



Byelaw & Permitting Sub- Committee Meeting

Draft Minutes from 26th
February 2026

Version Control and Drafting

Date	Comments
Version 0.1 2 nd April 2026	1 st Draft of minutes developed by PPO Townsend for circulation to Officer's present at the meeting for potential internal amendment and/or additions.
Version 0.2 & 0.3 15 th April 2026	Additions by DCO Clark and CO Mander applied. Draft minutes circulated to Members for feedback.
Version 0.4 7 th May 2026	Updated to reflect the majority of suggested changes supplied by Members. Draft Minutes 0.4 published on D&S IFCA's website.

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Minutes of the Byelaw and Permitting Sub Committee Meeting

Held at Exeter Racecourse on 26th February 2026

Present:

Dr Emma Bean (Chair)	Professor Mike Williams	Mark Day
Felicity Sylvester	Charlie Ziemann	Jon Dornom
Guy Baker	Wayne Thomas	Didi Alayli
David Morgan	Mike Spiller	Sarah Holmyard
Alistair Dewhirst		

Meg Hayward-Smith (Natural England)
Rachel Irish (Marine Management Organisation)

Officers: Chief Officer (CO) Mat Mander, Deputy Chief Officer (DCO) Sarah Clark, Principal Policy Officer (PPO) Neil Townsend, Senior Environment Officer (SEO) James Stewart

Members of Public: Myles Blood Smyth, Olivia Phillips, Tegan Dacey, Zaya Adham, Rebekah Lazaova

Introduction:

All Members were welcomed to the meeting. The Chair welcomed Myles Blood Smyth who would be speaking to Members during Agenda Item 8. The Chair also welcomed the other observers that were students from the University of Plymouth. The Chair informed Members that MMO appointee and B&PSC Member Dr Simon Thomas had resigned from the Authority. All Members thanked Simon Thomas for his contribution to the work of the Authority and the B&PSC.

Agenda Item 1

Apologies for Absence

PPO Townsend informed Members that apologies had been received from, Dr Pamela Buchan, Cllr Louise Wainwright (Devon County Council), Cllr Sara Wilson (Devon County Council), and Cllr Jayne Stansfield (South Gloucestershire County Council).

PPO Townsend informed Members that it was unknown if Cllr Dermot McGeough (Devon County Council), Cllr Josh McCarty (Plymouth City Council), and Simon Toms (Environment Agency) would be attending the meeting.

Agenda Item 2

Declaration of Interest

As per Paragraph 9.40 of the D&S IFCA's Standing Orders, CO Mander informed Members that Sarah Holmyard had been provided with a dispensation to participate in discussions relating to Agenda Item 9 (mariculture sites), but not to vote on any motions relating to Agenda Item 9 (south Devon site). Members acknowledged this decision by CO Mander. The Chair said that all Members can update their own declarations of interest, that are held on file, by contacting CO Mander.

Agenda Item 3

To consider and approve the draft minutes of the B&PSC meeting held on 16th October 2025.

The draft minutes (version 0.3) from the October B&PSC meeting were examined page by page. Felicity Sylvester highlighted line one of the final paragraph on page 10 and asked for an amendment relating to her comments regarding the marketing of fish. Mark Day highlighted the final paragraph on page 11 and asked for an amendment relating to his comment regarding age of fishers working at sea on commercial fishing vessels. The amendments were noted by PPO Townsend, to be applied in the finalised B&PSC minutes.

That the minutes (as amended) provide a true and accurate record.

Proposed:	Mark Day	Seconded: Mike Williams
In favour:	12	
Against:	0	
Abstain:	3	

Agenda Item 4:

Matters requiring urgent attention.

The Chair consulted with the Chief Officer and there were no matters requiring urgent attention.

Agenda Item 5:

Members of the public – questions or comments for the meeting.

The Chair informed Members that Myles Blood Smyth would be speaking at the beginning of Agenda Item 8 about the potential opening of a razor clam fishery. There were no questions or comments from members of the public for the meeting.

