

**MINUTES OF THE QUARTERLY MEETING OF THE
SUSSEX INSHORE FISHERIES & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY
on 24th April 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)
Councillor Theresa Fowler (Brighton & Hove City Council)
Councillor Deborah Urquhart (West Sussex County Council)
Sally Ashby (MMO Appointee) [Online]
Dr Corina Ciocan (MMO Appointee) [Online]
Dr Paul Driver (MMO Appointee)
Prof. Paul Leonard (MMO Appointee)
Paul Johnson (MMO Appointee)
Graham Furness (MMO Appointee)
Mark Bennett (EA Representative)
Julian Seaman (MMO Appointee)
Kim Matthews (MMO Appointee)
Danni Barrett (NE Representative) [Online]
Shaun Brewer (MMO Appointee)

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 Geroche Balchin (Fisheries & Conservation Manager)
Ruth Harrison (Finance Manager)
Sol Lucas (Senior Conservation & Research Officer)

1 CHAIR & CHIEF OFFICER'S INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Prof. Peter Jones welcomed members, staff and guests to the AGM for 2025/26 and declared the meeting open.
- 1.2 Prof. Peter Jones took a moment to welcome new MMO appointee member, Shaun Brewer, detailing his background as a commercial fisherman of over 22 years and currently Vice Chair of Brighton Fishermen's Protection Society.

- 1.3 Prof. Peter Jones advised the committee that this would be Graham Furness's final meeting, after being with SxIFCA as a member from the formation of the IFCA in 2010. He said that Graham's knowledge and input to meetings over the years has been informed and useful.
- 1.4 Prof. Peter Jones informed members that it was Senior IFCO, Nick Rogers final week at SxIFCA and gave thanks to his work and wished him the very best in his new project management role.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor Emma Evans (West Sussex County Council)

Absent

Councillor Tom Liddiard (East Sussex County Council)
Councillor Sam Adeniji (East Sussex County Council)
Gary Edwards (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 Armed Forces Champion for Worthing.
- 3.3 Kim Matthews and Shaun Brewer declared an interest as commercial fishermen.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- 4.1 The Chief Officer, Rob Pearson asked members for any comments and corrections on the minutes from the previous Quarterly Committee Meeting.
- 4.2 Prof. Paul Leonard commented on item 6.10 with regards to highlighting the opportunity to review partnerships and how the data is being utilised.

ALL RESOLVED to approve the minutes.

5. MATTERS ARISING

- 5.1 Rob Pearson asked if there were any further matters arising from the minutes. None were forthcoming.

DECISION ITEMS

6 Appointment of Chair and Deputy Chair

- 6.1 Rob Pearson explained that due to being our annual meeting and before further business, it was necessary to make the annual appointments for both the Chair and Deputy Chair. He apologised for the slightly unconventional manner on voting to temporarily suspend the provision in the Standing Orders with regards to the period of eligibility for the appointment of the Chair and Deputy Chair and explained this was a pragmatic approach to the electoral process to account for the required nomination window. He said that the proposal received a two-thirds majority vote with 13 out of 19 members voting in favour of temporarily suspending the provision, allowing members to nominate Prof. Peter Jones as a candidate for election as Chair.
- 6.2 Rob Pearson highlighted the proposed amendment to the eligibility criteria in the Standing Orders, stating that this can be further discussed at item 8, the affirmation of Standing Orders.
- 6.3 Rob Pearson informed that we had received two nominations for Professor Peter Jones to be elected as Chair and two nominations for Councillor Noel Atkins to be elected as Deputy Chair.
- 6.4 Rob Pearson asked Committee Members present to vote for those in favour of electing Prof. Peter Jones as Chair, and Cllr. Noel Atkins as Vice Chair.

Prof. Peter Jones – 10 votes (2 Abstained)

Cllr. Noel Atkins – 12 votes

ALL RESOLVED that both appointments made with majority votes.

7 Appointments to Subcommittees

- 7.1 The Chief Officer, Rob Pearson, introduced the item by explaining that subcommittees were established to ensure the Authority operates

effectively and efficiently. Details of each subcommittee are included in the meeting pack, and their constitutions are outlined in the Standing Orders. He reminded members that these are reviewed annually at the AGM, noting any changes to the memberships and providing an opportunity for new members to join relevant subcommittees. He reminded the room that the Chair and Deputy Chair serve as ex-officio members of all subcommittees, with the exception of the Appeals Subcommittee.

