



Authority Meeting 18th September 2025

Draft Minutes

Version & Date	Comments
Version 0.1 07/10/2025	1st set of draft minutes from, prepared by F&AM Pepper for internal review
Version 0.2 07/11/2025	Additions by DCO Clark and PPO Townsend applied. Circulated to Members for review
Version 0.3 25/11/2025	F&AM applied corrections suggested by Members.

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**Authority Meeting
18th September 2025
Exeter Racecourse**

Present

Chair: Prof. Mike Williams

Vice Chair: Dr Pamela Buchan

Councillors:

Jayne Stansfield (South Gloucestershire Council), Fi Hance (Bristol City Council), Josh McCarty (Plymouth City Council) , Andrew Strang (Torbay Council)

MMO Appointees/ Statutory Members:

David Morgan, Dr Emma Bean, Jon Dornom, Felicity Sylvester, Charlie Ziemann, Alistair Dewhirst, Simon Toms (Environment Agency), Jasmin Rix (Natural England)

MMO Representative: Rachel Irish

Officers:

Sarah Clark (Deputy Chief Officer – DCO (standing in for CO Mander), Olga Pepper (Finance & Administration Manager – F&AM), Neil Townsend (Principal Policy Officer – PPO), Simon Excell (Gloucestershire County Council), Simon Bunn (North Somerset Council), Jessica Maunder (Devon County Council Finance Team)

Public: No public present

Welcome

The Chair formally welcomed all to the meeting and updated on an amendment to the Agenda – CO Mander could not attend the meeting; therefore, the training session would be postponed with the aim to introduce it in December's meeting.

Action Items:

1. Apologies for absence

F&AM Pepper stated that the following apologies had been received: Mat Mander, Didi Alayli, Wayne Thomas, Cllr Biederman, Cllr Wilson, Cllr Wainwright, Beverly Phillips, Stephen Dury, Cllr Waite, Cllr Willson, Mark Day, Brian Glasson. Guy Baker also provided apologies.

The Chair welcomed new members that included Alistair Dewhirst, previously an Elected Member for Devon County Council, who now joined the Authority as a Marine Management Organisation's (MMO's) Appointed Member. The Chair also thanked those who were departing consisting of Jasmin Rix from Natural England, who was attending her final meeting and Tom Birbeck, an MMO Appointee, who had resigned prior to the meeting due to his workload related issues. Members were informed that the MMO has been contacted to secure a replacement for Tom Birbeck. The Chair invited all Members to introduce themselves and reminded

everyone that he, as well as CO Mander, have an open-door policy and are always available if any Members needed assistance.

The Chair suspected that there had been some confusion regarding the roles of MMO Appointed Members. The Chair reminded the MMO Appointees that their role on the Authority is to contribute to the decision making using their expertise within the sector they represent, rather than solely representing a single sector. The Chair stated that the Authority needs the knowledge of its MMO Appointees to gain a broader, holistic view.

2. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest had been received in reference to this meeting. The Chair invited all members to bring forward any declarations of interest at any time.

3. To consider and approve the Draft Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 19th June 2025

The draft minutes from 19th June 2025 were examined page by page. Simon Excel suggested an amendment to page three that Cllr Preest's name had been omitted from the list of thanks.

That the minutes from the Authority Meeting held on 19th June 2025 are a true and accurate record.

Proposed: Cllr McCarty Seconded: Pamela Buchan

In favour: 9

Against: 0

Abstain: 5

4. Matters Requiring Urgent Attention

The Chair briefly consulted with DCO Clark. There were no matters requiring urgent attention.

5. Questions from the Public

The Chair briefly consulted with DCO Clark. There were no questions from the public.

6. To note the report for Budget Monitoring 2025/2026 Month 4

The Chair wished to provide an update regarding the message from Defra received on 18th September 2025. Firstly, for the benefit of the new members, the Chair provided a brief summary of the Authority's funding issues. The Chair explained that prior to the inception of the IFCAs, there used to be Devon Sea Fisheries