Agenda Item 6:

Netting – To consider formally consulting on changes to the Category One Netting Permit Conditions

The Chair asked CO Mander to introduce the agenda item.

Presentation

CO Mander highlighted that at the last B&PSC meeting, when considering the development of a new Netting Permit Byelaw, the focus had been on examining ways to address issues associated with the use of non-powered fishing vessels but also recognising coastal heritage fisheries involving the use of non-powered fishing vessels. CO Mander highlighted that Officers had undertaken a focussed pre-consultation relating to the coastal heritage herring fishery near Clovelly and that the responses had been collated. CO Mander explained that to protect the identity of the fishers that had responded, the report supplied to Members had not been published and was being treated as sensitive information. CO Mander informed Members that Defra had presented national management options to the Minister relating to the use of non-powered vessels.

Although no timeframe for a decision regarding these options has been given, CO Mander commented that a decision on a national level could impact the development of a D&S IFCA Netting Permit Byelaw as uncertainty outside of the control of D&S IFCA can hamper or even result in the Byelaw not being fit for purpose.

CO Mander highlighted the second section of the Officers' paper setting out issues associated with non-powered vessels in the District. CO Mander referred to Table 1 in the Officers' paper that set out the amount of declared fishing gear being operated by non-powered fishing vessels, twelve of which are rowing boats below 7 metres in length. CO Mander said that non-powered vessels have no bass entitlement and the amount of fishing gear declared by some of the rowing boats, for example 3000 metres of net, far exceeds the amount of fishing gear that can be worked from a rowing boat

CO Mander explained that the Officers' paper sets out, what was, in the view of Officers, a way to reduce risks and to address concerns in a shorter time frame as compared to making a new Netting Permit Byelaw. CO Mander said that the current Category One Netting Permit Conditions could be amended, following formal consultation, to recognise that different commercial fishers operating under a Category One Netting Permit have different needs. CO Mander highlighted those commercial fishers without a shellfish fishing entitlement, as set out in the vessel's Fishing Licence, are restricted under the current Category One Netting Permit Conditions to removing five lobsters (from lobster or spiny lobster) and 25 crab (from a mix of species) per calendar day. Commercial fishers that have invested in a shellfish fishing entitlement, as set out in the vessel's Fishing Licence, do not have this restriction. CO Mander explained that the same principle of separating commercial fishers could apply for fishers with or without a bass entitlement. CO Mander explained that the Officers' proposals also reflected what would be a more appropriate amount of net to be worked commercially from a rowing boat, with the restrictions being proposed not preventing commercial fishing by non-powered vessels throughout the year.

CO Mander informed Members that the final recommendation was relevant to all Category One and Category Two Netting Permit Holders and was related to the marking of fixed nets. CO Mander said that the proposal reflected feedback from fishers over a prolonged period that they face challenges using flags to mark nets, especially in areas with strong tides. CO Mander said that the benefits of the current provision are limited hence the recommendation that it is removed as a Permit Condition.

Comments and Questions

David Morgan asked why the main focus should be on bass, when there are other species that can currently be landed without restriction by operators of non-powered fishing vessels. CO Mander said that the higher risk is associated with the lack of restriction relating to bass; however, the additional gear restrictions being proposed for non-powered fishing vessels will limit the catch of other species.

Jon Dornom suggested that if fishers do not comply with the Permit Conditions, D&S IFCA should take the permit away from the fisher. CO Mander responded and clarified that the suspension of a permit or disqualification of a person holding a permit is a decision for a court and not D&S IFCA.

Catch Data:

Jon Dornom said that he supported the proposals; however, he would favour an addition provision for non-powered vessels relating to the collection of data to consist of dates of activity, catch, gear used, and where

the catch was landed, similar to the data collected from the Salcombe Scallop fishers. Mark Day agreed that this should be an additional requirement adding that an opportunity would be missed if this provision is not included in the consultation Charlie Ziemann highlighted how Devon Sea Fisheries had many years ago required catch data from fishers using fixed surface nets. PPO Townsend confirmed that this was the case; however, it had been challenging to collect, chase up late returns of data and then to verify the accuracy of this data. PPO Townsend said that the majority of the data became meaningless for use by Devon Sea Fisheries. Mark Day said that even a nil return is a form of data that may be of use and if it is a consistent nil return, D&S IFCA could reject an application for a Permit. The Chair disagreed that a nil return could be used as the basis to reject an application.

