

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
SUSSEX INSHORE FISHERIES & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY
on 26th October 2023**

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

PRESENT

Members

Prof. Peter Jones (Chair)
Councillor Noel Atkins (West Sussex County Council)
Councillor Julia Hilton (East Sussex County Council)
Councillor Theresa Fowler (Brighton & Hove City Council)
Dr Paul Driver (MMO Appointee)
Sally Ashby (MMO Appointee)
Graham Furness (MMO Appointee)
Paul Johnson (MMO Appointee)
Prof. Paul Leonard (MMO Appointee)
Mark Bennett (EA)
Julian Seaman (MMO Appointee)
Becca Turley (NE)
Garry Walker (MMO Appointee)
Gary Edwards (MMO Appointee)

Staff

Robert Pearson (Chief Fisheries & Conservation Officer)
Angharad Purcell (Deputy Chief Fisheries & Conservation Officer)
Matt Wiseman (Mate of Patrol Vessels)
Dr George Balchin (Conservation & Research Manager)
Rebecca Belleni (Committee Manager and Personal Assistant to SMT)
James Tapley (Inshore Fisheries & Conservation Officer)
Vanessa Simons (Inshore Fisheries & Conservation Officer) [Online]

1 CHAIR & CHIEF OFFICER'S INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Prof. Peter Jones opened the third quarterly meeting of 2023 with a welcome to our two new members to the Sussex IFCA Committee. Councillor Theresa Fowler, the newly appointed from BHCC and Becca Turley who is the new NE representative.
- 1.2 The Chair, Prof. Peter Jones also notified the committee that Tim Dapling was unwell with Covid and unfortunately unable to attend.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor Emma Evans (West Sussex County Council)
Councillor Pieter Montyn (West Sussex County Council)
Councillor Tom Liddiard (East Sussex County Council)
Councillor Sam Adeniji (East Sussex County Council)
Dr Corina Ciocan (MMO Appointee)
Andy Read (MMO Appointee)
Tim Dapling (Strategic Advisor and Clerk)

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 Garry Walker as a Commercial Fisherman.
- 3.3 Cllr Noel Atkins as West Sussex County Councillor and for Worthing Borough Council. Member of Littlehampton Harbour Board. Chair of Worthing Royal Naval Association.
- 3.4 Gary Edwards as a Commercial Fisherman.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- 4.1 Prof. Peter Jones, asked members to approve the minutes from the previous meeting held in July as an accurate record.

ALL RESOLVED to approve the minutes.

5. MATTERS ARISING

- 5.1 Prof. Peter Jones asked all present if there were any matters arising.
- 5.2 Prof. Peter Jones then explained that Cllr. Theresa Fowler, the new B&HCC representative has agreed via email to be nominated to sit as a member on the Finance Subcommittee. He asked the present members if they would agree to this.

ALL RESOLVED to approve.

Information Items

6 Beachy Head East MCZ Update

- 6.1 Prof. Peter Jones introduced this item prior to handing over to Chief Fisheries Officer, Rob Pearson.
- 6.2 Rob Pearson provided members with a thorough update on BHE MCZ following the previous meeting in July, whereby after significant discussion and consideration of arguments and evidence raised, the authority resolved to proceed with making the marine protected areas byelaw 2023 and accepted the recommendations to commence formal public consultation.
- 6.3 Rob Pearson highlighted the successful completion of this formal consultation in respect to schedule 5 and that this was held in accordance with the requirements set out in Defra's IFCA published byelaw guidance. He added that three drop-in sessions were held within the geographical area of the byelaw for BHE MCZ, Eastbourne, Bexhill and Hastings. He continued to add that in contrast to the informal consultation workshops and despite being well advertised through stakeholder circulation, local and national press and social media, there was a total of only 10 attendees over the three dates. He added that we hope this is due to good engagement leading up to the making of the byelaw such as the informal consultation and therefore stakeholders had a good understanding of the proposed management. He also noted the stakeholder consultation fatigue issue due to the volume of consultations stakeholders have been subject to this year.
- 6.4 Rob Pearson continued to update that the formal consultation closed on the 6th October 2023 and that we are currently waiting for confirmation from the MMO on the written response submissions and added that we were directly copied into five from; Sussex Wildlife Trust, Natural England (NE), Blue Marine Foundation, Marine Conservation Society and a single member of the public. The MMO have advised as of this morning that there are further responses beyond these that they plan to send imminently and then these will be reviewed at a Technical Subcommittee.
- 6.5 Rob Pearson made reference to the previous committee meeting and the large discussions surrounding a single historically observed point of *Sabellaria* within zone 2 that would not be protected from the exclusion of towed gear. He added that members resolved to make the Byelaw as proposed after considering the arguments presented on the basis of low confidence of this historic record and in order to expedite protection of designated features within zone 1 as well as aiming to meet Defra's 2024 MPA deadline.