Committee. When the ten IFCA's were created, every coastal area in England had to be managed by an IFCA. D&S IFCA was created covering two coasts and two very different environments. The funding formula that Defra put in place for the IFCA's had determined how much each Local Authority would contribute to D&S IFCA, with the percentage based on ratable value of cluster properties as well as the length of coastline. It is believed by some Local Authorities that this was measured unreasonably. Concerns arose regarding the funding percentages attributed to each Local Authority and these concerns are still present. In 2019, when Prof. Mike Williams became the Chair, he made solving this problem a priority and communications to relevant UK Government Ministers continue to take up much of the Chair's time. Following the 2021/22 review, Defra undertook a review of the funding arrangements, but the pace of the process has since slowed. In June 2024 the matter was due to be submitted to the relevant Ministers, but the General and Local Elections that year postponed that process, although there was a certain level of progress. In March this year it was announced that the Minister of Housing, Communities and Local Government was reviewing how it paid across central funding to Local Authorities. D&S IFCA is included in the process which caused Defra to pause the review of the D&S IFCA's funding formula. It was decided that these grants would not be part of the funding re-organisation. The Chair emailed Defra in August this year; a response was received on 18th September and the Chair read it out for all present:

We now understand that all IFCA grants will be exempt from the MHCLG rationalisation changes happening next year so there will be no changes to the process we currently use for all IFCA grants. Work on the D&S IFCA review slowed while implications of the rationalisation were worked through but has picked up over the last few weeks. We are now preparing a submission for new Ministers asking for a decision on taking this work forward.

On timing, we are aiming to send the submission up after conference recess and will then be in a position to provide a further update once we receive a response from the Minister.

12:50 Simon Toms arrived.

The Chair invited questions and comments.

Simon Excell stated that he was not filled with confidence and noted the slow progress. Felicity Sylvester asked who the new Fisheries Minister and Secretary of State are, and DCO Clark confirmed that Dame Angela Eagle is the new Fisheries Minister and that Emma Reynolds is the new Secretary of State for Defra.

Jessica Maunder introduced Agenda Item 6. In December 2024, the Authority agreed to the use of reserves of £118,042 to balance the budget for 2025/26. The approved budget was prepared on the basis the Authority would not receive any additional grant funding for the year. At month 4, there is currently a projected transfer from the General Reserve of £66,342, rather than the original budgeted £118,042. This is mainly due to receiving a one-off additional grant income of £50,000 from Defra.

Jessica Maunder invited questions and comments.

Alistair Dewhurst asked what the payment of £50,000 was in reference to. DCO Clark answered stating that she believed the funds were received towards work related to Marine Protected Areas but asked Jessica Maunder to check. Jessica Maunder stated that in fact the monies received were for work relating to Fisheries Management Plans. However, in D&S IFCA's case, the funds go to the overall budget, and no new Officers are employed to undertake this additional workstreams, and the workload is absorbed by the current staff.

Alistair Dewhirst asked what the £2,000 variance for enforcement costs shown in the Budget monitoring report related to. DCO Clark explained that majority of this cost is due to the fact that D&S IFCA had a service level agreement with Succorfish which ended in June with the MMO roll out of IVMS. Therefore the £2,000 covered the cost of this SLA for three extra months from 1st April to the end of June 2025.

At Alistair Dewhirst's request, Jessica Maunder confirmed that the minimum level of the Authority's reserves is 25% of the annual Revenue Budget.

Cllr McCarty enquired about any risk pressure points on the budget following the current issues surrounding the IVMS situation. The Chair responded and said that any risks, which the Officers were able to consider at this time, are mentioned in the Paper for Agenda Item 9. Any preplanned expenditure is listed in the Annual Plan, however the difficulty is in dealing with unplanned expenditure, for example any additional work relating to the octopus influx. The Chair stated that so far there has been no unexpected cost in reference to IVMS, other than the cost mentioned in the Officer Paper.

Cllr Stanfield was interested to find out why the byelaw advertisement budget is not utilised. Cllr Stansfield wished to highlight the importance of communications around the Authority's byelaws. DCO Clark explained that this was a different type of advertisement, only applicable when a new Byelaw is made by the Authority that requires formal advertising in newspapers and has not been utilised this year. The Authority is required to place an advertisement for any new Byelaw in a variety of local press although it is hoped that this requirement set by Defra will change if Defra reviews the Byelaw Making Guidance for all IFCA's, as this form of advertisement is both expensive and inefficient. The Officers utilise better ways to communicate with stakeholders, including direct contact with permit holders, use of the Mail Chimp platform to contact all stakeholders at once, and the release of news items on the Authority's website.

There were no further questions.

7. To approve the Outturn Statement of Accounts Report for 2024/2025 as presented at the June 2025 Authority Meeting

The Chair introduced this Agenda Item. The Officer Paper set out that in the June Authority meeting (AGM), the Senior Management Team did not clarify the need for the Members to vote regarding approval of the Outturn Statement of Accounts for the financial year 2024/25 introduced in that meeting as Agenda Item 12.

