

## **Press Release – For immediate release 21/08/2017**

### **Finding the best way forward to monitor scallop populations**

Devon and Severn IFCA are about to conduct a three-day survey to establish the best method for assessing scallop stocks, allowing for better management of the population in the future. It is hoped that the results will prove that using a towed camera array to monitor the shellfish is by far the best method and should replace the traditional use of dredges, particularly in more delicate habitats where they can cause damage.

The survey will begin with the filming technique, an effective way to look at species and habitats along the seabed without disrupting the marine environment. This will be followed by the more common method of dredging. Both sampling techniques will be assessed for their effectiveness in estimating densities of king scallops, with the numbers caught on camera compared with those caught in the dredge. On the final day, the video system will also be used to assess the impact of the dredges on the seabed.

Although the research location is within a Marine Protected Area, it is 500m beyond the buffer zone of reef areas and is outside the site of community importance. The Lyme Bay SI is 200km<sup>2</sup> and the total survey grid is 1km<sup>2</sup> (0.5% of SI area) and the survey will only take place in less than one third of this grid. The scallops from each transect will be counted and measured by fishing crew and IFCA officers, before being returned to waters within the SI.

Permission has been granted by Defra, the Marine Management Organisation and Natural England for D&S IFCA, South Western Fish Producers Organisation and fishers to carry out the survey, which will feed into Cefas' national project to develop the best method for scallop stock assessment.

"Hopefully, this will demonstrate to Cefas and the industry that the flying array camera is our best option currently for stock assessment within our district's waters," Tim Robbins, chief officer at D&S IFCA, said.

"That would result in no further need to tow damaging dredges along the seabed for scallop assessments. This would undoubtedly be a better outcome for the conservation of the marine environment."

The results will be drawn up within three months of the survey.

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#### Editors Notes:

- 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 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 or images, please contact:**

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