Cllr. Theresa Fowler joined the meeting and Prof. Peter Jones welcomed her to the meeting and to the Committee as an elected member from B&HCC representative.

- 6.6 Rob Pearson continued to note that NE abstained from the vote and shortly after July's committee meeting, Sussex IFCA invited NE to discuss the review process and monitoring control plan for BHE MCZ, to determine what actions could be taken to enable NE to support the Byelaw. This meeting took place in September whereby NE presented new information from a recent dive survey which found no *Sabellaria* at the original point in zone 2, though it was found at a new location within the towed gear exclusion zone.
- 6.7 Rob Pearson explained that as an outcome from this meeting, Sussex IFCA wrote to NE with a request to submit this new evidence as part of the formal consultation, to then be reviewed at the Technical Subcommittee. The letter also raised concerns on issues caused by the delays in providing this evidence throughout the Byelaw development process. He reported that NE had since attended a further meeting to discuss how Sussex IFCA and NE can work towards a more strategic, forward-facing approach to MPA work, with the intention to prevent issues such as those that have occurred within this process.
- 6.8 Rob Pearson concluded that once the MMO have shared all the formal consultation responses, we will hold a Technical Subcommittee meeting to consider the responses, including our approach to the new evidence provided by NE.
- 6.9 Prof. Peter Jones thanked Rob Pearson for the BHE MCZ update and summarised this new evidence by NE which has been shared and therefore the proposal which will be discussed further at a subsequent Technical Subcommittee and to hopefully then be a decision item at the next principal committee meeting in January 2024.
- 6.10 Garry Walker questioned the extent and area of the additional new *Sabellaria* data sightings.
- 6.11 Prof. Peter Jones informed that it was a single area sighting which was focused on surveying seahorses within BHE MCZ but following this NE have commissioned a further extensive survey at which point he asked Becca Turley to provide an update on this, agreeing that the deadline for this new evidence to be submitted was 6th January 2024.
- 6.12 Prof. Paul Leonard raised concerns on further survey work and the timeframe due to the unsettled weather likely at this time of year.
- 6.13 Becca Turley provided an update on the further survey work which has been commissioned to Seastar and will be drop down camera work within

zone 2, specifically on the points where *Sabellaria* was found and also on a wider surrounding area due to its mobile nature. She also added that this footage will be quality assured as soon as it is available by a team on standby to analyse the data in order to meet the 6th January 2023 deadline.

- 6.14 Prof. Paul Leonard asked if NE had looked at the Marine Aggregate Levy Sustainability Data.
- 6.15 Becca Turley in response said that this had not been looked at.
- 6.16 Prof. Paul Leonard explained that he was in discussions with Dr George Balchin with regards to this data which is historic and beneficial to consider as part of BHE MCZ.

Recommendations

- i. **That the Authority notes the completion of the public, formal consultation in respect to Marine Protected Areas Byelaw 2023 Schedule 5 Beachy Head East Marine Conservation Zone.**
- ii. **That the Authority notes that, through formal consultation, Natural England have submitted new evidence in respect to the designated features of the site.**
- iii. **That a meeting of the Technical Subcommittee is held in November 2023 to consider the analysis of the formal consultation responses.**

ALL AGREED to accept the recommendations.

