

Minutes of the Inshore Potting Agreement (IPA) Committee Meeting 30th September 2024

Attending:

Member	Initials	Sector
David Morgan	DM	Potting
Paul Dornom	PD	Potting
Rick Mitchelmore	RM	Potting
Beshlie Pool of the SDCS	BP	Potting
Nick Stone	NS	Potting
Alex Passmore	AP	Mobile gear
Martyn Rogers	MR	Mobile Gear
Richard Fowler	RF	Mobile Gear
Tom Beresford	TB	Mobile Gear

Apologies:

Member	Initials	Sector
Juliette Hatchman	JH	Mobile gear
Steve Parker	SP	Mobile gear

Secretariat:

Member	Initials	Organisation
Mat Mander	MM	D&S IFCA
Sarah Clark	SC	D&S IFCA
Neil Smith	NSm	MMO

Agenda Item 1 - Apologies

SC read out the apologies.

Agenda Item 2 - Introduction

SC welcomed Members to the meeting and introduced a new Member to the Committee – Tom Beresford who represents the Mobile Gear Fleet.

Agenda Item 3 - Minutes

SC explained that minutes had been circulated to all Committee Members with no comments forthcoming. The minutes of the meeting from 2023 were agreed by the Committee Members.

Agenda Item 4- Actions from the last meeting

SC discussed the actions that had been completed since the last meeting. Some of the actions from the last meeting were discussed under Agenda item 5.

Agenda Item 5 – Membership/ Representation

This agenda item commenced with a discussion about attendance and those Committee Members that had not attended the meetings for several years. The Committee discussed the need for, and the importance of, having Members attending the meeting in person especially since it is only one meeting a year. The Committee also wanted to ensure that there was representation from both sectors so that any decision discussed would have enough Members for the meetings to be quorate and allow voting to take place. The discussion focused on Juliette Hatchman (JH) and her position on the Committee. Due to her non-attendance the Committee Members decided to pass a vote on whether she should be removed from the Committee.

Of the nine Members present seven Members (four potting gear Members and three mobile gear Members) voted that Juliette Hatchman should no longer be a Member of the IPA Committee. Two Members (one from each sector) abstained. Members asked the secretariat to contact Juliette Hatchman to inform her of their decision.

Action: SC to contact JH to inform her of the decision by the IPA Committee Members that she should not remain on the Committee due to her lack of attendance at the Committee meetings.

Committee Members discussed Steve Parker's current position on the IPA Committee as a representative of the mobile gear sector. Members felt that as he no longer fishes using trawls or dredges he should resign from the IPA Committee. As he is currently netting and not a member of the potting sector it may be possible in the future for him to be considered as a member of the Potting sector should a vacancy arise and if Members were happy with him being able to represent that sector. Whilst consideration was had as to his position on the NFFO and his potential ability to represent the mobile gear sector that was not his original reason for being a Committee Member. The Committee instructed the Secretariat to contact Steve Parker and put it to him that it would be appropriate to resign from the Committee if he cannot demonstrate that he actively represents the mobile gear sector.

Action: SC to contact Steve Parker to find out if he, as an IPA Committee Member, still actively represents the mobile gear sector and discuss whether he should resign from the IPA Committee.

The Committee Members went on to discuss possible suggestion of increasing the number of representatives from each sector from 5 to six. SC informed the Committee Members that she had been actively trying to encourage membership from the Mobile Gear Sector. Through this engagement, Tom Beresford had come forward and he was welcomed onto the Committee at the meeting.

SC went on to inform Members that she had been in touch with Ed Baker of the Plymouth Seafood and Fisheries Association who had put forward some suggestions of potential members. SC had reached out to some of the suggested fishers, but these were not able to join at this time. One suggestion was Graeme Searle, who SC had not managed to contact prior to the meeting. Committee members suggested that SC should contact Graeme and see if he is actively fishing in the IPA or represents those who are, and whether he would be interested in joining the Committee. Members also suggested that SC contacts Derek Meredith, who has vessels that actively fish in the IPA and may be interested in joining the IPA Committee as a Mobile Gear representative. Members also felt that in order to get the number of Committee Members representing the Potting Sector up to six that this sector should be contacted too. DM and BP supported this view, and BP was actioned to lobby the potting sector to have another representative join the Committee.