- 7.2 **The Finance Subcommittee's** function is to consider expenditure reports and specific financial decisions requiring Committee approval, 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:

Prof. Peter Jones (Chair)

West Sussex County Council

Cllr. Noel Atkins (Deputy Chair)

Cllr. Deborah Urquhart

East Sussex County Council

Cllr. Sam Adeniji

Brighton and Hove City Council

Cllr. Theresa Fowler

Cllr. Noel Atkins would Chair Finance Subcommittee meetings.

- 7.3 Rob Pearson informed members that Cllr Sam Adeniji from ESCC has been absent for at least 6 meetings and said that this has been raised to Democratic Services and awaiting an update on this appointment.

- 7.4 **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 byelaws. 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

Paul Johnson

Prof. Paul Leonard

Julian Seaman

Kim Matthews
Danni Barrett

Rob Pearson explained that, with his technical knowledge and experience, new member Shaun Brewer would be an appropriate appointment to the technical subcommittee if he wished to participate. Shaun Brewer confirmed that he did wish to be added to the technical subcommittee membership.

- 7.5 Rob Pearson advised that the three further subcommittees, Compliance, Staffing and Appeal Subcommittees meet ad hoc as required but have not been required in the past three years. He therefore suggested that, instead of taking the time to assign members now, this could be done through an appeal to appropriate members if the need for a subcommittee meeting arose. He asked the members if this was a reasonable approach for the next year.

All RESOLVED to accept the appointments and resolutions proposed.

8 Affirmation of Standing Orders

- 8.1 The Chief, Rob Pearson introduced this item by explaining that the Affirmation of Standing Orders (SOs) was required annually. He explained that the SOs are included in the annex for this report and that this is an opportunity to reaffirm and consider any proposed amendments. He added that the SOs are always made available in the public domain through the SxIFCA website for transparency.
- 8.2 Rob Pearson informed members that the SOs are derived from legislation and guidance including MaCAA, the SxIFCA Order, local authority Codes of Conduct, Defra guidance and terms of appointment for our MMO appointee, along with relevant local government legislation and the Nolan Principles. These SOs were established in 2010 and as part of the IFCA's governance process it is appropriate to review and re-affirm these regulations at each annual meeting.
- 8.3 Rob Pearson stated that there are two proposed amendments to the current SOs. He stated that the first proposal was amendments to paragraphs 14 and 15, which refer to the annual re-election process and dictate an eligibility period for the Chair and Deputy Chair. He stated that the proposed amendments were to remove the existing maximum eligibility period of four consecutive years for either role. He explained that there is no statutory obligation for this provision and reminded members that we have a nomination and election process for both roles every year. He added that a number of other IFCAs have no such limited eligibility period. He further added that the MMO appointment periods do not align with SxIFCA internal committee appointments, this therefore removes any risk of conflict.

- 8.4 Julian Seaman raised the importance of succession planning within the committee, suggesting that members should have the opportunity to progress to Chair via the Deputy Chair role, both to encourage engagement and to bring fresh perspectives.
- 8.5 Rob Pearson agreed with this idea and stated that similarly there should be a process by which members who are interested in either role have the opportunity to have time with the Chair and Deputy to understand what each role entails.
- 8.6 Julian Seaman advised that on other committees he is part of this has worked well with succession planning and without it you may have members stand back from coming forward through lack of information on the role.
- 8.7 Rob Pearson agreed with this and stated that going forward it may be beneficial to have a process whereby members notify an interest in becoming Chair and Deputy Chair, allowing them to gain further information about the role and also informing voting members on who would be happy to be nominated towards either role.
- 8.8 Rob Pearson outlined the second proposed amendment to Standing Order paragraph 44, concerning dispensations for members with personal or prejudicial interests. The change would remove the requirement for members to automatically withdraw from meetings during discussions in which they had a prejudicial interest. Instead, they would only need to withdraw if requested by the Chair. He noted that members with prejudicial interests have previously remained in the room and contributed to discussions, and this amendment would formalise that practice.
- 8.9 Cllr Theresa Fowler questioned whether they would be eligible to vote.
- 8.10 Rob Pearson confirmed that, as per the Code of Conduct, members would not be permitted to vote on matters in which they had declared a prejudicial interest.
- 8.11 Paul Johnson informed members that this matter of prejudicial interests and member voting is being discussed by the MMO and Defra due to the differences between IFCAs, with some allow voting on prejudicial interests, therefore Defra are keen to have this aligned towards co-management rather than having fishermen feeling excluded at times.
- 8.12 Rob Pearson reminded the committee that it is down to the individual member to declare if they have a prejudicial interest and said that being a commercial fisher does not exclude those members from all decisions.
- 8.13 Paul Johnson stated that, since the Sea Fisheries Committees and through the time of the IFCA things have mutated and been inconsistent, with more restrictions on voting in recent years, and reiterated that the

MMO and Defra are looking into this due to the disparity around the coast.