DCO Clark added for clarity that the Members had an opportunity to comment and ask questions regarding the Statement of Accounts, which was minuted in June 2025. The initial Officer Paper is now being represented to Members as an Annex to Agenda Item 7 with a view to vote on its approval. DCO Clark invited questions and comments.

Felicity Sylvester was interested in the £10,000 received by the Authority in financial year 2024/25 from AIFCA regarding a Sea Angling Project. Felicity Sylvester wished to know how these funds were utilised. DCO Clark was able to provide some context regarding angling liaison meetings attended by CO Mander, but more detailed information was noted as an action for CO Mander to deliver.

That Members approve D&S IFCA's Statement of Accounts for 2024/2025

Proposed: Pamela Buchan

Seconded: Cllr Strang

In favour: 14

Against: 0

Abstain: 1

8. To consider additional appointments to the B&PSC

DCO Clark introduced this Agenda Item. The Authority's Standing Orders allow for a replacement Member of the Byelaw and Permitting Sub-Committee (B&PSC) to be sought by the Authority at the next meeting (following an AGM). Currently there is a vacancy. It was DCO Clark's understanding that Alistair Dewhirst, wished to take the opportunity to become a Member of the B&PSC. If this was confirmed by Alistair Dewhirst who was in attendance, the Members would be invited to vote. Alistair Dewhirst confirmed that he would be happy to join the B&PSC.

That General Member Alistair Dewhirst is appointed as a Member of the B&PSC

Proposed: Jon Dornom

Seconded: Pamela Buchan

In favour: 14

Against: 0

Abstain: 1

9. To note the Remote Vessel Monitoring of Mobile Fishing Vessels in D&S IFCA's District report and approve funding associated with additional tracking device.

DCO Clark introduced this Agenda Item and explained that mobile fishing is managed in the District through the Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw (introduced in 2014) and its associated Permit Conditions. In 2018, D&S IFCA introduced a requirement for all vessels between 6.99 metres and 15.25 metres in overall length to have a fully functioning remotely accessed electronic reporting device (IVMS) fitted to the vessel which reports the required information. The data from the relevant vessels are received through the UK Hub. Since then, a national roll out of IVMS devices took place with an introduction of a MMO licence condition meaning that all vessels under 12 metres in overall length must have IVMS devices onboard. Subsequently, devices supplied by Maritime Systems lost the MMO's type of approval. D&S IFCA ended its service agreement with Succorfish (a provider of IVMS devices) due to the national IVMS roll out.

On 12th August 2025 Succorfish stopped sending IVMS data to the UK hub which resulted in an ongoing discussion between the MMO and Succorfish and meant no data can be seen by the D&S IFCA's Officers causing a risk to Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in the District. On 5th September CO Mander attended a meeting between the MMO, the Isle of Man and the Welsh Government where the MMO representatives stated that a soft launch approach had been adopted allowing more time for the discussion between the interested parties. CO Mander advised the MMO that D&S IFCA would be looking for alternatives to the Succorfish devices, an approach which the MMO signalled that there may be issues with. At the time of the Authority's meeting, there was no resolution that the Officers were aware of regarding Succorfish sending data to the UK VMS Hub.

DCO Clark went on to explain that several vessels within the District already have Rewire (REM) devices installed onboard, and the feedback for these devices had been positive. The MMO was aware that there was an Authority meeting today and had raised several concerns regarding Rewire devices being fitted in addition to Succorfish devices. The MMO had highlighted potential issues regarding geofencing, the pinging rate and problems with data transmission if the Rewire devices failed to function correctly. DCO Clark informed Members that CO Mander will be responding positively to the MMO to address their list of concerns. DCO Clark informed Members that the MMO's position was that it was not blocking the process being taken by D&S IFCA. DCO Clark said that there are forty vessels in the D&S IFCA's District affected by this issue, rather than fifty as the Officers' paper suggested. Officers are proposing that D&S IFCA covers the cost of purchase and installation of the Rewire IVMS devices as well as 6 months of airtime cost for all the vessels which currently have non-transmitting Succorfish devices to ensure that the relevant permit conditions can be adhered to. The company chosen for the installation of the devices is Tecmarine-uk with which the Officers have a good working relationship. The total cost initially quoted was £10,000 but since the data regarding the number of the vessels involved had been updated this cost would be lower. The Officers were confident that funding would be available to cover the cost. DCO Clark emphasised that as things stand currently, there is heightened risks associated with illegal incursions into the Marine Protected Areas within the District.

DCO Clark invited questions and comments.