Alistair Dewhirst supported the additional provision for catch data to be supplied from operators of non-powered vessels and hoped it would be as simple as possible for both fishers and D&S IFCA. Jon Dornom suggested a monthly catch data form be a requirement. DCO Clark said that a requirement for the submission of catch data will assist with traceability of fish.

CO Mander informed Members that many other IFCA's do have wider catch reporting requirements in place, but they have additional resources to collect and manage the data. CO Mander said that if Members favoured the additional provision for collection of data it can be added in the formal consultation, as this would be an opportunity to be open and transparent. Mike Williams said that the Netting Permit Byelaw already included a provision for the collection of data. CO Mander confirmed this; however, this related more to the powers of D&S IFCA to collect data, and the Permit Conditions would be the more appropriate mechanism to set out the exact requirement of what the data consists of and when it must be provided by the Permit Holders.

Gear Restrictions:

Felicity Sylvester highlighted Table 1 in the Officers' paper containing 13 non-powered vessels and listing the declared amount of nets being used. Felicity Sylvester said that the maximum length of net being proposed of 260 metres would appear to be appropriate as it matched up with responses in the pre-consultation; however, some fishers may not have informed D&S IFCA fully about their gear use. Felicity Sylvester asked if all the operators of non-powered vessels had been consulted on the wider issues and that someone operating a dinghy would also be using a larger powered vessel. Felicity Sylvester said that some fishers had spoken to her and may not have provided D&S IFCA with all their views.

CO Mander clarified that the pre-consultation had only focussed on the coastal herring heritage fishery, with some additional information gained about the mud horse being operated in Bridgwater Bay. CO Mander said that some commercial fishers do have more than one vessel, but the operators of the dinghies are not on record as having another powered vessel with a Category One Netting Permit. CO Mander clarified the focussed nature of the pre-consultation work relating only to heritage fisheries and informed Members that the formal consultation, to contain proposals by the B&PSC, would be an opportunity for all stakeholders to respond. Felicity Sylvester asked if additional measures would be considered to regulate seine netting for salmon in estuaries. CO Mander said that this would be the responsibility of the Environment Agency.

Safety at Sea:

Felicity Sylvester informed Members that when the Netting Permit Byelaw was made, she and other stakeholders had raised concern about permit conditions being so restrictive that they placed fishers in danger as they would have to adapt their fishing practices. Felicity Sylvester highlighted that netting in the winter in the dark along the coast, in particular in North Devon where there are fewer shore lights, poses a

high risk to fishers. Felicity Sylvester said that one of the responses from fishers had suggested that operators of non-powered vessels should be able to take an outboard engine to sea in case of emergencies and that she thought this was a sensible request based on social and economic welfare of fishers.

CO Mander informed Members that considerations and decision making based on health and safety falls outside of the remit for D&S IFCA and that relaxing the requirement that an engine cannot be taken to sea by a declared non-powered vessel would completely undermine the proposals. CO Mander clarified that if fishers with non-powered vessels consider their activity in such a vessel to be too high risk, their choice is to consider purchasing a powered vessel.

Jon Dornom agreed and said that all professional fishers are aware that their chosen profession can be dangerous. Jon Dornom said that any fisher that operates a vessel, including a non-powered vessel, should be experienced enough to know when it is safe or not to go to sea.

Gear Marking:

In response to some questions about gear marking, CO Mander highlighted current provisions in the Permit Conditions including that all gear must be marked correctly. Wayne Thomas asked if there was merit in different coloured flags being used. CO Mander said that the provision relating to use of flags marking fixed nets had originated as potentially a better way to demonstrate what is a net compared to a pot. Although the intentions were good the problems now outweigh the benefits of the provision. Jon Dornom confirmed that the use of flags is very challenging for fishers and expected strong support from fishers operating nets for the proposed relaxation of this permit condition.