- 8.14 Rob Pearson advised that we welcome this national guidance and recognises the importance of balancing local authority and public sector Codes of Conduct whilst ensuring we have the valuable input from the fishing community members. He said one further option to consider is members declaring an interest only against specific decision items on the agenda.
- 8.15 Kim Matthews raised that this issue had affected him in regard to the Netting Permit Byelaw, due to being a small-scale net fisher he felt discriminated against and treated like a member of the public rather than a member of the committee, denied the option of proposing an amendment or voting. He stressed that if SxIFCA want fishing knowledge on the committee then decisions must be inclusive and he welcomes national government addressing this issue. He said that he felt very strongly with regards to the inshore fleet, as a representative, and that he should have been given the opportunity to speak, make amendments and vote on decisions.
- 8.16 Rob Pearson responded to Kim Matthews stating that he was allowed to speak and had the opportunity to bring evidence to be considered by members during those conversations. However, as per our committee regulations he was not able to vote due to the direct prejudicial interest.
- 8.17 Kim Matthews said that there is a difference between having a voice and having an influence and welcomes national intervention due to the fishing community not being represented fairly and there is a bias to conservation. He also added that the wording of the dispensation is patriarchal.
- 8.18 Rob Pearson informed that he is fully committed to a co-management approach but keen to understand how guidance from Defra and the MMO will align and overcome the legislative requirements around conflict of interest in public office.
- 8.19 Cllr Theresa Fowler advised that within her role as councillor, if there were a decision that she would directly gain from she is removed from voting or even participating.
- 8.20 Paul Johnson informed that Defra and the MMO will be discussing this issue with AIFCA with the aim of more consistency and balance.
- 8.21 Rob Pearson advised that SxIFCA will update members as soon as there are any other updates on this matter.
- 8.22 Dr George Balchin said that perhaps we need to look at the number of representatives from the fishing community on the authority and increase the number to ensure a rich input and knowledge.

- 8.23 Rob Pearson explained that this appointment process is through the MMO governance team, and we still have an outstanding position for a member with commercial fishing knowledge and expertise.
- 8.24 Prof. Peter Jones added that historically fishers dominated the old Sea Fisheries Committees, this was one of the reasons MaCAA was introduced towards the formation of the IFCA's, providing a more balanced committee structure.
- 8.25 Tim Dapling reminded members that MMO appointees have terms of appointment and conditions which clearly state that members are appointed to the committee to bring knowledge and expertise to discussions and matters under consideration, and not there to represent any one sector or group specifically.

Recommendations:

- i. **That members reaffirm the Sussex IFCA Standing Orders with the proposed amendments described.**
- ii. **That a signed copy of the current Standing Orders is made available on the Authority's website.**

ALL RESOLVED to accept the recommendations.

9 Annual Planning: Focus and Priorities 2025/202

- 9.1 Rob Pearson advised that the purpose of the report was to update members on the final agreed planning priorities for the upcoming financial year. He noted that these priorities had been previously presented and approved by members at the final quarterly meeting of 2024 in January and have been submitted, unchanged to Defra.

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 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.

PRESENTATION:

Dr Pete Davies – Angling for Sustainability – Tracking of Black Bream on nesting areas

10 Kingmere MCZ Management Review

- 10.1 Rob Pearson took a moment to read out the purpose of the report, which is to update members on the progress of the Authority's review of management measures for Kingmere MCZ, including the consideration of revised conservation advice from Natural England concerning black bream. The report provides members with the minutes and recommendations from the Technical Subcommittee meeting held on 13th March 2025 provided as Annex I, where the best available evidence and existing management measures were reviewed in detail, following the delegation decision by the Principal Committee on 23rd January 2024.
- 10.2 Rob Pearson took time to read through the background, informing new members that SxIFCA has a statutory duty under Section 154 of the MaCAA to further the conservation objectives of MCZs. Kingmere MCZ, designated in 2013, aims to protect subtidal chalk, infralittoral rock, mixed sediments and spawning black seabream. Due to their vulnerability to fishing impacts, all features were assigned a "recover" status, requiring active management. He said that following extensive consultation in 2015, statutory management measures were introduced in 2016 through the Marine Protected Areas Byelaw, including seasonal and spatial fishing restrictions aligned with the black seabream nesting season of April to June in known nesting areas. He added that management covers a broad range of gear types, and a voluntary code of conduct also supports compliance. He continued to state there was a delay in the 4-year review of management due to COVID-19 and competing priorities. While black seabream conservation advice has changed, advice for other features remains the same, therefore, current management for those features is assumed sufficient. Sussex IFCA is in the process of drafting a formal MCZ Assessment as part of the overdue review.
- 10.3 Rob Pearson advised that the technical subcommittee, under delegation from the Principal Committee, reviewed Sussex IFCA's evidence on Kingmere MCZ in light of updated conservation advice from Natural England. Technical subcommittee members noted that the lack of condition assessments and formal conservation targets from Natural England hinders a fully informed review. However, the evidence shows current management has significantly reduced fishing pressure and appears to be supporting recovery of black bream populations, which are reportedly thriving both within and beyond the MCZ. The subcommittee raised concerns about reputational risk and potential non-compliance if stricter no-take measures were proposed, without clear evidence of benefits being provided. He stated that the evidence shows existing