The Chair wished to add that a national scheme requires any vessel up to 12 metres in overall length to have IVMS system on board. Vessels over 14.99 metres in overall length are not allowed to operate in the District. The Chair wished to stress that there are forty vessels which the Officers are unable to monitor currently.

Cllr McCarty praised the Officers' pragmatic approach and described the MMO's approach as a blunder to the fishermen, and in his view, any further uncertainty and delay is not acceptable. The absence of a Service Level Agreement between the MMO and Succorfish, in Cllr McCarty's opinion, did not fulfil the industry's hopes and aspirations but created confusion which is a worry.

The Chair agreed with Cllr McCarty, additionally finding peculiar the fact that a single, resource strained IFCA (D&S IFCA) is able to introduce an IVMS quite successfully where the MMO has not succeeded to date. This was, in Chair's opinion, a matter of considerable concern and it was time for action. The Chair reassured Cllr McCarty that any comments would be noted and invited an expression of thanks to the Officers to be sent to the relevant Minister.

DCO Clark reminded all that the Officers could not comment on behalf of the MMO. The Officers could not have foreseen the end of service level agreement with Succorfish. The burden to the fishers to do with installation of the new units is appreciated by the Officers and if the Succorfish units were to return to being operational, fishers would have the added advantage of having two devices that would meet the requirements of the Permit Conditions.

Cllr McCarty enquired about the impact of this issue on prosecutions. The Chair confirmed that if the Officers are unable to track a vessel this could pose a risk. The Chair added that any prosecutions are assessed under a public interest test.

Alistair Dewhirst enquired about the third IVMS provider listed at the time when the units were initially introduced and asked why was this supplier was not considered to provide an alternative for the Succorfish units? The Chair provided context and highlighted that the Rewire devices are used exclusively by the Government of Jersey. Additionally, the "gear in gear out" project (REM), which the Officers are hopeful will be introduced in the future via the new Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw 2022, could make use of Rewire devices which are compatible with REM technology and are cost effective and reliable. In the view of the recent

events, it was very important to obtain a reliable product to ensure the confidence of the fishers. The Chair wished for the Officers to clarify whether the third provider considered back in 2018 was able to provide what is required. DCO Clark responded by reminding the Members that all the devices initially installed in 2018 were procured through external funding; the third company is still operating but the devices provided cannot be attached to “gear in gear out” cameras.

Alistair Dewhirst expressed a concern that the fishers may wish to make their own decisions rather than follow those taken by D&S IFCA; the appropriate use of the taxpayers’ money should also be considered. The cost in question is high, and transparency is required in terms of the choosing processes.

DCO Clark highlighted that the fishers were able to choose the alternative devices at the time of the initial installation, but they opted for Succorfish and now the Officers are offering those fishing operators help.

Cllr McCarty was of the opinion that the Officers’ proposal was most robust in terms of safeguarding of the Authority and the fishers, especially since Maritime Systems devices were excluded.

David Morgan expressed disappointment with the national roll out and found it ironic that the MMO would question D&S IFCA on the suitability of Rewire units where their efforts should be concentrated on resolving the issues with Succorfish instead. David Morgan enquired about a possibility of receiving the relevant data directly from Succorfish rather than via the UK Hub. In terms of levels of scallops stocks in the District, David Morgan added that it was in his view that there is no fishery left following the decimation of scallops stocks by the octopus.

DCO Clark explained that any relevant data are required to be sent to the UK Hub in the first instance, any other option is interim, but D&S IFCA is able to view the data from the Rewire devices. Regarding the current levels of scallop stock, this has not yet been confirmed. More information will be available once the scallop season is open on 1st October 2025.

The Chair added that CO Mander enquired with Succorfish if D&S IFCA could resurrect the service level agreement which was declined as Succorfish only wished to have an agreement with the MMO.

Emma Bean was interested in a potential cost, if the Authority would have to cover the airtime past the period of six months mentioned in the Officers’ Paper. Additionally, Emma Bean queried that if some fishers benefit from six months of free airtime, would this be a cause for upset amongst other fishers not benefiting.

In response to Emma Bean, DCO Clark said it was unclear if the Authority would be covering the cost following the first six months of the free air time, but the proposal in the paper is only to cover six months free time. D&S IFCA has not received any feedback from those with NEMO devices but if required Officers can check with the NEMO units’ owners. The Officers’ aim is to try and limit burden and expense to the fishers who have been affected by the Succorfish lack of transmission of data and ensure they are compliant with the Mobile Fishing Permit Conditions.

