to protect stocks and stated her horror to hear someone mention killing seals.
- 9.43 Graham Furness commented that when he used to go out with the Sussex netsmen, in four years there were three salmon caught which were then hidden, therefore asking fishers to report numbers of salmonids encountered at sea is not viable.
- 9.44 Cllr. Theresa Fowler advised in regard to the Nearshore Trawling Byelaw – that the kelp has returned as per Eric Smiths BBC documentary.
- 9.45 Gary Edwards raised that there was no control area to monitor whether the trawling ban was the result of this or if other factors have had an impact such as water temperature.
- 9.46 Rob Pearson advised that we have annual surveys to monitor any changes however it is still in its infancy and a lot of what we hear is anecdotal and SxIFCA aim to collect appropriate evidence to assess impacts.
- 9.47 Prof. Peter Jones informed that the Nearshore Trawling Byelaw is not solely focused on kelp recovery and has actively tried to voice this in partnership discussions. Kelp is just one element of the essential nearshore habitats the Byelaw aims to enhance.
- 9.48 Dr Corina Ciocan said there are three PhD students working on kelp recovery project and would like one of them to come along to a committee meeting, believing it would be beneficial for these discussions.

- 9.49 Gary Edwards added that Bognor Rocks is an area people focus on for the kelp regeneration, but this was never a trawling area. He said each time a fishing method is enforced and prohibited the fishers are forced to move into another method of fishing resulting in displacement and pressure on the remaining fisheries which have become unviable.
- 9.50 Dr Corina Ciocan responded to say there are other factors to consider with the decline in fishing such as young people not taking up this job, pollution and impacts such as oyster population decline.
- 9.51 Gary Edwards informed of the vast amounts of oysters on Littlehampton Harbour wall and explained that we have had two years of good spat fall but due to restrictions, had we been able to fish Chichester Harbour there would be a fantastic oyster fishery at present.
- 9.52 Prof. Peter Jones concluded that important issues have been raised but we now must come back to the recommendations on this agenda item.

Recommendations:

- i. That members note the legal requirements and guidance concerning IFCA annual plans and reports.**
- ii. That members agree to implementation of the management priorities as described and submitted.**
- iii. That members note that the annual planning priorities were submitted to Defra in accordance with guidance as part of the Sussex IFCA's four-year planning cycle, 2024 to 2028.**

ALL RESOLVED to accept the recommendations.

10 BHE MZ Management Update

- 10.1 Rob Pearson informed members that the purpose of the report provided is to give a brief update on the proposed MPA byelaw 2023 and the formal consultation, which was approved at the previous principal committee meeting. He added that the report includes SxIFCA response document to consultees and that it sets out recommendations for the next step following the end of the second formal consultation. He said that the report identifies the actions taken as per statutory requirements through advertising the consultations, our communications and engagement plan, and provision of drop-in sessions to distribute information. The report also summarises the NE submission of evidence for zone 2 and subsequent agreement for NE to

conduct further survey work. It then refers to the amended management measures presented to the committee on 8th February 2024 and the decision to extend the zone 1 towed gear exclusion area to incorporate the newly evidenced areas of designated features. This resulted in the requirement for a second formal consultation which was conducted from 22nd March 2024 to 19th April 2024.

- 10.2 Rob Pearson advised that SxIFCA are yet to receive the responses from the second consultation from the MMO, however he said there were various social media posts towards the end of the consultation period promoting a response, which resulted in over 100 email responses.
- 10.3 Rob Pearson confirmed the recommendation to hold a Technical Subcommittee to consider the second formal consultation responses as part of the overall evidence package for the management, which he said would be in late May – early June.
- 10.4 Prof. Peter Jones restated the process going forward, with a Technical Subcommittee in late May – early June to review and consider the details of the responses, before considering whether any further amendment to the management should be considered. A recommendation would then be provided for consideration at the July Principal Committee meeting.