Decision Making:

Members clarified that they wished to add an additional item for formal consultation relating to collection of data and Mike Williams formulated a proposal based on the detail provided in the Officers' paper.

That Members agree to formally consult on changes to the Category One Netting Permit Conditions to:

- a) **Prohibit the catch, retention, and landing of bass by a Category One Permit Holder operating a non-powered vessel or a licenced fishing vessel without a bass authorisation.**
- b) **Prohibit the removal of more than five lobsters (including spiny lobster), and twenty five crabs (mixture of species as defined) in any calendar day from a fishery within the District from a non-powered vessel or a licenced fishing vessel without a shellfish fishing entitlement.**
- c) **Limit the amount and length of nets (as set out in the Officers' paper) that can be fished by a Category One Netting Permit Holder operating a non-powered vessel**
- d) **Remove a requirement to mark fixed nets at sea with a flag at one end of the net.**
- e) **Require operators of non-powered vessels to supply data relating to their fishing activity.**

Proposed:

Mike Williams

Seconded: Mark Day

There were no amendments put forward.

In favour: 13

Against: 1

Abstain: 1

Agenda Item 7:

Mobile Fishing: Amendments to Category One Mobile Fishing Permit Conditions

The Chair asked CO Mander to introduce the agenda item.

Presentation

CO Mander explained that although decision making was required, this was simply a matter of process. CO Mander highlighted that the area in question referred to as “the Corridor” as shown on the Inshore Potting Agreement Area (IPA Chart) was now closed to demersal mobile fishing gear vessels. As the area is co-managed with use of D&S IFCA’s Category One Mobile Fishing Permit Conditions, these cannot be less restrictive than the national legislation already applied. Based on this, and due to the process set out in the current Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw, D&S IFCA was required to formally consult on a change to the Permit Conditions. Five responses had been received; however, CO Mander clarified that the responses could have no bearing on the decision making which must be to amend the Permit Conditions.

Comments and Questions

There were no comments or questions.

Decision Making:

That Members agree:

1. That the Category One Mobile Fishing Permit Conditions are amended (as set out in the Officers Paper) to close Area C of Annex 5a.
2. That the changes to the Category One Mobile Fishing Permit Conditions become valid on 1st March 2026.

Proposed:

Mike Williams

Seconded: Alistair Dewhirst

There were no amendments put forward.

In favour: 15

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

Agenda Item 8:

Mobile Fishing: To consider formally consulting on changes to the Category One Mobile Fishing Permit Conditions – Razor Clam Dredge Fishery

The Chair said that Myles Blood Smyth would address Members before CO Mander introduces the Officers’ paper.

Note: Rachel Irish left the meeting at 14.45.

As per D&S IFCA’s Standing Orders, Myles Blood Smyth used his allotted five minutes to inform Members about his fishing background and details about his intended fishing activity. Members thanked Myles Blood Smyth for the information.

Presentation

CO Mander explained that the Officers' paper builds upon the explanation provided by Myles Blood Smyth and highlighted the diagram in the Officers' paper showing how two vessels work together. CO Mander highlighted the methodology explained in the Officers' paper as well as the photographs of the tracks made in the sand by the razor clam dredge that back fill very quickly. CO Mander guided Members through the on-board research work undertaken in the District and the details of the survey work undertaken in Cornwall IFCA's District on the CIFCA's research vessel, Tiger Lily. Regarding the access area for the proposed fishery, CO Mander said the area was large enough for other fishers to engage in the fishery, but this was unlikely as the method is complicated and requires significant investment. CO Mander said that if the fishery was to open, the Officers' paper highlighted the importance that it is closely monitored, with a REM system being fitted to the fishing vessel to be a mandatory requirement. CO Mander informed Members that the new Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw 2022 includes scope for REM which would be introduced as a Permit Condition. CO Mander informed Members that the REM system would allow D&S IFCA to confirm that the dredging is taking place on sandy ground within the areas classified for the harvesting by the FSA, that this would be set out in a Permit Condition Annex and would provide evidence of the sustainability of the fishery and support the development of this new fishery. CO Mander said that as REM was a key requirement, it was his view that D&S IFCA should fund the purchase and installation of the equipment as this is a value to the public purse, compared to physical monitoring of the fishery.