measures are fulfilling the IFCA's statutory duties to further conservation objectives of the site, that the objective to 'recover' black bream is being achieved and therefore management does not require change at this time. The subcommittee members voted to support the recommendations and continue with current management, with a majority supporting decisions but 2 abstentions from NE and EA.

- 10.4 Rob Pearson concluded that SxIFCA is preparing a formal MCZ Assessment for Kingmere MCZ to evaluate the impact of current activities on designated features, with a draft expected by July. He outlined planned work to increase our evidence base, including a collaborative project with the Angling Trust being developed to collect standardised CPUE data to monitor black bream populations, and discussions are ongoing with the University of Plymouth to investigate black bream spawning activity in July. Sussex IFCA will continue site inspections and support research to gather monitoring data. A Monitoring and Control Plan is also being developed with Natural England to establish activity thresholds for future management reviews.
- 10.5 Shaun Brewer noted that, based on information shared at other meetings he has attended, the current plan for Rampion 2 involves routing the cable directly through Kingmere MCZ. He asked whether Sussex IFCA is investigating the potential impacts of this on black bream nesting activity.
- 10.6 Rob Pearson informed that SxIFCA provided a response and evidence towards the consultation which closed last year and was shared with members regarding the disturbance to designated features.
- 10.7 Dr George Balchin stated that there was a lot of discussion regarding noise pollution and informed on projects to aid biodiversity, such as reef blocks and scour protection.
- 10.8 Shaun Brewer responded by expressing concerns that both reef blocks and scour protection would be ineffective. He highlighted the contradiction of efforts made through Sussex IFCA to protect Kingmere MCZ, only for a cable to potentially be laid through it, which he fears will cause significant damage.
- 10.9 Dr George Balchin directed members to the insert to the report pack. He informed them that due to time constraints the MCZ Assessment was not finished but the insert provided demonstrates the minimal fishing effort in Kingmere MCZ since introduction of management. He advised, in anticipation of the assessment, angling is the only fishing type to highlight as significant but added that this is already strictly managed, therefore SxIFCA is confident that the conservation objectives are being achieved. He took time to explain that a black bream condition assessment is required from Natural England to assess the management, but this is not yet completed, and we understand will not be for some time.
- 10.10 Dr George Balchin informed members that to reduce the bag limit, which is in place year-round, would be highly controversial with anglers. He

also added that Matt Doggett attended and presented survey information at the recent Tech Sub as an expert on bream, specifically within Kingmere, through conducting surveys dating back to 2002. Matt Doggett's statement was that Kingmere MCZ is at carrying capacity for nesting bream, supporting the position that current management is delivering on its objectives.

- 10.11 Cllr Julia Hilton raised the Brighton Marina dredging and disposal site from the minutes of the technical subcommittee.
- 10.12 Rob Pearson advised that this was not directly relevant to the agenda item and will be covered in the C&R update.
- 10.13 Prof. Paul Leonard updated members that he attended Cefas in February which resulted in useful data that was directed on to Dr George Balchin.
- 10.14 Cllr Theresa Fowler asked when the cable will be run through Kingmere.
- 10.15 Prof. Peter Jones informed that this was a separate matter.
- 10.16 Cllr Deborah Urquhart notified members that there is an upcoming judicial review of the Rampion 2 decision.

Recommendations:

- i. **That members note the evidence provided, as considered at the Technical Subcommittee of 13th March (Annex II).**
- ii. **That members consider and approve the recommendation of the Technical Subcommittee; that current available evidence suggests there is no requirement to alter the existing management to ensure that Kingmere MCZ meets its conservation objectives towards black bream.**
- iii. **That Sussex IFCA continues to develop a monitoring and control plan for fishing activity on the site, in consultation with Natural England and the Angling Trust.**

14 Approve

0 Against

2 Abstention

ALL RESOLVED to accept the recommendations.