Recommendations:

- i. That the Authority notes the actions taken to deliver Marine Protected Areas Byelaw 2023 Schedule 5 second formal consultation.**
- ii. That the Authority notes the Annexes associated with this report.**

Annex I Proposed Marine Protected Areas Byelaw 2023 Schedule 5 Beachy Head East Marine Conservation Zone
Annex II Zones 1 and 2 with boundary reference points
Annex III Associated Impact Assessment for Schedule 5 Beachy Head East Marine Conservation Zone
Annex IV BHE MCZ Consultation Poster
Annex V BHE MCZ Fact Sheet
Annex VI First Formal consultation responses
Annex VII SxIFCA Formal response to first consultation responses

- iii. That the Authority approves the recommendation for a Technical Subcommittee meeting to be held prior to the July Principal Committee meeting, to consider the consultation responses received from the second formal consultation, with a view to deciding upon final byelaw text incorporating any agreed amendments, for proposal to the Principal Committee.**

- iv. ~~That once the Technical Subcommittee has concluded the process it makes specific recommendations to be reported to the next quarterly Authority meeting in July. Subject to approval by the Principal Committee, the Authority would submit the Byelaw and supporting documentation to the MMO and Defra for confirmation.~~**

ALL RESOLVED to accept the recommendations.

11 Renewal MaCCA s.167 Agreement 'Chichester Harbour' Sussex IFCA and Southern IFCA

11.1 Tim Dapling gave the background on the reasoning for the original s167 agreement, explaining that when the IFCAs were established in 2010, the boundaries were changed to align with the Sussex County boundary, unlike the previous Sea Fisheries Committee district boundary which incorporated a small proportion of Hampshire and Kent.

11.2 Tim Dapling explained that when the IFCAs were established the boundaries were aligned strictly to those of the local authority boundaries and in the case of SxIFCA this meant the boundaries for east and west Sussex, which resulted in the use of water or rivers as county boundaries and had minimal impact to those councils, however as an IFCA we require a landward location boundary.

11.3 Tim Dapling referred to our western boundary and advised that as a result of this boundary change, the most western part of Chichester Harbour that fell within Hampshire became part of Southern IFCAs district and SxIFCA retained the remainder. He said to rationalise management and for more consistency within Chichester Harbour there was a provision in MaCCA under s.167 which enables SxIFCA to have an agreement with another authority to delegate responsibilities to that authority.

11.4 Tim Dapling informed that in 2014, when he was CFO of SxIFCA and Rob Clark was CFO of Southern IFCA, they drafted a S.167 agreement which then was approved by the respective authorities and successfully had this signed off by the SoS for a 10 year period which ends in July 2024.

11.5 Tim Dapling explained that Southern IFCA have had the renewal of the s.167 agreement passed by their authority and therefore we are presenting this report and paper for SxIFCA members approval today. He stated that the inclusion of this area is already incorporated within several SxIFCA byelaws and has been considered within the Netting Permit Byelaw, which enables better compliance and management within Chichester Harbour.

- 11.6 Tim Dapling advised that once a decision is made to hopefully approve the renewal of the s.167 agreement, it will then be submitted to Defra for review and subsequent sign off from the Secretary of State, with the aim to have this in place prior to the current agreement ending in July.
- 11.7 Prof. Peter Jones thanked Tim Dapling for this update and asked the authority if there were any questions.

ALL RESOLVED to accept the following Recommendations:

- i. **That, in collaboration with Southern IFCA the Authority seeks from Defra and the Secretary of State renewal of the existing Agreement for a further period of 10 years, from the 30th July 2024.**
- ii. **That, subject to any drafting amendments required from Defra the Agreement is as proposed and appended to the report (Appendix 1).**
- iii. **That, the Clerk to the Authority continues to work as the contact officer with Southern IFCA Senior Officers and Defra officials to achieve the renewal.**

PRESENTATION:

Ella Garrud - Wild Coast Sussex - Marine community engagement in Sussex

INFORMATION ITEMS

12 Financial Performance 2023 / 2024

- 12.1 Prof. Peter Jones introduced this item explaining that the report was emailed out prior to the meeting from the Finance Manager, and that the Finance Subcommittee meeting took place this morning prior to the principal committee meeting.
- 12.2 Rob Pearson apologised for the delay in the distribution of the Finance report due to being on annual leave, which was a commitment prior to joining SxIFCA.

- 12.3 Lucy Francis informed that she was joining remotely today due to having a bad flu and continued to present a financial summary in light of being at the end of the financial year.
- 12.4 Lucy Francis advised that the Finance Subcommittee met earlier today and discussed the results from Q4, which is January – March 2024 and the preliminary results for the last financial year. She said that we had a successful quarter, which resulted in a surplus of £30,147, mainly due to timing differences and the part release of the Defra grant income against work undertaken. She added a surplus level of interest income against our cash reserves also contributed to this.
- 12.5 Lucy Francis stated that the Q4 results led to a full financial year position of £5,255 surplus against a balanced budget for 2023/2024.
- 12.6 Lucy Francis explained the significant differences to reflect this surplus were the higher income rates across the whole financial year and additional Defra grants. She further said that expenditure costs were lower due to less costs in Marops as a result of less repairs and maintenance. Compliance costs were slightly higher due to BHE MCZ consultation costs and lastly, utilities were greater than planned due to inflationary increases as everyone is experiencing.
- 12.7 Lucy Francis concluded that this led to our reserves remaining healthy with an addition of the small surplus to this. She said we are in a good financial position going forward. The results are preliminary and subject to independent examination by auditors, James Todd & Co.
- 12.8 Dr. Paul Driver commented on the positive financial report.
- 12.9 Prof. Peter Jones thanked Lucy for her diligence.