Comments and Questions

Sarah Holmyard asked if there would be any potential impact on seagrass beds, and DCO Clark confirmed that the beds of seagrass were not within the proposed operational areas for the fishery. In response to Sarah Holmyard, CO Mander confirmed that the methodology was different to the method that is now banned in Scottish waters.

Mike Williams said that he was supportive of innovation, and was reassured that if the fishery was to begin, the monitoring of it would be a key component. Mike Williams said that it was a good opportunity to see REM in action.

Didi Alayi asked if there was sufficient confidence that it would be sustainable, and if Officers had data on stocks and other information about impacts on juvenile razor clams. CO Mander said that razor clams are an un-tapped resource so there will initially be large quantities available; however, sustainability is driven by economic viability, and fishing to over-exploitation would not be profitable, and therefore very unlikely. In response to Didi Alayi, CO Mander confirmed that the proposal at this time was not to introduce a catch limit; however, the fishery would be closely monitored and there would be scope for additional management measures should they be needed. DCO Clark added that this new fishery would be monitored more closely than any of the other fisheries in the District. In response to questions about smash rates, CO Mander informed Members that this is expected to be minimal because of how the fishing gear has been tested and adapted, and it is not in the interests of the fisher to have a high rate of damage to the product.

Didi Alayi said that it was important that review periods are set to go alongside the monitoring and DCO Clark confirmed that this will all be part of a Monitoring and Control Plan. CO Mander said that the B&PSC will be updated about the monitoring. In response to questions from Members about the potential to add further restrictions, CO Mander said it was the Officers' view that measures not set out in the Officers' paper would not initially be needed and would be overly precautionary. Sarah Holmyard disagreed and said that consideration should be given at this time to introducing a closed season when the razor clams are spawning.

CO Mander said that as the fishery, to begin with at least, would only have one operator he had the view that a closed season was not necessary. If Officers had concerns, CO Mander said that a closed season would have been added within the proposals. Mike Williams reminded Members about the live wrasse fishery that had been managed in the District, also with a lot of monitoring and reporting back to the B&PSC. Mike Williams said that from a monitoring perspective, D&S IFCA is in a far better place now because it can utilise REM. SEO Stewart added that REM could be used to determine when and where the activity takes place, with additional information such as sales notes would provide a robust monitoring package and give good base line data and over time LPUE can be calculated by Officers. Jon Dornom said that he was supportive of fishers trying to diversify and had the view that the fishery would partially manage itself, as the complications of this method of fishing require good weather, thereby naturally limiting effort. David Morgan asked a question regarding juvenile razor clams and their survivability. CO Mander responded and said that when the fishing gear is set up correctly, as he had witnessed, the survivability of juveniles is high. There is a quick return to sea process and the juveniles re-burrow very quickly.

Decision Making:

That Members

- a) **Support a new fishery for razor clams in the South of the D&S IFCA's District limited to sandy habitats within the areas classified for the harvesting of razor clams by the Food Standards Agency;**
- b) **Support the introduction of REM on the harvesting vessel to ensure the fishing activity takes place on suitable sandy habitats and the fishery can be fully monitored; and**
- c) **Agree to formal consultation on changes to the Category One Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw Permit Conditions to include a definition of the razor clam dredge to support this new fishery.**

Proposed:

Mike Williams

Seconded: David Morgan

There were no amendments put forward.

In favour: 11

Against: 1

Abstain: 2

Agenda Item 9:

Mobile Fishing: To consider formally consulting on changes to the Category One Mobile Fishing Permit Conditions – Mariculture Sites

The Chair said that Sarah Holmyard had declared a pecuniary interest. CO Mander informed Members that Sarah Holmyard had been granted a dispensation that would enable her to participate in the debate but not to vote on the site located in South Devon.