Action: SC to contact Graeme Searle and Derek Meredith to discuss whether they would be interested in joining the IPA to represent the Mobile gear sector.

Action: BP to contact the SDCS membership to encourage another potter to who fishes in the IPA to join the Committee.

Agenda Item 6 – Terms of Reference

DM had raised concerns about the need for a more formal procedure in the Terms of Reference to ensure that those Committee Members were still actively representing the sector they initially joined the IPA Committee to represent. This point was raised in particular with reference to SP, which was discussed under Agenda Item 5. BP made the suggestion that under the Terms of Reference it should be made clear that if a representative of one sector changes fishing method that they should resign and seek to be a candidate for membership of the other sector if appropriate, if a vacancy was available, and if agreed by the Committee Members. SC was actioned to amend the Terms of Reference and circulate them to Committee Members.

Action: SC to amend the Terms of Reference to include a formal procedure about membership representation.

Members also requested that the Terms of Reference be amended to include attendance at meetings and the consequences of non-attendance. Members agreed that if a Member of the IPA Committee did not attend three consecutive meetings or send a deputy to represent them, then the IPA Members of the same sector as the non-attendee would make the decision as to whether that representative should continue on the Committee.

Action: SC to amend the Terms of Reference to include a procedure on non-attendance of IPA Committee Members.

Agenda Item 7 – Gear Conflict Reports

PD informed the Committee Members that he had half a string of pots towed away (20 pots) from an area within the IPA that he works, having later found them half a mile away on top of another string, and FV Tenacious had strings towed, end weights and three pots lost. MR asked if PD believed this was a trawler a scalloper that had towed the potting gear up. PD believed it was a scalloper as the pots were on rough ground on the edge of the Rutts and if more likely to be a scalloper that could access that area than a trawler. MR asked MM if this was detected on examination of IVMS data. MM explained that some vessels may switch their IVMS off to prevent detection. MR suggested that many vessels do not have their IVMS on due to the Statutory Instruments for the requirement of IVMS is not yet in place. MM also informed the Committee that FV Excel has reported pot losses close to the six-mile limit, which may have been due to infringements by French vessels.

No other infringements were reported or logged.

Agenda Item 8 – Items for Discussion

The Opening of the Corridor

MM started the agenda item by explaining that the remade D&S IFCA Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw was still in the quality assurance process with the MMO and therefore not in place yet and that D&S IFCA cannot formally introduce a requirement for REM on vessels. He explained without the Byelaw there is not a framework to introduce the REM requirement formally. MM went on to explain that D&S IFCA was looking to secure funding for REM and the on-going costs of running the REM system, but D&S IFCA is still restrained by not having the amended Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw in place to implement REM.

MR explained that he was concerned that the Corridor would not be opened if there was no REM in place as this was discussed and minuted at the meeting in 2023. RM raised his concerns that if the Corridor is opened in 2025 that the conflict between the mobile gear and potting fleets would return and the Corridor should then be closed again. RF replied saying that he believed if it isn't opened in 2025 it would never be opened again. AP asked MM whether REM would be implemented in the next 12 months. MM reiterated the position regarding the Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw and explained that there are many benefits to having an automated monitoring system in place and that if at any time the system fails both the fisher and D&S IFCA would be notified via an alert so that issues could be remedied.. MM returned to MR's point earlier about the lack of identification of the vessel that caused lost pots raised by PD, and that if REM was in place that vessels would be monitored more closely and alerts set up when vessel entered prohibited areas. PD questioned that if the Corridor was to be opened would that allow access to the five vessels that are currently fitted with REM equipment. MM explained that currently only two vessels with REM operate in the IPA. MM went on to say that 2024 has been a good year on terms of reported conflict and infringements and that the decision to close the Corridor in 2024 showed what would be the consequences of further infringements by the Mobile fishing sector. MM also suggested he hoped that by the meeting in the autumn of 2025, REM would be in place, or close to its implementation. He stated that REM would allow vessels access due to the better monitoring of activity. TB stated that he does not support the use of REM and suggested that the Corridor wouldn't be worth anyone fitting cameras as it's too small a bit of ground.