ALL RESOLVED to approve the report and appendices.

13 Conservation and Research Update

- 13.1 Dr. George Balchin informed that this report would encompass the annual plan for the Conservation and Research team and took time to explain that one element captured in both the annual and four year plan is to build in an element of flexibility. He said that Covid and FMP work are good examples as to why this is advantageous and the movement to a project management software will assist work stream flexibility throughout the year and 4 year planning periods.

- 13.2 Dr. George Balchin explained that in both annual and 4 year plans they anticipate the move towards a review and refinement period of the current management within SxIFCA and less of an emphasis on new management.
- 13.3 Dr. George Balchin drew members attention to section 4.3 in this report and explained the extensive work carried out by Jake Wilson our Research Officer on the SPS extensions.
- 13.4 Dr. George Balchin further highlighted section 4.4 on developing monitoring control plans for our existing and future MCZ areas. This will be a set of thresholds based on environmental status or fishing activity, beyond or below which will trigger a review of that management.
- 13.5 Dr. George Balchin informed on tranch one FMPs which have now moved into a second phase in relation to evidence collation which SxIFCA are contributing to.
- 13.6 Dr. George Balchin updated the committee members that SxIFCA have purchased a floating array which will be used for towed video surveys. He said this change to the towed video surveys will better capture the imagery in a way to quantify the fauna and flora with less impact than dragging a camera sled on the seabed.
- 13.7 Dr. George Balchin gave an update on work by fellow Conservation and Research Manager, Jen Lewis on Rampion 2 consultation which is a substantial piece of work.

ALL RESOLVED to approve the report and appendices.

14 Conservation and Research 4 year plan

- 14.1 Dr. George Balchin presented the priority workstreams from the report for the upcoming 4 years and explained how this work has been broken down into workstream themes.
- 14.2 Dr. George Balchin stated the significant items in both the annual and four year plans are anticipation of the confirmation on the Minimum Size Byelaw which will require communication work with the fishing community. He said that the Kingmere MCZ review is overdue and will be a priority for this year, along with the Shellfish Permit Byelaw.
- 14.3 Dr George Balchin continued to state the four year plan significant work areas includes the Hand-gathering Byelaw introduction and communications, the Fishing Instruments Byelaw review, the Chichester

EMSSE review and the development of a monitoring control plan for BHE MCZ as a priority in 2025. He said in 2026/27 there will be numerous MCZ reviews and monitoring control byelaws but anticipated to be light compared to Kingmere MCZ and BHE MCZ. He added that this final year will conclude the reviews for Sussex MCZ and monitoring control plans.

- 14.4 Gary Edwards asked in regard to Kingmere MCZ review and the Nearshore Trawling Byelaw continuing to help bream stocks, he hoped the catch limit could be increased.
- 14.5 Dr. George Balchin advised it is something they can consider and will look to set a meeting to discuss further.
- 14.6 Gary Edwards further raised concern on Rampion 2 in relation to the bream and cable laying through chalk reef and nesting areas.
- 14.7 Dr. George Balchin explained that SxIFCA's input has an impact to the fishing community and supplying them with 10 years' worth of fishing effort grids.
- 14.8 Gary Edwards responded with his concern primarily on the environmental impact on cable lying at certain times of the year when its breeding season for the bream this will have a detrimental effect.
- 14.9 Dr. George Balchin advised that Dr Jen Lewis is leading on this and she would be happy to discuss however he added that the three primary inputs to Rampion 2 were fishing effort, habitats and the impact on black bream which respect to noise pollution.
- 14.10 Gary Edwards stressed the concern when drilling with sediment displacement could affect how bream breed due to silt covering the nests.
- 14.11 Rob Pearson read out the written statement to Rampion 2 which highlighted our position and concern on the cable route in regard to chalk reef habitats and black bream nesting areas.
- 14.12 Paul Johnson explained that any windfarm is subject to MMO licensing and conditions, which includes the MMO requirement for statutory consultations to which the concerns mentioned will be raised. Due to SxIFCA being a statutory consultee the response and evidence will be considered through their response to the consultation.
- 14.13 Dr. Paul Driver asked what the Rochdale Envelope was.
- 14.14 Julian Seaman explained from his understand this is a footprint guide on where they propose to lay the cable and allows the licensing process to commence.