INFORMATION ITEMS

11 Hand Gathering Byelaw 2021

- 11.1 Rob Pearson reminded members that the Hand Gathering Byelaw was confirmed in December 2024, along with the Minimum Size Byelaw. He reported that through the first quarter of 2025, we focused on implementing the Minimum Size Byelaw, notifying and educating stakeholders. Rob Pearson then added that our focus recently has been on preparing the database functions and guidance documents for the Hand Gathering Byelaw introduction.
- 11.2 Rob Pearson informed members that the Authority's strategic management review identified hand gathering of sea fisheries resources as a key area for management, leading to the development of the Hand Gathering Byelaw. Hand Gathering activities, including the collection of bait species and seaweeds for both recreational and commercial purposes, are often dispersed, occur in remote areas, and remain largely unrecorded and unregulated within the district. He said the Hand Gathering Byelaw introduces a district-wide bag limit and a permit system for those exceeding limits, aiming to regulate and record hand gathering activities. It includes specific restrictions within Marine Protected Areas to protect sensitive features. The byelaw seeks to enhance fishery sustainability, support ecosystem health, contribute to sustainable development, balance user needs and protect marine habitats. He then took time to read out the policy objectives to members.
- 11.3 Rob Pearson continued that SxIFCA have developed an implementation plan for the Hand Gathering Byelaw. Working with database provider CFront, they have ensured a functional permit application process and catch-return system will be in place before the byelaw takes effect. Key milestones include proposing the 1st May 2025 for permit applications to open and a communications campaign commences. The intention is that on the 1st July 2025 permits will become active, the catch-return function live, and enforcement of the byelaw will begin. He said this two-month notification period will be used to promote the byelaw and educate stakeholders, allowing commercial gatherers time to apply before enforcement starts.
- 11.4 Rob Pearson directed members to the table in the report, detailing the technical guidance documents and promotional materials, and said there is a range of communication materials being produced and distributed through various forms such as press, social media, website, emails and officers on the ground. He then opened the meeting up to any questions.
- 11.5 Kim Matthews stated his longstanding connection with the Adur Estuary and noted residents concerns around cockle gathering by groups of people, noting that the local council have Environmental Health notices displayed informing that this shellfish should not enter the human food chain. He reported there are also concerns of modern slavery issues

surrounding the gathering community. He further asked if IFCOs communicate with the Gangmasters Authority.

- 11.6 Rob Pearson replied to confirm that SxIFCA officers are in communication with the Gangmasters Authority. He also added that none of the Sussex District areas have classified shellfish beds, therefore no hand gathered shellfish should enter the food chain from Sussex.
- 11.7 Kim Matthews asked if we could post SxIFCA notices alongside the Environmental Health signage.
- 11.8 Rob Pearson confirmed this would be possible.
- 11.9 Prof. Peter Jones advised that the Hand Gathering Byelaw will now allow SxIFCA to enforce and intervene on these issues.
- 11.10 Prof. Paul Leonard asked if the permits would be for an individual specifically and nontransferable and noted the importance of this being stated on the permit.
- 11.11 Rob Pearson confirmed that this was part of the permit conditions.
- 11.12 Dr Paul Driver raised that we should make it clear in communications that we are not forbidding hand gathering with small amounts under the bag limits not requiring a permit, as a consequence of this could be a view that we are ceasing a traditional activity.
- 11.13 Rob Pearson agreed and added that the bag limits were assessed carefully.
- 11.14 Cllr Julia Hilton said that the PR should be adapted and published in local newspapers and further raised the modern slavery aspect with regards to communications and the opportunity to promote SxIFCA work through stories, alongside facts and evidence.
- 11.15 Prof. Peter Jones was in agreement with promoting the PR to local press outlets and suggested potential opportunities for television interviews.
- 11.16 Kim Matthews informed members of a new group 'Friends of the Adur SSSI' who would be a good avenue to educate.
- 11.17 Cllr Deborah Urquhart said that it would be beneficial to also inform local businesses and restaurants of the Hand Gathering Byelaw.

ALL RESOLVED to approve the report.

12 Conservation and Research Update

- 12.1 Dr George Balchin stated that he is happy to take the majority of the report as read but would summarise highlights.