PPO Townsend stated that potentially after the six-month period the fishers involved would have to cover that cost of airtime but had been informed that this would be low cost, potentially amounting to approximately £70 a year. PPO Townsend clarified that the Officers are not instructing the fishers to uninstall the Succorfish devices as these are required by the MMO. David Morgan noted that since a Succorfish unit was installed in 2023 on his vessel, no charge was incurred.

Jon Dornom provided feedback for a Succorfish unit as his vessel was fitted with a tracking device twenty years ago. Jon Dornom reported that it is working well and is deemed reliable which is why so many fishers chose Succorfish units initially. Jon Dornom was supportive of the recommendation in the Officers’ Paper as

there was a concern that rules are currently being broken affecting static gear permit holders. Cllr McCarty agreed with Jon Dornom.

Rachel Irish, who works for the MMO, wished to provide a comment by acknowledging that D&S IFCA is working with the MMO to resolve the issue. Although not able to provide additional detail surrounding the issue, it was Rachel Irish's understanding that no decisions would be made during this meeting. Rachel Irish reminded the Members that the Rewire unit is not part of MMO's list of approved devices. There is a risk of dual systems in the future where fishers would potentially have to comply with a requirement for two types of devices. Rachel Irish was interested to know how the Officers intend to address this issue.

In response, DCO Clark clarified that, as per the Officer Paper it was hoped the Authority would act immediately and continue discussions with the MMO regarding their list of concerns after action is taken by D&S IFCA.

DCO Clark explained that fishers would need to comply with the MMO's regulations but that having a Rewire device would act as a back up should this be necessary and would help facilitate future projects relating to REM. DCO Clark highlighted that the D&S IFCA had been working with IVMS longer than the MMO. Rewire units are currently used in Jersey and are transmitting to the UK Hub with no issues, which the Officers are hoping will be the case for D&S IFCA. The Officers would be able to work through the list of issues provided by the MMO, but this will not be addressed in today's meeting.

PPO Townsend reiterated that the duplication may occur, and some vessels may keep both devices in order for the Rewire device to meet future requirements for REM but that does not resolve the current issues, which remain for the MMO to address. Rachel Irish expressed concern that should the Rewire units be not needed soon, the expenditure quoted in the Officer Paper may be deemed as a temporary spend.

DCO Clark reminded the Members that the Officers are hoping to cover the cost by external funding and that there could be longer term benefits of fishers having additional monitoring devices.

Cllr McCarty agreed with the Officers' pragmatic approach. It was Cllr McCarty's opinion that the MMO had put D&S IFCA in a difficult position through the mistakes made which caused an ongoing challenge for the fishers as well as the regulators. Based on the conversation in today's meeting Cllr McCarty would like to see a service level agreement which has comprehensive notes regarding implementing updates to the devices.

Jon Dornom stated that Succorfish devices receive updates remotely.

David Morgan stated that whilst what is proposed is a £10,000 expenditure, it is a much lower cost compared to the amount the MMO spent on purchasing Succorfish devices. David Morgan wondered whether further grant money would be available to other fishers should the MMO and Succorfish not resolve the issues, and the purchase and installation of other devices was required by the MMO.

The Chair concluded the discussions by bringing the Members' attention back to the content of the Officer Paper and the Officers recommendations within it.

There were no further questions.

That Members agree to the procurement and installation of REWIRE tracking devices on board affected mobile fishing vessels operating in D&S IFCA's District.

That Members agree to D&S IFCA's covering the transmission costs of IVMS data for affected mobile fishing vessels for six months.

Proposed: Pamela Buchan

Seconded: Alistair Dewhirst

In favour: 14

Against: 0

Abstain: 1

13:55 Members took a short comfort break.

Cllr McCarty wished for CO Mander or the Chair to write a letter to the Minister expressing concern regarding the IVMS issues and say that pragmatic approach has been taken.

The Chair supported this suggestion and wished to also write to the newly appointed Minister a letter of congratulations on the new role.

Cllr McCarty made a proposal:

That the Chair writes to Secretary of State and Fisheries Minister expressing concern, to request a definitive explanation on when the situation be resolved for the fishermen and to highlight that Devon and Severn IFCA has shown a pragmatic approach in the matter.

Propose: Cllr McCarty

Seconded: David Morgan

Favour: 15

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

10. To approve expenditure for the FaSS funded Invasive to Native Project

The Chair introduced this Agenda Item by posing a question – is there a possibility that the Pacific Oyster is to be deemed naturalised in the future?

DCO Clark provided context – prior to the creation of the IFCAs, Devon Sea Fisheries Committee worked with the Duchy of Cornwall to lease the Waddeton area in the Dart Estuary and develop a regulating order known as the Waddeton Fishery Order 2001. The Duchy owns the foreshore since its inception in 1337 as granted by Edward III.