CO Mander highlighted that in 2022 the Authority (B&PSC) had demonstrated its support for mariculture by introducing Mobile Fishing Permit Conditions to prohibit demersal mobile fishing in three mariculture sites.

CO Mander highlighted that this decision by Members had recognised the content of D&S IFCA's Mariculture Strategy. CO Mander informed Members that prohibiting demersal mobile gear vessels from fishing in mariculture sites is a way to reduce the risk of damage to the farms and encourage investment in mariculture. Although Members had taken this decision regarding those three mariculture sites, further consideration on the introduction of protective measures for new sites was agreed by Members to take place on a case-by-case basis.

The Chair informed Members that as two separate mariculture sites were to be discussed, the presentation and deliberations would be split into two parts.

Presentation (1) - Mussel spat collection site Labrador Bay South Devon

CO Mander highlighted the detail in the Officers' paper regarding the mariculture site in Labrador Bay, South Devon, which had been granted a licence from the Marine management Organisation in the location set out in the Officers' paper. CO Mander informed Members that during the Marine Licence Application consultation process, D&S IFCA had responded and suggested a change in the location and orientation of the site to reduce the impact on the local mobile gear vessels who have historically fished in the area. CO Mander informed Members that the MMO considered all the information from the consultation on the Marine Licence Application, including impact on other marine traffic, and granted the licence for the site in the original proposed location. CO Mander explained that the operator Offshore Shellfish Ltd (OSL) had already notified mariners, including Fishermen's Associations, that it intended to commence the construction of the site by the end of January 2026. CO Mander clarified that the decision to be taken by the B&PSC was not one about the location of the site, but was one regarding introducing protective management measures to mitigate potential damage by mobile fishing gear vessels, now the site had been established and construction was taking place.

Comments and Questions

Mike Williams said that he was supportive of consulting on amendments to the Permit Conditions; however, Mike Williams said that D&S IFCA was not obliged to take any action as the MMO's Marine Licence Application Process, and D&S IFCA's review of Permit Conditions were independent processes. However, considering that the site had now been agreed, its protection in line with D&S IFCA's duties including balancing the needs (Section 153 (a) Marine and Coastal access Act 2009) makes it a material consideration.

The Chair highlighted the response by D&S IFCA to the Marine Licence Application consultation requesting that the site was relocated and asked where D&S IFCA had suggested the site be relocated to and why the suggestion was made. DCO Clark used a projector screen so that Members could examine the content of D&S IFCA's response and suggested location. DCO Clark explained to Members how IVMS had been used to show mobile gear activity in the area and highlighted engagement by D&S IFCA with both OSL and 11 fishers that were likely to be impacted by the placement of the site in the original location. DCO Clark added that D&S IFCA also provided a follow up response to points raised by OSL, but despite this, the MMO agreed with OSL's preferred location.

The Chair asked if Officers could highlight the relevant sections of D&S IFCA's Mariculture Strategy. The Mariculture Strategy was displayed on the projector screen for Members to view.

Mark Day said that it was disappointing that D&S IFCA's response had not had the desired impact; however, the MMO must have had their own reasons and ideally those reasons should be clearly explained by the MMO. As there was now no option to relocate the site, he would favour protective measures being introduced as otherwise the site could suffer damage by incursions by mobile fishing gear vessels.

In response to questions from Members about the influence of D&S IFCA's responses to Marine Licence Applications, DCO Clark said that the MMO has a deadline for responses, and therefore it would be challenging to include the views of B&PSC Members in responses, as the scheduling of B&PSC meetings would not correspond to the timelines for the determination of the marine licence application.

CO Mander agreed that the preparation of responses is better managed by Officers acting on behalf of the Authority, rather than input by Members. Regarding D&S IFCA's decision making relating to the protection of mariculture sites on a case by case basis, CO Mander highlighted what Officers understood case by case to consist of. CO Mander said that there are occasions where sites are applied for but could then see no meaningful development of infrastructure which therefore leads to a "land grab" type of scenario. In those situations, Officers would not recommend to Members that areas are prohibited to mobile fishing vessels.