- 12.2 Dr George Balchin highlighted the continued effort on Fisheries Management Plans, including the Black Seabream FMP.
- 12.3 Dr George Balchin updated that the full C&R team attended the Angling for Sustainability and Pollack FISP Conference on 12th February, where they presented current project results and confirmed intentions to continue tagging work on the south coast, subject to securing further funding.
- 12.4 Dr George Balchin informed members that Rampion 2 has now been approved and moved to a further stage of consultation, and we will look to direct inshore fishers towards the dates of engagement for this project.
- 12.5 Dr George Balchin added that the Technical Advisory Group has now implemented a national IFCA Environment Officers Course in Brixham which he and new staff member, Sol Lucas, attended in January and that the training was well received.
- 12.6 Dr George Balchin outlined the Conservation and Research Annual Plan with the main items for the year ahead including the Shellfish Permit Byelaw review, habitat mapping project, scallop potting trial and HRAs.
- 12.7 Kim Matthews stated that he attended the Shoreham engagement event on the authorisation review process of the Bass Fisheries Management Plan, informing on the issue that the entitlement is for the boat and not the licensed person. He added that in 2016 when the regulations were introduced it had 2000 entitlements issued and is now at 900.
- 12.8 Paul Johnson corrected the initial entitlement number to 1200 not 2000.
- 12.9 Kim Matthews continued to inform that there was a discussion around widening the authorisations options and noted that he would not be happy after the cost and time he has spent in obtaining an authorisation. He further informed that the discussion considered dual authorisations, whereby a fisher can land bass caught by net or by rod and line, but stated there is a rule which prohibits both methods of fishing on a boat at the same time. Kim Matthews also added due to climate change the bass distribution has migrated northwards.
- 12.10 Rob Pearson replied to advise he sits on the Bass Management Group for the Bass FMP, which will be receiving the outcomes of the authorisation review group, undertaken by the MMO, and will feed back this information into the Bass FMP.
- 12.11 Paul Johnson informed that he attended a meeting earlier that morning particularly on Bass authorisation transfers and is hopeful this process will be smoothed out.

- 12.12 Prof Paul Leonard highlighted from the plan the Environmental Impact Assessments which refer to enforcement case files and suggested a change in the terminology and structure.
- 12.13 Prof. Paul Leonard raised the scallop potting trial and stated his thoughts that a maximum landing size is as important as a minimum landing size to retain a healthy stock of large fecund scallops for the fishery to avoid collapse.
- 12.14 Dr George Balchin advised that the trial is extremely small-scale but said he is aware that the inshore stock could be a valuable spawning population but there is reasonable evidence to suggest there are large areas of scallops inshore that could enable a small, restrictive fishery.
- 12.15 Shaun Brewer asked if this will be trialed across the district.
- 12.16 Dr George Balchin confirmed that he agrees that fisheries can be highly spatially specific and therefore has arranged trials in the east, middle and west of the district.
- 12.17 Shaun Brewer reported that he knew of a fisher he could put SxIFCA in contact with who would be interested in the scallop pot trial.
- 12.18 Dr George Balchin gave a final update from the C&R report on the Brighton Marina dredge and disposal site license renewal, which SxIFCA have a longstanding objection to and directed members to the final letter for their consideration prior to submission to the MMO.
- 12.19 Shaun Brewer explained that the issue of sedimentation causing detriment to the crab and lobster fishery is not solely a problem from Brighton but throughout the district. He questioned what the alternative was, as the dredging must continue or the harbour will be obsolete and is already a danger to users.
- 12.20 Rob Pearson stated that the letter is not opposing dredging, as we understand it is a statutory requirement for the marina to maintain safe navigation, specifically it is the appropriateness of the disposal site in Beachy Head West Marine Conservation Zone. He asked for clarification from Paul Johnson on how an alternative disposal would be identified and who would be responsible.
- 12.21 Paul Johnson clarified that the onus is on the license applicant to formally identify and apply for a new disposal site, which could take years. He said that determination from the MMO licensing team is expected next week.
- 12.22 Shaun Brewer further questioned whether sediment disposal alone could be responsible for the decline in lobster and crab populations. He asked officers if other potential factors, such as noise pollution from the development of the wind farm, had also been explored.

- 12.23 Rob Pearson explained that there are various partner organisations we have worked with, such as CHASM, who are looking into sedimentation. He said that as part of the environmental impact reviews for Rampion they would have included assessments of noise pollution.
- 12.24 Dr Paul Driver added that SxIFCA officers will be conducting crab and lobster potting surveys.
- 12.25 Dr George Balchin confirmed that officers would be undertaking surveys aboard potting vessels in Sussex. He further said that noise pollution has been a significant area of consideration for the Rampion 2 consultation, which may partly be off the back of anecdotal evidence from the impact of the first windfarm, Rampion.
- 12.26 Prof. Paul Leonard explained that in relation to dredging, when part of the licensing team at Defra, they would consider managed realignment projects, where, as an alternative to sediment disposal sites at sea, the sediment was transported to somewhere it would support sea defence and used the example of Tilbury London Gateway and the HS2 project. He said these methods have proven to work but it is a matter of cost.