D&SIFCA has continued to manage the Waddeton Fishery Order area and sub-let areas within the Order for individual shellfishermen to cultivate mussels or oysters. DCO Clark explained that the Waddeton Fishery Order is coming to an end in 2026. Discussions regarding the lease and the Order with the Duchy have been ongoing for some time and have focussed on the continued cultivation of Pacific oysters, which is still classed as an invasive non-native species.

DCO Clark went on to explain that whilst Pacific oysters are still known as invasive species, they are present in many locations and estuaries through Devon and the Southwest, including the River Dart wider area. Research work has been conducted on the genetics of Pacific oysters to establish where the oysters initially came from. Most of the wild population are believed not to be coming from British estuaries but from France. However, the Duchy is concerned about any invasive species within their estate as per their policies.

D&S IFCA undertook an MCZ assessment on the potential impact of an additional Pacific oyster production plot within the Waddeton Fishery Order in the Dart Estuary MCZ and a Habitats Regulation Assessment of the potential impact of the Pacific oyster cultivation on the adjacent Lyme Bay and Torbay Special Area of Conservation (SAC). Natural England agreed with D&S IFCA's conclusion that Pacific oyster aquaculture through the additional plot would not have a significant effect in view of the sites' conservation objectives nor adversely affect the integrity of the two sites.

DCO Clark explained that the Duchy, to date, does not agree with the presence or cultivation of the Pacific Oyster which unfortunately will mean that a small fishery run by local people providing food for the community would not continue.

The question for the Authority is what actions will need to be taken when the Order comes to an end as the Licence quotes that "*at the end or sooner determination of the licence period to yield up the Rights in such improved condition*". The Officers are liaising with the Duchy, but it is a slow progress. However, it is clear that the Authority will need to clear up the sites. The licensees (individuals who work the sites as licenced by the Authority) also have an obligation to tidy the sites at the expiration of licence but many of them stopped the productions because of the uncertainties surrounding the area and they were at the time not pressed to clear the sites. The Officers are now looking for alternative solutions. DCO Clark explained that large amounts of wild Pacific oysters have been observed in the Lymptone Private Fishery within the Exe Estuary and the shellfishermen working in this area are looking into ways of cleaning up those sites and in so doing the fishermen would benefit from harvesting the oysters and making them into a saleable product. D&S IFCA Officers have been conversing with these fishermen about a project proposal involving a concept to trial different methods of harvesting Pacific oysters without damaging the features of the conservation areas. These discussions have led to a project being submitted to the Fisheries and Seafood Scheme (FaSS) to apply for funding to investigate the different harvesting methodologies.

DCO Clark stated that FaSS received a large volume of offers resulting in it closing very quickly. If granted the funds, D&S IFCA would be able to claim back 75% of the cost incurred. DCO Clark explained that if successful the project would result in clearing Pacific oysters from areas within estuaries and if fishermen are also involved in the clean up this can be viewed as a "win-win" for all. It has not been confirmed if D&S IFCA has been granted the funding. If the methods are successful, they can be applied in other estuaries within D&S IFCA's District and potentially in other areas across the UK.

The Officers are proposing that the Members approve the use of £20,875. DCO Clark highlighted that for many years the research budget was not spent and now the Officers would like to utilise this budget.

DCO Clark opened to the floor to comments and questions.

David Morgan was interested to find out what the cleaning process is going to involve in practice to make sure the Members have got a good understanding of the matter. It is clear what needs to be achieved but not how it would be achieved. DCO Clark provided a response – the Officers, working together with the fishermen, are looking at different techniques, for instance the use of an elevated harvester or a hand grab system to remove the oysters. Potentially an adapted oyster dredge would be trialled, and a water jet system could also be considered, similar to that used for the cockles harvesting. The lowest impact system would

be preferred. DCO Clark reiterated that the project is looking to help fishermen too as well as the removal of wild Pacific oysters. DCO Clark clarified that with such trials the cost of sampling, analysis and consultancy costs can be expensive which is why the FaSS has been applied for.

Alistair Dewhirst asked what stops the oysters coming back. DCO Clark responded to confirm that the oysters will always keep returning so the expectation to stop them cannot be met. However, the project is looking to mitigate the impact of the Pacific oysters' presence in the MPAs through the ability to remove the oysters.