Sarah Holmyard informed Members that if the site was not protected there could be incursions and with only 25 metres between mussel lines, there would be damage to the farm. Jon Dornom commented that the present site is approximately 1000 metres long and 400 metres wide, but asked if the site would grow, therefore leaving parts unprotected unless permit conditions would change once again. Sarah Holmyard confirmed that the site will not grow beyond the licenced area and would only be a spat colocation site. In response to questions about the application process (and granted licence), Sarah Holmyard informed Members that an operator must start developing the site within 12 months of gaining the licence.

Decision Making (1) - Mussel spat collection site Labrador Bay South Devon :

That Members agree to formally consult on prohibiting fishing by demersal mobile fishing gear vessels within the defined area of the mussel seed farm in Labrador Bay, South Devon.

Proposed: *Alistair Dewhirst* **Seconded:** *Mike Williams*

There were no amendments put forward.

In favour: 12
Against: 0
Abstain: 1

(Sarah Holmyard did not vote because of her pecuniary interest)

Presentation (2) - Seaweed Farm Bideford Bay North Devon

CO Mander confirmed that Algapelago Marine Ltd (AML) were granted a Marine Licence to locate a seaweed farm in Bideford Bay, North Devon, in 2022. The site is 116 hectares in size and is marked on the most up to date Admiralty Chart. CO Mander said that D&S IFCA had not objected to the location of the site. CO Mander said that although the location of the site is less contentious compared to the site in Labrador Bay, the site is still at risk from incursions which is therefore reflected in the Officers' proposals to introduce additional Permit Conditions for mobile fishing gear vessels.

The uncertainty includes:

- What will happen this year?
- Timings of events?
- Catches?
- Abundance?
- What support is there for fishers?

DCO Clark said that it is not yet clear of how the Fishing and Community Fund will help fishers. DCO Clark said that D&S IFCA will continue to engage with relevant parties and highlighted that she had been interviewed by ITV West Country.

Comments and Questions

Sarah Holmyard asked if there had been any analysis of catches by scallop vessels. DCO Clark said that she was aware that octopus are taking scallops into pots and eating them; however, there is generally less impact by octopus in the east of the District where more commercial divers operate. DCO Clark said that the biggest impacts appear to be west of Dartmouth. DCO Clark said that fine scale analysis is important.

Mike Williams said that in their January 2026 report, the Marine Biological Association (MBA) recommended an urgent investigation into the social and economic impact of the 2025 octopus bloom on the affected fishing industry and communities, but D&S IFCA is not able to act alone. Mike Williams asked if there had been any movement by Local Authorities and Defra to examine the social and economic impacts. DCO Clark said that she was not aware of any progress on that and no clear direction on how government funds will potentially be used to support fishers.

DCO Clark informed Members that the influx of octopus has relevance to D&S IFCA's continuing work associated with Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs). DCO Clark said that many of the FMPs are data deficient and that the Crab and Lobster FMP work will look to support the development of effort management in crab and lobster fisheries and to assess the impact of the octopus influx on these stocks. DCO Clark said that the FMP work will be proposed by Officers to be included in the 2026/2027 Annual Plan to be agreed by the Authority in March.

Felicity Syvester highlighted potential support for fishers within the Coastal Communities Fund. Sarah Holmyard responded and said that most of this is likely to be grant aid for particular projects.

Members examined the Annex to the Officers' paper and DCO Clark provided explanations associated with the graphs focussed on catches and catch value and how they should not be misunderstood. DCO Clark said that although a graph shows a 50% increase in catch for some, this can be a modest increase in real terms for example 200kg to 400kg.

Members thanked DCO Clark for preparing the Officers' paper and Mike Williams asked that the Officers' paper is re-presented at the Authority meeting so that all Members are aware of the situation and on-going work.

Date of the Next B&PSC Meeting.

PPO Townsend explained that the next B&PSC meeting would be expected to take place in about three months' time, and an exact date would be confirmed via email correspondence.

End.

DRAFT