7 Fishery Management Plans - Update

- 7.1 Rob Pearson gave an overview following the announcement at the previous Committee Meeting in July of the six frontrunner FMPs consultations, reminding members they had resolved to support submission of a collective response on behalf of the Authority. He advised that Tim Dapling led on drafting this response, covering each of the six FMPs, each of which have relevance to the Sussex IFCA district and stakeholders. This draft response was shared with Technical Subcommittee members for review and comments via email, and he gave thanks for those who contributed to this. The final response was submitted prior to the consultation closing date of the 1st October.

- 7.2 Robert Pearson took a moment to stress the volume of material alongside each plan and subsequently the difficulty for stakeholders to properly engage and respond to these plans, making reference to consultation fatigue. He added that Sussex IFCA have had the opportunity to discuss this with senior MMO colleagues who are aware of the issue.
- 7.3 Garry Walker highlighted that a number of Rye fishermen have attended some of the FMP's and agreed with the consultation fatigue issue.
- 7.4 Cllr. Julia Hilton questioned why there is not an ecosystem-based approach instead of species specific which would help reduce reading material. She also raised whether this work would then involve Sussex IFCA in the responsibility out to cover and implement out to 12miles.
- 7.5 Rob Pearson clarified that the IFCA's are considering what their role will be in transitioning from development of the plans to implementation. He also acknowledged her initial comment which he assured was mentioned in the written consultation response with regards to the ecosystem-based approach.
- 7.6 Cllr. Julia Hilton further raised ESCC reviewing its Waste and Renewal Plan in 2024 and asked if there is any consideration being given as to how FMP work will feed into the Waste and Renewal Plans review.
- 7.7 Rob Pearson explained this is something we can look into, but that work tends to be focused on by the MMO in regard to licensing, for which relevant applications Sussex IFCA do consult on.
- 7.8 Cllr. Theresa Fowler questioned the non-UK fleet and her concern around trawling within the 6-12 miles and for clarification on this.
- 7.9 Prof. Peter Jones explained that some trawling vessels have historic rights within the 6-12 miles though they are still regulated as are all vessels by the MMO between 6-12 miles.
- 7.10 Cllr. Theresa Fowler continued to question the trawling issue and voice her concern with regards to bycatch particularly around dolphins and on speaking with the Whale and Dolphin Conservation, she is looking to a motion to increase regulation on the bycatch as WDC have voiced concern of dolphin bycatch being dumped offshore.
- 7.11 Paul Johnson advised from the MMO perspective that a lot of work is done around bycatch and highlighted the vessel monitoring systems whereby these vessels are monitored and routine inspections are carried out in high numbers and do not encounter any dolphin bycatch.

- 7.12 Garry Walker agreed with Paul Johnson and added as a commercial fisherman he has never heard of any marine mammals being the subject of bycatch within the district.
- 7.13 Rob Pearson returned the focus to the FMP's and specifically regarding the AIFCA response to the Whelk, Crab & Lobster FMP's. He thanked Paul Driver, Prof. Paul Leonard and Gary Edwards for their contribution. He said the workshop in Poole was a great opportunity to have delivery partners, IFCA, MMO and Defra representatives together for constructive conversations and development, which is documented in the outcome report submitted to Defra as part of the consultation process.
- 7.14 Rob Pearson highlighted the next five FMP's consisting of Cockles, Queen Scallop, North Sea and Channel sprat, Southern North Sea demersal non-quota species and Southern North Sea skate and rays. The deadline for delivery is the end of 2024. He said that Sussex IFCA have started early engagement with some of the delivery partners, Dr. George Balchin will sit on the working group for skate and ray FMP.
- 7.15 Rob Pearson concluded by explaining there are a total of 43 FMPs and 36 of these are for English waters, therefore the Authority will need to consider engagement with the development of each plan with its relevance to the district and stakeholders and consider the resource and capacity required to contribute effectively.
- 7.16 Prof. Peter Jones thanked Rob Pearson for this overview and update and made reference to the appended detailed consultation response which included reference to the ecosystem-based approach.
- 7.17 Prof. Paul Leonard tactfully suggested a two page summary to submit to Defra with regards to the workshop outcome report based on his experience working for Defra. He added that he has not seen the two page summary submitted by the AIFCA and feels this would be beneficial to read and asked if this could be circulated.