ALL RESOLVED to approve the report and appendices.

Finance Performance - Verbal Report

- Ruth Harrison briefly updated members on the financial performance reports, which were discussed in length earlier in the Finance Subcommittee meeting and approved, subject to the independent auditor's examination.
- Ruth Harrison informed that the most significant expenditure item from January to March was in relation to the purchase of *FPV Osprey*.
- Ruth Harrison said that income for the quarter was £488,000 against an expenditure of £378,000, which gave a surplus of £110,000 for the quarter. She added that we had budgeted for a £25,000 deficit which is a significant disparity but is a result of receiving the £150,000 capital grant from Defra towards *FPV Osprey* which weighted the income into this quarter.
- Ruth Harrison stated that looking overall at the year, the bottom line was a deficit of £47,000 compared to an original budgeted deficit of £98,000, resulting in a positive variance. This was due to higher income and lower costs across the year.
- Ruth Harrison advised that SxIFCA make contributions into the reserves, including the capital finance reserves and this year the total cost of *FPV*

Osprey of £248,000 has been moved into the capital finance reserve to fund future depreciation of the asset.

- Ruth Harrison said the net gain in reserves was £198,000 and the total value of reserves at the end of the financial year, excluding the re-evaluation reserve for SxIFCA vessels, was £1117,000.
- Ruth Harrison asked if there were any questions from members, but none were forthcoming.

ALL RESOLVED to approve the report.

13 Compliance and Enforcement Report

- 13.1 Angharad Purcell introduced a detailed report covering January to March. She said there were 65 intel reports within the quarter and 40 patrols, encompassing sea, drone and road patrols. The majority of sea patrols were focused on the Shellfish Permit Byelaw, scallop dredging and national bass regulations.
- 13.2 Angharad Purcell stated that, within the reporting period, there were 11 offences reported, 2 advisory letters, 1 verbal warning, 6 official written warnings and 3 ongoing investigations as we move into the current quarter.
- 13.3 Angharad Purcell updated members on training and development with 4 officers attending the national IFCA training courses in Brixham, 2 officers completing the competent officer course and 2, as mentioned by Dr George Balchin, completing the new environment science and conservation course. There was also mandatory training including ENG1, Seafarer Medical Certificate, STCW qualifications an officer attended the safety management systems training.
- 13.4 Dr Paul Driver commended the training program SxIFCA hold and keep current. He further asked with regards to *FPV Merlin* and the lack of utilising this asset and if there are plans to carry out more work with this vessel.
- 13.5 Rob Pearson informed that we will be looking to review how we utilise *FPV Merlin* more in the near future, considering not only enforcement work but supporting research work such as data collection and vessel sightings. He added that operating from the same base mooring for several years may have resulted in underrepresenting other areas across the district.
- 13.6 Angharad Purcell further added that the Skipper, Chris Hubbard has voiced the desire to utilise *FPV Merlin* more.
- 13.7 Kim Matthews raised that a Worthing fisherman was concerned about black market fish being sold to restaurants at a lower price. He further

noted that Southern IFCA had prosecuted an angler in Langston Harbour with a fine of £6000 for 50 undersize bream onboard.

- 13.8 Kim Matthews informed he was very upset to read in Fishing News that Hastings has only 15 registered vessels left due to factors including the lack of cod, sole and further management such as netting byelaw, the French trawlers, seal populations and climate change.
- 13.9 Shaun Brewer referred to Kim Matthews comment on black market fish which he said is not solely Worthing but throughout the district.
- 13.10 Rob Pearson informed that the introduction of the Minimum Size Byelaw provides a further avenue we can pursue with recreational anglers landing fish. He also said we always welcome intelligence as this guides our enforcement activities, we are aware of reports regarding certain vessels and have ongoing intelligence led enforcement plans to pick up these issues.

ALL RESOLVED to approve the report and appendices.

14 Vessel Maintenance Log

- 14.1 Prof Peter Jones commended the report, stating that it was very detailed and explained, in the interest of time it can be taken as read.

ALL RESOLVED to accept the report.