MR pointed out that the IPA Committee Members should honour the decision made in the meeting in 2023 to open up the Corridor if there were no infringements in 2024. BP supported RM view that, if there were infringements in 2025 if the Corridor was opened, a closure would be in place in 2026. BP did raise concerns that the potters would once again suffer from gear losses. RM stated that, as noted in last year's minutes, the Corridor should be opened again. BP still expressed concerns and questioned that, without the correct tools, such as REM, should the Corridor be opened in 2025. RF asked how the boats without trackers could be monitored. MM explained that any mobile gear vessel operating in the D&S IFCA's District is required to have a fully functioning IVMS unit on board. TB stated that the automatic alert system on his IVMS unit had not been working and had been approached by the MMO about this. MM suggested that if the vessel was not detectable on the THEMIS system then the owner/skipper should contact the system provider to see if the unit was working. MM went on to say that currently the IVMS requirement within the D&S IFCA's District is implemented under D&S IFCA's Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw and permit conditions, and that the MMO may not be checking the vessels that operate outside of the D&S IFCA's District to see if the units are working.

The IPA Committee took a vote on the opening of the Corridor in 2025.

All nine Committee members present voted to open of the Corridor in 2025.

The Members then went on to discuss what would be the consequence of any infringements by mobile gear vessels in 2025. RF suggested that if there were infringements in the Corridor in 2025 then the Corridor should be closed in 2026 and only opened in 2027 with REM fitted to vessels. He raised the point that he wanted to ensure the fishing opportunities of the mobile gear fleet, in particular those of younger fishers coming into the industry. AP suggested that with REM on board mobile gear vessels, gear conflict should become more recognisable and identifiable. Members had a discussion on whether REM could be switched off and raised concerns about non-operational IVMS units. NS asserted that no mobile gear vessels should be within the potting zone of the IPA, whether units were working or not.

Members collective developed wording for a proposal and put the following proposal to a vote:

If there were no infringement in 2025 then the Corridor should remain open. If there were infringement in 2025 then the Corridor should be closed in 2026 whether REM was in place or not.

All nine Committee Members present agreed with this proposal.

Agenda Item 9 – IVMS/REM

As this was thoroughly discussed under Agenda Item 8 no further discussion was had.

Agenda Item 10 - D&S IFCA Byelaw Updates

MM reiterated the impact of the delay in the quality assurance by the MMO on the new Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw. MM also explained that whilst the IPA committee had decided that the Corridor would be open in 2025 and that the MMO would implement this as a Licence Condition, D&S IFCA would need to take the proposal to its Byelaw and Permitting Sub-Committee for discussion. D&S IFCA Mobile Fishing Permit conditions outline the areas that are open seasonally to mobile fishing gear under Annex 5a. Currently this is consistent with the IPA Licence Condition, but any changes to the permit conditions would need to be considered by the B&PSC and go out to formal consultation, as this is the legal duty of the IFCA. A similar process was undertaken when the IPA Committee voted to close the Corridor for 2024 in the meeting in 2023.

Agenda Item 11 – MPAs

SC explained the on-going discussions D&S IFCA was having with Natural England and Defra regarding maintaining the management regime of the IPA. As the IPA co-locates with two Marine Protected Areas, D&S IFCA had assessed all the fishing activities that take place in these areas. Natural England has not agreed with the conclusions of D&S IFCA's assessments of the impact of towed gear on the habitats within Zones 3, 4 and the Corridor (Areas B, C and D respectively of D&S IFCA's Mobile Fishing Permit Annexes) and that on-going discussions are being had on how the IPA zones can remain open (and in so doing maintaining the integrity of the IPA) by implementing a system known as Measure of Equal Environmental Benefits that can be applied to activities in MCZ.

End.