Recommendations

- i. **For members to note the report.**
- ii. **For members to note the Authorities response to the six frontrunner FMP's and the consultation response document appended to this report**

- iii. **For members to note the Authorities contribution to the AIFCA led FMP Review project and the workshop outcome report appended to this report.**

ALL AGREED to accept the recommendation.

8 Presentation Pete Davies (University of Plymouth)

Fish Intel Project Update

9 Conservation and Research Update

- 9.1 Dr George Balchin introduced the item highlighting that the Sussex IFCA Conservation and Research team has contributed to Dr Sarah Coulthard's study of the role of IFCA's in the development and delivery of FMPs and co-management more broadly.
- 9.2 Dr George Balchin briefly advised on attending the FMP workshop in Poole along with colleagues and committee members, Dr Paul Driver and Prof. Paul Leonard and commented on the importance of this in term of meeting with other IFCA's and working on how to increase efficiency with FMP responses. He further added that the team had also contributed with resources, presentations, reports and papers for the AIFCA to form part of their FMP website.
- 9.3 Dr George Balchin continued with reference to the FMP response written by Tim Dapling and added that this included analysis of whelk, crab and lobster fisheries, which was gathered from the data submitted by catch returns through the Shellfish Permit Byelaw.
- 9.4 Dr George Balchin updated that they are in the process of developing a habitat regulation assessment for Solent and Dorset coast SPA along with Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay SPA which have been extended to further protect tern foraging areas.
- 9.5 Dr George Balchin took time to cover the collaborative work by the C&R team including the Fish Intel and now Angling for Sustainability Project, which has significance in feeding data into FMP's and review of the Kingmere MCZ Byelaw.
- 9.6 Dr George Balchin continued on collaborative work in regards to Sussex Kelp Recovery Project (SKRP) and on the successful completion of 5 years' worth of towed video surveys. He added that there is an opportunity now after 5 years of data gathering, to write a report and is in talks with Chris

Yesson Zoological Society of London (ZSL) to work collaboratively on this with the help of a student from University of Sussex in order to assist with data analysis.

- 9.7 Dr George Balchin added that it has been a busy year for Small Fish Surveys, with expansion of effort in large part to our collaboration with Solent Seascape Project. He added that there are talks with the RSPB in Pagham to restart Small Fish Surveys within Pagham and Medmerry.
- 9.8 Dr George Balchin moved focus to the Elasmobranch Code of Conduct, which he presented to committee previously in April 2022. He further advised that this has now been reviewed by The Shark Trust who kindly gave feedback on minor amendments. The only significant change was in regards to the commercial fisheries advice to fall in line with their Shark Trust fisheries advisory leaflet, which was published this year.
- 9.9 Dr George Balchin mentioned the completion of the third year of potting surveys in association with Blue Marine Foundation with hopes to see analysis from the data in the first half of 2024.
- 9.10 Dr George Balchin finally added that we have taken on a photojournalism student on a voluntary basis who has been out on patrols to document work which aids our communications and annual report. He also explained that we hosted an intern through Wild Coast Sussex for 2 days. He concluded through update on further training that has been carried out by staff in the Conservation and Research Team.
- 9.11 Prof. Peter Jones thanked Dr George Balchin for this impressive diversity of research and training updates.
- 9.12 Prof. Paul Leonard made reference to pg.134 and the interactive map and questioned which data is being used if solely Sussex IFCA or also dataset from the Marine Environmental Data and Information Network (MEDIN) which would complement the work.
- 9.13 Prof. Paul Leonard additionally asked with regards to non-quota species in particular cuttlefish and asked the likelihood of work on this within the research programme in the next 12 months.
- 9.14 Dr George Balchin initially responded in regards to MEDIN and advised that they are currently in the process of submitting the past 20 years' worth of small fish survey data to MEDIN which is arduous due to the volume and varying formatting challenges with such a long-term data set.
- 9.15 Dr George Balchin secondly advised with regards to non-quota species and cuttlefish that the predominant work on this will come from our data though catch returns from the Shellfish Permit Byelaw. He added that there is no plan to expand this research beyond the data analysis from the Shellfish Permits but there is potential to do so if deemed necessary. He further said he will speak to Seafish regarding this as there is a question around what