Emma Bean questioned whether there were oysters present on the site when D&S IFCA took it on and whether these would have been the Pacific oysters, and if so, would this make a difference to the requirement that the Authority is meant to leave the site in the state as it found it. DCO Clark confirmed that Pacific oysters were present through a private fishery that previously operated in the area and D&S IFCA's requirement to clear all the Pacific oysters is being checked with the Duchy.

DCO Clark explained that the method of cultivation had changed since the Order came into being with some fishers placing the oysters directly on the foreshore, as a means for cultivation, which is different to how it has been previously conducted and therefore this might make a difference to the need to clear the site. DCO Clark stated that the new representative for the Duchy was cooperative and supportive at the start of the conversations but that managers higher up within the Duchy are less supportive of continuing oyster production in the Duchy's estuaries. However, DCO Clark assured the Authority that dialogue is still on going. One solution is to remove as much oyster as possible and continue to work with the relevant fishermen as they will find themselves in a difficult position as the Order comes to an end.

Pamela Buchan asked about the use of the research budget and queried if the funds were used on the project, would this remove funding for other research workstreams that the budget could be dedicated to. DCO Clark responded explaining that there may be consideration of purchasing a research drone, but this would not use up the entire budget.

Pamela Buchan was also interested in finding out what would happen if the funds have been spent as per Officer Paper, but the Duchy changes its approach. Pamela Buchan asked whether this would mean that the Authority does not need to action the clear up of the site and removal of Pacific oysters. DCO Clark explained that it is likely that Natural England would still advise that some of the work was done. DCO Clark noted that another benefit of the project is that if there is a way for Pacific oyster fishermen to continue operating in the site, and to clear the wild Pacific oysters from the site and financially benefit from this work, the fishermen may be able to invest in native oyster production which the Duchy fully supports.

Felicity Sylvester asked if the Pacific oysters are removed, would native oysters be able to prosper and would the funds be dedicated to support that. DCO Clark answered that, the project is focused on testing of methodology as per the Officer Paper and at this time does not include investment in native oyster restoration. However, if there is an opportunity for shellfishermen to continue to operate in the sites native oyster production is a possibility. DCO Clark stated that in some estuaries in Devon the native oysters are present but not cultivated commercially.

PPO Townsend noted that in the long term the Pacific oysters will not go away. Finding the method for the continuous removal is important but PPO Townsend asked how the removal will be managed and controlled considering that putting regulations in place is difficult without a relevant Order.

DCO Clark remarked that Defra has significantly increased the costs of issuing a regulating order which makes it potentially prohibitive for D&S IFCA to apply for a new order. However, the Authority would still be able to lease the foreshore from the Duchy and manage it in a similar way to how it has been managed to date. Officers would need to discuss this with the Duchy.

Simon Toms enquired whether the Officers considered any waste disposal cost as any material collected would be deemed as byproduct which should be reviewed. DCO Clark responded that the project is looking at how wild oyster could be removed but that the shellfishermen could use them as a harvestable product. All shellfish production areas are classified by the Food Health inspectorate (Cefas), monitored for bacteria/ viruses on a monthly basis and there are strict regulations on harvesting, movement and purification of shellfish intended for human consumption.

David Morgan enquired about the condition that the site needs to be returned to and asked if the position of the Duchy is final or is it negotiable as answers are needed for any discussions amongst the Members.

The Chair noted that two issues seemed to be confused. The anticipation is that there would be no answer to the question about returning the site to the original state as there is no precedence for oyster beds. Secondly, there is the issue of research into removal which is not particular to this area of water but includes other estuaries. D&S IFCA has issues regarding an estuary in its District, but any research conducted may be useful for other MPAs elsewhere. Trials are needed in response to the oysters affecting the MPAs generally. The Chair believed that from the way that the Officer Paper had been laid out it is clear to differentiate between the two matters although they are overlapping.

David Morgan wished to be informed about how the Authority is going to conduct the required clear out. DCO Clark replied that the methods being trialled on the Exe Estuary may be applied to the Dart and the Waddeton area although at this time it is uncertain what method will be applied. D&S IFCA will undertake an assessment of impact of the method to be used on the features of the MCZ and the condition of the site and will work with Natural England. Jasmin Rix stated that the last Condition Assessment was undertaken by Natural England a couple of years ago. DCO Clark reiterated that if successful, the methodology trialed in the Exe might be used in other Devon estuaries such as Yealm Estuary.

PPO Townsend asked if the site is no longer managed by D&S IFCA how would this impact the condition of the site thereafter. DCO Clark replied agreeing that there is a level of uncertainty and that further discussions are needed with the Duchy and Natural England but there is real value in the project, and the outputs will be very useful in understanding the next steps. .