15 Communications Report

- 15.1 Angharad Purcell introduced the item advising that, as always, it reports on the actions taken to engage with stakeholders during the last quarter. She added that the website and database both continue to run as expected with a over 4300 visitors to SxIFCA website for the quarter.
- 15.2 Angharad Purcell informed that there are still missing biographies and photos of members on the authority page and asked if members would please write a few paragraphs along with a photo for the website team to upload. She explained this helps with transparency and accountability, providing information on the specific knowledge each member brings to the authority.
- 15.3 Angharad Purcell updated members that publicity has been focused on the introduction of the Minimum Size Byelaw. We also marked the 4th anniversary of the Nearshore Byelaw on 18th March and as part of this Rob Pearson was part of a segment on ITV Meridian.

- 15.4 Angharad Purcell took time to explain that we continue to use multiple social media platforms with posts, which continue to engage and raise awareness over a wide online demographic. She explained that SxIFCA collaborative posts are key to driving stakeholder engagement and enhance cross promotion with other partners and gave an example of the SxIFCA Elasmobranch CoC which the The Shark Trust were happy to collaborate on promoting, resulting in a reach of 20,000. Further collaborations included SKRP, MMO, Sussex Dolphin Project and Saltwater Angler.
- 15.5 Angharad Purcell said that SxIFCA have continued community engagement with attendance and contributions to partnership meetings and events and noted the list within the report.

ALL RESOLVED to accept the report.

16 Chief Officers Update

- 16.1 Rob Pearson informed that there are 2 outstanding byelaws, the MPA Byelaw 2021 and Netting Permit Byelaw which are both in quality assurance process with the MMO.
- 16.2 Rob Pearson briefly advised on the IFCA Conduct and Operations report, which was published on 6th February for the period 2018-2022. Data was collected through surveys, direct engagement and IFCA officer input, including 23 quayside conversations in Sussex. The report outlines 13 national conclusions and a government response, including recognition of funding concerns for the IFCA's as well as areas needing improvement. He said the conclusions are very mixed, feedback is not district-specific, therefore SxIFCA have taken the action to assess which conclusions are most relevant locally from the report. He reminded members that the publication is now three years on from the end of the reporting period, within that time Covid 19 impacted services, including face to face engagement with stakeholders. He concluded that in response to the report, IFCA Chief Officers have met with Defra Deputy Director, Rachel Muckle to progress in addressing the relevant issues. A national steering group, including Defra, IFCAs, and the MMO, has been formed to address the report's findings and improve future reporting processes.
- 16.3 Rob Pearson informed that he and the Chair, Prof. Peter Jones had attended the Association of IFCAs' event '*Securing Sustainable Small-Scale and Inshore Fisheries*' at the House of Commons on 17th March. The event was attended by MPs, Ministers, and key stakeholders, including strong representation from Sussex groups such as the Hastings Fishermen's Protection Society and Newhaven Fishers CIC. Several reports were presented, with more events planned for 2025.

- 16.4 Rob Pearson took time to update members on staffing and committee changes at Sussex IFCA. First Mate Matt Wiseman left in December for a marine engineering role closer to home. A recruitment round for his replacement as Senior IFCO (Skipper) did not yield a suitable candidate, therefore IFCO James Tapley has been offered an internal development opportunity over 18 months.
- 16.5 Rob Pearson informed that due to James Tapley acting up, we have recruitment underway to backfill his current role that attracted over 30 applicants, with interviews to be held in mid-May.
- 16.6 Rob Pearson reiterated the Chairs earlier mention that Senior IFCO Nick Rogers will sadly leave at the end of April after nine years, to pursue a career in project management in London and we wish him all the best.
- 16.7 Rob Pearson said he was happy to welcome newly MMO appointed member, Shaun Brewer, a local commercial fisher and Vice Chair of Brighton Fisherman's Protection Society and look forward to his contributions to the authority.
- 16.8 Rob Pearson reminded members that this was Graham Furness final meeting and will step down, having served since 2010. This will leave two committee vacancies – one for the commercial fishing sector and one for the recreational sea angling sector – which the IFCA will continue to support the MMO governance team.
- 16.9 Prof Peter Jones asked Paul Johnson if this was his last committee meeting prior to retirement from the MMO.
- 16.10 Paul Johnson advised that he would possibly be at the July meeting but will retire at the end of July 2025 from his position as Principal Marine Officer for the MMO in the southeast.

ALL RESOLVED to accept the report.

17 Chief Officers Group

ALL RESOLVED to accept the report.

18 Association of Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities

ALL RESOLVED to accept the report.

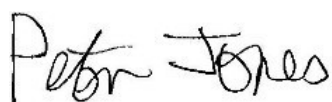
19 AOB

None.

20 To confirm no requirement for the Technical Subcommittee meeting in June.

21 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

21.1 24th July 2025.

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

Prof. Peter Jones, Chair Sussex IFCA.