potting data they accept as he believes they will not accept surveys from catch that hasn't been landed, which he believes is beneficial.

- 9.15 Dr Paul Driver said Vanessa Simons had sent him the results from the Blue Marine Foundation potting surveys and he added that it was interesting to see nearly all of the lobsters taken were above legal size therefore the ongoing decline may be due to recruitment factors.
- 9.16 Gary Edwards responded to this advising that it is due to the increase in conger eels and smooth hounds. He further gave personal examples of this from his years of fishing in Chichester and Littlehampton and the drastic increase he has witnessed giving an example of a 20lbs conger eel with a whole 1.5lb lobster in its stomach.
- 9.17 Sally Ashby raised trophic levels being unbalanced through historic overfishing and climate change, noting that this will affect the species that are not commercially viable to overpopulate and take over.
- 9.18 Gary Edwards was in agreement and continued by voicing his concern on unnatural levels of tope that we currently now have which drive bream off the nest sites in breeding season, stressing that top predators change their feeding patterns and risk killing off our shellfish fishery.
- 9.19 Garry Walker informed with regards to the cuttlefish landing for non-quota species that commercial fishermen should be recording the discards in the log book on the catch app. He also raised that small cuttlefish are definitely caught in towed gear and stressed the importance of a cuttlefish size limit. He finally added that fishermen are now seeing skate being eaten by seals which is very unusual.

ALL RESOLVED to approve the report and appendices.

10 Compliance Report

- 10.1 Angharad Purcell opened the agenda item advising that in the interest of time most of the item can be taken as read. She advised that most of the sea patrols this quarter have been focused on shellfish permit byelaw enforcement with some disruptions due to prolonged periods of bad weather but stating 25 sea patrols, 22 road patrols 5 drone patrols were carried out.
- 10.2 Angharad Purcell continued to update with regards to training and development and was pleased to inform that Sussex IFCA now have 8 warranted officers. She also mentioned all staff had completed GDPR

training and other continual mandatory requirements for officers with regards to ENG1 medicals and STCW refreshers.

- 10.3 Prof. Peter Jones thanked Angharad Purcell for this update and noted that the number of ongoing investigations is very encouraging.

ALL RESOLVED to note the report.

11 Communications Report

- 11.1 Angharad Purcell informed the committee that the website and social media platforms continue to be used as our main form of stakeholder engagement.
- 11.2 Angharad Purcell advised that due to this quarter being significant with the progression of the MPA Byelaw schedule 5 BHE MCZ formal consultations, there were various communications circulated, such as regulatory notice adverts in multiple local newspapers, flyers and posters which were distributed adjacent to BHE area, with examples of these within the report.
- 11.3 Angharad Purcell said there had also been a fantastic level of community and partnership engagement material associated with the Byelaw's formal consultation and made reference to the extensive list.

ALL RESOLVED to note the report.

12 Financial Performance Report Q3 2023/2024

- 12.1 Prof. Peter Jones explained the main Finance Subcommittee has been postponed until 9th November 2023 and therefore this is a brief report with a full update being given at the following committee meeting in January.