- 14.15 Kim Matthews highlighted that the Rampion 2 area, which he has extensive knowledge in, is a traditional area for oyster beds that was fished in the Victorian times and asked if there could be a suggestion made to lay oyster beds between Rampion 1 and Rampion 2 in hope to restore historic oyster bed areas.
- 14.16 Dr. George Balchin agreed this is a beneficial point that they would take into account when submitting advice.
- 14.17 Prof. Peter Jones thanked Dr. George Balchin for a thorough report.

ALL RESOLVED to accept the report.

15 Compliance and Enforcement Report

- 15.1 Angharad Purcell due to time constraints briefly summarised the report and highlighted figures for the intelligence report, various inspections and boardings with any sanctions issued and ongoing investigation work.
- 15.2 Angharad Purcell informed of lower IR figures due to long periods of bad weather and when there have been weather windows the focus has been on sea patrols.
- 15.3 Angharad Purcell advised on the fishing activity objectives summarised by each port and highlighted the higher risk fishing activity for the upcoming quarter.

ALL RESOLVED to accept the report.

16 Vessel Maintenance Log

- 16.1 Prof. Peter Jones informed members that the log in its entirety is included in the report and continued to add that SxIFCA have one of the best maintained fleets in the IFCA.

ALL RESOLVED to accept the report.

17 Communications Report

- 17.1 Angharad Purcell introduced this item briefly but was happy for this to be taken as read, informing of the continued use of social media for communications with a wide demographic of stakeholders.
- 17.2 Angharad Purcell informed members that SxIFCA now has a Linked In presence which is the largest business orientated network, geared specifically towards professionals therefore opening doors to opportunities and networks.
- 17.3 Angharad Purcell highlighted the publicity section for the past quarter to promote the proposed BHE MCZ management and second formal consultation.
- 17.4 Kim Matthews asked which fishing association communities and partnerships were engaged with.
- 17.5 Angharad Purcell directed Kim Matthews to the end of the report where the list of these associations and partnerships are stated.
- 17.6 Rob Pearson explained that there are some missing that should have been included such as Worthing Fishing Group, West Quay Users group and Rye Harbour Advisory group.
- 17.7 Prof. Peter Jones thanked Rob Pearson and noted this as an action to be added.

ALL RESOLVED to accept the report.

18 Chief Officers Group

- 18.1 Rob Pearson said as a result of the meeting timing he was happy for this item to be taken as read.

ALL RESOLVED to note the report.

19 Association of Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities

- 19.1 Rob Pearson informed members that AIFCA are leading on the cockle FMP which is the only IFCA led FMP work and added that it will be interesting to see the development and will share progress as appropriate.


ALL RESOLVED to note the report.

20 A.O.B.

- 20.1 Prof. Peter Jones asked members if they had any other business to raise.
- 20.2 Dr. Corina Ciocan, in light of the discussion on the 'bottom-up' approach to management measures, would like to accept the offer from fellow committee member, Kim Matthews to give a lecture to her students at the University of Brighton. She also said she would like to meet Gary Edwards and look at the Oysters growing in Littlehampton Harbour and consider the potential opportunity for collaboration on research and revival of oysters in different areas of Chichester.
- 20.3 Gary Edwards reiterated that his reference on the mass of oysters at Littlehampton Harbour is evidence that there is enough stock to produce a viable oyster spatfall. He said a commercial oyster fishery is not a natural occurrence and requires working of the seabed through dredges which creates the perfect scenario to catch the spatfall. He further explained that this is on the intertidal area of the walls and there is evidence of good spatfall for two years however the seabed is too dirty to catch it.
- 20.4 Dr. George Balchin informed that the sort of collaboration that Dr. Corina Ciocan is interested in pursuing with the aid of Gary Edwards, could create useful evidence to then help base management decisions on.
- 20.5 Prof. Peter Jones thanked Dr. Corina Ciocan for her collaboration requests with committee members and declared the AGM closed.

21 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 21.1 25th July 2024.

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

Prof. Peter Jones, Chair Sussex IFCA.