Jon Dornom mentioned that many oysters are present in the subtidal areas of estuaries. Jon Dornom questioned that if the oysters on the shoreline are removed, then those underwater may spread to the intertidal areas. Jon Dornom understood the need for research and appreciated that the action would help fishers involved but there is a concern that the result of the removal exercise will be unsuccessful considering the number of oysters existing in the deeper waters of estuaries and which clearly visible at low tide.

Cllr Hance suggested contacting the Duchy to state that the clear out cannot be conducted, the concern being if no FaSS funding is available where would the required funds be obtained from. DCO Clark stated that there is no certain answer to this matter but will continue to liaise with the Duchy. Pamela Buchan highlighted the fact that this project may be dependent on the FaSS funding and that if the funding is granted this can be seen as validation of the project.

DCO Clark provided an update on the Authority's FaSS application and explained that there are delays regarding the decision on whether the project will be funded. DCO Clark went on to state that the application window was only open for five weeks and there was a large volume of applications. DCO Clark explained that the work referred to in the Officers' Paper needs to be accomplished by the end of March 2026. CO Mander is monitoring the application outcome.

Rachel Irish provided context regarding how the applications are being considered including looking at the long-term value of the project, which is taken into account alongside the cost, benefits and other factors. Thorough justification is required, especially with high level of applications. Rachel Irish offered to chase up the progress of the application.

There were no further questions.

That Members approve the use of up to £20,875.07 to support the delivery of the FaSS (ENGFaSS4921) invasive to Native project.

Proposed: Pamela Buchan

Seconded: Cllr Hance

In favour: 15

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

11. To note the Byelaw and Permitting Sub-Committee Report (September 2025)

DCO Clark thanked PPO Townsend for the update paper summarising the most recent work of the Byelaw and Permitting Sub-Committee (B&PSC) which last met on 26th June 2025 and invited questions and comments.

Regarding the ongoing work of the B&PSC associated with managing pot fisheries in the District, David Morgan shared his experience attending a meeting in Brittany, France where he had learnt a great deal about the potential management of what seems to be an ongoing octopus fishery going forward. David Morgan found it disappointing that no one directly involved in the octopus project (for instance D&S IFCA or the MMO) attended the meeting and it was only attended by the fishers themselves. David Morgan was happy to feed back to the Authority any reports following the meeting.

DCO Clark confirmed that an invitation was issued to D&S IFCA at short notice and although no Officers were available to attend, DCO Clark sent in questions to, hopefully, be discussed during the meeting. The Officers are keen to keep themselves up to date in terms of the outcomes of the meeting.

12. To note the MPA Audit report and receive a presentation.

Members watched the Audit of D&S IFCA's Marine Protected Area Work presentation by DCO Clark and had an opportunity to ask questions.

DCO Clark pointed out that management had been implemented in light of the outcome of D&S IFCA's MPA assessments. DCO Clark stated that in some sites D&S IFCA has challenged the advice given by Natural England on towed gear activity on coarse sediment and sand and that D&S IFCA is content that the management introduced will mean that the features of the MPAs are not adversely affected or that the conservation objectives are not hindered. DCO Clark stated that many of the assessments undertaken are available for viewing on D&S IFCA's website.

Felicity noted a great deal of conservation work relates to the North of the District and requested an update on any news from that region since the Authority visited Hinkley Point in North Somerset back in March 2025.

DCO Clark provided a brief update. DCO Clark stated that the Senior Environment Officer, Dr James Stewart, is currently in discussions with EDF regarding a trial of new acoustic fishing deterrents. DCO Clark said that the main concern is about the number of fish that will enter the cooling system if no fish deterrents are in place, and it is estimated to be much larger than is often stated by EDF. There is also concern about the level of fish larvae mortality from the intake system.

Cllr Stansfield reported that current information provided by EDF and that is available to public states that the number of fish entering the intake system annually is an equivalent to the amount caught by one trawler. DCO Clark stated this has not been calculated to the equivalent adult fish mortality and is therefore a huge underestimation.

Agenda Items for Information:

13. AIFCA Officers Report

The Members received The Association of IFCAs (AIFCA) Officers' report as per the Agenda.

Felicity Sylvester recommended that the Members read the AIFCA's reports thoroughly highlighting their informative value.

The Chair updated the Members that AIFCA had appointed a Communication Manager (a newly introduced post) in the hope to raise the profile of the IFCAs as it had been learnt that the national knowledge about the IFCA's work needs improvement.

14. Date of next meeting – 11th December 2025

End.