ALL agreed to be taken as read.

13 Vessel & Vehicle maintenance log

- 13.1 Matt Wiseman advised this report can be taken as read and asked the members if there were any questions.

- 13.2 Prof. Peter Jones commended the work and meticulous care for *FPV* Watchful and the fleet.

ALL RESOLVED to accept the report.

14 Chief Officers Group

- 14.1 Rob Pearson provided a quick update on this agenda item adding that the majority of it can be taken as read.
- 14.2 Rob Pearson stated the minutes from the previous COG held on 15th September meeting are appended with key discussions focused on FMP workstreams and national IFCA training delivery.
- 14.3 Rob Pearson updated members that since the report there was a COG face to face meeting in York, where Sean Douglas who is Head of Regulatory Insurance at the MMO was in attendance and gave updates, such as the IVMS rollout and Defra's procurement of a new intelligence and case management system.

ALL RESOLVED to accept the report.

15 Association of Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities

- 15.1 Rob Pearson informed members that the AIFCA minutes from the previous meeting on 15th September were appended.
- 15.2 Rob Pearson further informed members that key points covered within the report and meeting were that AIFCA have agreed to lead on Defra's cockle FMP. He said that Tim Smith who is the Senior Policy Advisor for AIFCA is leading on this, and he has already been heavily involved in the FMP process.
- 15.3 Rob Pearson updated on Dr Sarah Coultard's project that Dr George Balchin also mentioned in his report regarding recognising and developing capacity for sustainable fisheries co-management. He explained that as part of that project there will be a workshop in London in early December which Sussex IFCA intend to attend. This will focus on the key challenges of the IFCA's'

capacity and potential. He finally mentioned there was an additional place if a member would like to attend.

- 15.4 Rob Pearson concluded by informing that since the dissemination of the meeting papers, that the AIFCA are planning to host a series of online workshop type events, tailored to Authority members and IFCA Officers. The purpose of these events is to provide officers and members the opportunity to learn from recognised experts in marine and fisheries policy and share that knowledge and skills to enrich their role and share best practice. He added that more information will be shared when released.

ALL RESOLVED to note the report.

16 A.O.B.

- 16.1 Prof. Peter Jones asked members if they had any other business to raise, to which he went round the meeting room.
- 16.2 Gary Edwards raised his concerns regarding the oyster fishery in Chichester Harbour. He explained that since management it had ceased to exist due to the management that was brought in. He said that he would like this revoked and allow the oyster fishery to be opened up seasonally with the purpose to work the ground and hopefully produce a spat fall. He asked for the Committee to consider this and stressed the failed outcome due to the Oyster Fishery Byelaw being implemented. He stated that for 50 years there was an oyster fishery in Chichester Harbour that worked well. He also informed members that there are no native oysters in Chichester Harbour but there are *gigas* oysters which are of low value and an invasive species therefore he would like to see the fisherman able to fish there again and subsequently clean up the harbour with hope to catch a spat fall in time. He further added the sewage pollution issue in Chichester Harbour which was another challenge but explained this can still be fished with the caveat that the oysters are sold to someone with a relaying area.
- 16.3 Prof. Peter Jones responded advising this was a proposal we would take into consideration and asked Chief Fisheries Officer, Rob Pearson of the procedure.
- 16.4 Rob Pearson explained that we would look at the current byelaw and consider the review period. He added we would need good evidence to bring as a proposal to then bring to the Committee.
- 16.5 Gary Edwards replied that the evidence was a successful oyster fishery for 50 years until the introduction of the Byelaw by Sussex IFCA. He briefed members on the issues of attempting to create an artificial fishery of

oysters which he stressed will fail and added that the only way a native oyster fishery will be profitable is by human activity cleaning the seabed up from silt, concluding that a native oyster fishery is not a natural feature.

