

Southern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority

Pia Bateman – Chief Executive Officer



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12th August 2026

Dear Member,

MEETING OF THE TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE – 20th August 2026

The Meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) will be held in the meeting room at Unit 3 Holes Bay Park, on **Thursday 20th August 2026 at 14:00** to discuss the business on the under mentioned Agenda. Parking is limited, please consider other forms of transport, or share lifts. Parking may be available at the Premier Inn, Holes Bay Hotel, however, please be aware that spaces are not always available. In order to check if parking is available, you are required to use the Horizon Parking App. Poole Railway station is approximately a 15-minute walk from the office.

Members of the public can request a guest telephone dial-in code from enquiries@southern-ifca.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely,

Sarah Birchenough
Deputy Chief Officer

AGENDA

1. Welcome

2. Apologies

To receive apologies for absence.

3. Declaration of Interest

All Members are to declare any interests in line with paragraphs (16) and (17) of the Southern IFCA Code of Conduct for Non-Council Members.

4. Minutes – 7th May 2026

To confirm the Minutes of the Technical Advisory Committee meeting held on 7th May 2026 (Marked A).

PROGRESS REPORTS

5. To consider the following:

- a) **Emergent Updates** – to receive an update on any matters of relevance which have emerged since the publication of this agenda.
- b) **Black Seabream Co-Developed Principles – Year 1** – to receive a verbal updated from DCO Birchenough.
- c) **Review of Pot Fishing Management in the Southern IFCA District** - to receive a report from DCO Birchenough (Marked B).

ITEMS FOR DECISION

- 6. The Solent Native Oyster Survey 2026: Report to Inform Solent Dredge Permit Byelaw Category B Permits** - to consider a report from IFCO Churchouse (Marked C).

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

- 7. Poole Bivalve Survey Report 2026 & Non-Technical Summaries** - to receive a report from IFCO Mullen (Marked D).
- 8. Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Byelaw: Monitoring & Control Plan In-Season Monitoring Update, May to June 2026** - to receive a report from IFCO Mullen (Marked E).
- 9. Fisheries Management Plans** – to receive a report from PO Wright (Marked F).
- 10. District Wrecks – An Overview** – to receive a presentation from IFCO Perrins.
- 11. Date of Next Meeting**
To confirm the date of the next meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee on Thursday 5th November 2026 at Southern IFCA, Unit 3 Holes Bay Park, Sterte Avenue West, Poole Dorset BH15 2AA.

SOUTHERN INSHORE FISHERIES & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE – 7th May 2026

Minutes of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), held in the meeting room at the Southern IFCA office in Poole at **14:00 on Thursday 7th May 2026**.

Present

Dr Antony Jensen	Chairman, MMO Appointee
Mr Richard Stride	Vice Chairman, MMO Appointee
Dr Heidi Guille	MMO Appointee
Mr Colin Francis	MMO Appointee
Mr Rob Milton	MMO Appointee
Mr Mark Cornwell	MMO Appointee
Mr Neil Hornby	MMO Appointee
Mr Tom Havelock	Marine Management Organisation
Mr Stuart Kingston-Turner	Environment Agency
Dr Richard Morgan	Natural England
Ms Pia Bateman	Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

Principal Deputy Chief Officer (PDCO) Sam Dell, Deputy Chief Officer (DCO) Dr Sarah Birchenough, IFCO's Ms Hester Churchouse, Ms Celie Mullen, Mr William Meredith-Davies, Ms Chelsea Perrins and PO Ms Imogen Wright were also present.

Ms Alison Ruscoe and Mr Steve Boyd were present in the public gallery. Mr Peter Morgan (Angling Trust) attended virtually.

Apologies

30. Apologies for absence were received from Ms Elisabeth Bussey-Jones (MMO Appointee) and Dr Simon Cripps (MMO Appointee).

Declarations of interest

31. The following pecuniary interests were declared: Mr Rob Milton (Agenda Items 7, 8 and 9).

Minutes

32. Members considered the Minutes of the meeting held on the 5th of February 2026 (Marked A). The minutes were approved by mutual consent.

PROGRESS REPORTS

33. Emergent Updates

The CEO informed Members that the EFRA (Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) Committee report had been published at the end of April, titled 'Resetting the Relationship with Fishing Communities'. The report sets out how Defra can help the UK fishing industry recover after what has been described as a series of avoidable failures in communication and policy design. The CEO noted that IFCAs are not mentioned in the report or recognised for local and collective national contributions, the focus being on Defra and the MMO. Members were informed that the report calls for Government to develop a strategic framework for managing competing demands in inshore and offshore waters, noting a loss of confidence from the fishing industry in the relevant departments there to support them. The report also calls on the MMO to resume the publication of enforcement statistics and that the proposed framework required should be collaborative with the fishing community at its heart, including a formal mechanism enabling the community to participate in decisions that affect them. The CEO

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outlined that the report also recommends that Defra establish a UK-wide network of Regional Fisheries Management Forums, comprising of fishers, marine scientists and environmental organisations. The CEO reflected that this recommendation is very similar to the IFCA model.

