

## Press Release – For immediate release 13/02/2018

### **New Netting Permit Byelaw to deliver locally focussed flexible and adaptive management**

A new Netting Permit Byelaw has just been approved by the Secretary of State, submitted by the Devon & Severn IFCA after an extensive period of consultation with stakeholders. The new Byelaw, which comes into force on the 1<sup>st</sup> of March requires all fishers to have a permit to use nets, with flexible and proportionate restrictions implemented and enforced.

The new Byelaw will deliver a more flexible and adaptive local regulatory approach to managing netting and improve integration with other conservation initiatives for species protection is supported by multiple organisations and individuals.

Netting is already prohibited in many estuaries in the D&S IFCA district as it can result in large volumes of fish, being caught in nets in a relatively short amount of time. Scientific research has shown that juvenile fish, especially Bass, congregate in estuary areas and therefore, netting in such areas poses a danger to already critically low stock levels of bass.

Under the current national legislation, many estuaries are designated as Bass Nursery areas with added European Commission conservation measures in place, which include an increase in the minimum conservation reference size to 42cm. However, Bass smaller than 42cm are found in estuaries and are often caught. Although unwanted catches of Bass and Salmon can be returned to the water, the experience can affect their reproduction, causes stress, disease and scale damage and evidence suggests it may also have an impact on mortality.

“We have to recognise the views and interests of different people and organisations, not solely the commercial fishing sector,” Tim Robbins, Chief Officer at Devon & Severn IFCA, said. “The introduction of this byelaw is a clear illustration of how the IFCA’s duties and the views of a wide range of stakeholders are balanced with extensive consultation and participation.”

The adoption of the new regulations means that many could continue to use nets in open sea areas where the Byelaw measures would remain almost unchanged.

“It is a misconception that D&S IFCA officers make decisions without recourse to stakeholder views or scientific evidence,” Mike Williams, the Authority’s Vice Chairman, said. “It is the Authority members that make the decisions which are carried out after extensive and documented deliberations.”

“D&S IFCA recognises that some commercial netters will be affected, but the weight of evidence is clear. Responses from the inshore commercial sector during the consultations were few and lacked evidence of adverse financial impact. The Authority must take a precautionary approach when evidence is lacking. Alternatives to removing most netting methods from within the estuaries were, of course, considered but it was inappropriate when balanced against multiple factors.”

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## Editors Notes:

- D&S IFCA website links to relevant documents:

[Impact Assessment](#) (Used for the formal consultation period)

[Response & recommendations report for stakeholders – November 22nd, 2016](#)

Used to explain how objection responses to the Byelaw were considered. This report was circulated to all stakeholders who raised objections to the Byelaw and those who supported the introduction of the Byelaw

[Access for netting within estuaries & decision-making report – February 2017](#)

Further explanation of the decision-making process, with focus on the proposed restrictions for estuary netting. This report explains how access for netting was considered but ultimately for the reasons documented dismissed as an appropriate option

- D&S IFCA was established under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 to lead, champion and manage a sustainable marine environment and inshore fisheries. The duties, responsibilities and powers for all IFCA's are clearly set out in this Act of Parliament.
- The D&S IFCA is the largest of ten separate IFCA districts and has two sea boundaries. The D&S IFCA District covers an area of 4522 Km<sup>2</sup>
- The D&S IFCA is funded through its constituent local authorities by an annual levy. That levy is supported by central Government to enable the Authority to deliver on national management objectives. The local Authorities funding the IFCA are: Devon County Council, Plymouth City Council, Torbay Council; Somerset County Council, North Somerset Council, South Gloucestershire Council, Gloucestershire County Council and Bristol City Council.
- The D&S IFCA manages the exploitation of sea fisheries resources in its district and seeks to ensure that the conservation objectives of any Marine Conservation Areas in the district are furthered.
- D&S IFCA's vision is to: "lead, champion and manage a sustainable marine environment and inshore fisheries, by successfully securing the right balance between social, environmental and economic benefits to ensure healthy seas, sustainable fisheries and a viable industry".

**If you would like further information, images or an interview with a D&S IFCA Officer, please contact:**

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