- 16.6 Dr Paul Driver queried whether the byelaw would require changing and stated that surely it would only need to be opened up and lift the full closure.
- 16.7 Prof. Peter Jones agreed and advised this would be taken into consideration and would readdress at the following committee meeting.
- 16.8 Prof. Peter Jones raised the email circulated by Cllr. Julia Hilton regarding 'A motion for the ocean' that the local government association has developed. He added Cllr. Julia Hilton has had to sign out of the meeting but advised that we note this but that it is directed at local authorities and therefore inappropriate for an IFCA to sign.
- 16.9 Prof. Peter Jones finally introduced Rob Pearson to inform members on the outstanding three byelaws which have been with the MMO and Defra.
- 16.10 Rob Pearson updated members that as stated in the previous meeting, the Minimum Size byelaw and Handgathering byelaw were with the MMO's legal team for review as part of their quality assurance process. Since then, Sussex IFCA have received confirmation that the MMO have completed this review on Minimum Size Byelaw, and this is now being prepared and submitted to Defra for the final phase of quality assurance prior to being submitted to the Secretary of State.
- 16.11 Rob Pearson continued to advise that the Handgathering Byelaw is still currently with the MMO's legal team under review. He said that now with the Minimum Size byelaw complete this will hopefully allow time and resource within that team for this to now be the focus.
- 16.12 Rob Pearson concluded the update with informing on the final outstanding Netting Permit Byelaw which he stated had now been with Defra for two years with limited correspondence, despite Sussex IFCA repeatedly requesting updates. He explained that in recent communications, Defra have raised several issues with the byelaw concerning the Sussex IFCA amendments that were made in response to the original formal consultation. These amendments were agreed and made by the Authority in January 2020 including amendments to enable easier compliance for inshore fishers, the removal of a fixed distance from the shore in which netting must not occur and retention of the minimum height over the headline. He concluded by stating the Defra have now suggested a further stakeholder engagement but that they have not clarified which specific amendments they consider problematic or what their expectations are on further engagement.

- 16.13 Rob Pearson informed members that following this recent communication, Sussex IFCA have escalated this to Director level by letter on 14th August, highlighting the significant delay in this process and lack of clarification in the subsequent review response. He advised that we are yet to receive a full response other than an acknowledgement of receipt.
- 16.14 Rob Pearson added that this is an unfortunate circumstance and in the absence of further guidance from Defra it is likely we will have to return to the Netting Permit Byelaw, review the original proposed management measures and consider conducting a further formal consultation to meet the requirements of Defra. He finally raised that this additional work will also require additional resource due to ongoing and planned byelaw work that is outstanding.
- 16.15 Gary Edwards questioned due to the years and time since discussions if the Netting Permit Byelaw is relevant to pursue. He directly asked what the purpose of this byelaw was and what we were trying to achieve.
- 16.16 Rob Pearson advised there were a number of drivers, including concern for migratory Salmonids which are a threatened species. He added, however, that as it has been several years since the Byelaw was proposed, with significant staff turn-over since, it is important for IFCA staff to review all the information and present to the Authority how this can be progressed.
- 16.17 Gary Edwards replied and felt that Sussex IFCA should utilise their time and money into patrol and enforcement of the current byelaws and not creating more. He stressed his concern for a particular individual catching fish in an unlicensed vessel as an example. He said that his concern is the enforcement capacity is spread thin within the district and Sussex IFCA and the MMO should focus on the current byelaws with effort being made on compliance of these.
- 16.18 Prof. Peter Jones advised that all enforcement has a risk-based focus on compliance and added that all three outstanding byelaws will continue to be pursued, though he also reassured members that the compliance and enforcement of those will be risk-based to get the maximum return for the fisheries and ecosystem with the capacity that we have. He finally stressed the importance of wording used between Defra and MMO with a specific example on the word re-engage rather than re-consult and when questioned on clarification of stating re-engage, Defra were unable to clarify if they meant re-consult.

16.19 Garry Walker thanked Rob Pearson for the email update on the outstanding byelaws which he received prior to today's meeting and will not pursue this any further.

17 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

17.1 8th February 2024.