The CEO informed Members that the AIFCA are preparing a response on behalf of the IFCA to the Fisheries APPG Call for Evidence, providing an opportunity for IFCA to be proactive and constructive in the national picture. The Fisheries APPG launched the Call for Evidence to help shape a long-term fisheries action plan, calling for recognition of the inshore sector and its foundations in the community, as well as the impact that a loss of this sector would have. The CEO outlined six key themes and the associated suggested actions which are part of this Call for Evidence, covering fleet resilience, fairness in management, coastal communities, governance, evidence, people and investment.

The CEO stated that the Community Drop-In Surgeries held over the past 16 months have now concluded, with the Chair, Chair of the TAC, the CEO, the PDCO and DCO attending the final Surgeries in Mudeford & Lymington and Portsmouth & Warsash. The CEO informed Members that outputs of these cross-District sessions are currently being reviewed with an intention to provide more information at the June Authority meeting.

The CEO informed Members that Local Elections were taking place today which could have implications for the current Authority elected membership across 5 of the 6 relevant Local Authorities, with only Dorset Council not holding elections. The CEO reflected that this provides some positive continuity with the two elected Members from Dorset Council, Cllr Hughes and Cllr Wheller.

34. Marine Licence Application – Durlston Head to Hurst Spit Beach Sediments

DCO Birchenough informed Members that Southern IFCA, as a consultee for Marine Licence Applications (MLAs) relevant to the District, had been consulted on MLA/2025/00553 – Area 2105 MLA for beach sediments Durlston Head to Hurst Spit. DCO Birchenough outlined that the MLA had been submitted by Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) Council, proposing dredging works in a defined area over Dolphin Sands and Spit Bank to obtain sediment for beach replenishment within the region. DCO Birchenough stated that Southern IFCA have submitted a response to the consultation on this MLA, raising serious concerns with the proposed works, with the potential for impacts on fisheries of commercial and recreational importance that would result in negative social, economic, cultural and community effects, and the overall sustainability of the inshore, small-scale fishing fleet in the Poole Bay and Christchurch Bay areas. To inform the consultation response, Southern IFCA had engaged with representatives of the commercial and recreational sectors through the South Coast Fishermen's Council, Poole & District Fishermen's Association and the Poole and District Sea Angling Association. DCO Birchenough informed Members that the response set out recommendations based on reviewing the application and associated documentation, any identified inaccuracies, points where further clarity is requested, points and concerns raised by the stakeholder community and general comments which concerned the process and consultation on the application. DCO Birchenough outlined that the MMO would review all consultation responses received and that Southern IFCA expected to receive further communication in due course on the outcome of the consultation and any next steps.

Members discussed responses to the consultation from other statutory authorities, including Natural England, and where additional data may be available to inform the application including historic sediment data from that area. It was discussed that in addition to Southern IFCA, both Natural England and the local MMO team had also raised significant concerns with the proposals.

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35. Black Seabream Co-Developed Principles – delivery in the field

DCO Birchenough provided Members with an overview of the development process for the Black Seabream Co-Developed Principles, developed with the Dorset Community across the Purbeck Coast Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ), Poole Rocks MCZ and Southbourne Rough MCZ as an additional management opportunity to complement statutory protections and to advance understandings of black seabream fisheries over time.

DCO Birchenough informed Members that the focus of Year 1 of implementation, from 1st April 2026, is engagement, raising awareness and seeking compliance. Southern IFCA have produced engagement materials to support the implementation of the Co-Developed Principles using both electronic and paper formats to support wider engagement. All fishers and charter businesses who are engaged with black seabream fisheries in the three Dorset MCZs have also been invited to become Black Seabream Custodians via displaying a sticker on their vessel, and/or adding information to their business website. Any organisation, business or community group who would like to promote their support for the initiative have also been invited to have their logo displayed on the Southern IFCA black seabream webpage.

DCO Birchenough outlined that engagement materials have been disseminated through email and in-person engagement with all relevant sectors, supported by attendance at stakeholder meetings. Southern IFCA have engaged by email with 151 recipients and in-person with 80 recipients. A new webpage has also been developed to host all information relating to the management of black seabream and a new Google Maps Interactive Tool has been made live, to be used by all stakeholders to understand the location of spatial regulations within the District that are applicable to multiple sectors, including the Co-Developed Principles.

PDCO Dell informed Members that work on the coast has been carried out through shore patrols, port visits and sea patrols, both inside and outside of the three MCZs, including the collection of fisher-independent data from 16 vessels to date operating within the MCZs to support the Data Collection Programme. To date 56% of those engaged through at-sea inspections were aware of the Co-Developed Principles and those that were not have been provided with engagement materials. Officers have also been gathering feedback from all sectors on the Co-Developed Principles and their implementation.

DCO Birchenough outlined that Southern IFCA will continue to work closely with the Dorset Community through the recognised breeding season (Apr-Jul) and the first annual review will commence after the breeding season ends.

Dr H Guille commented on evidence gaps that had been identified through the development process and queried if any funding had been identified to address these. DCO Birchenough outlined that funding opportunities continued to be explored by relevant academic institutions to further tagging work done on black seabream, but nothing had been confirmed to date. DCO Birchenough commented that the Seabream FMP would hopefully support filling evidence gaps. Dr Guille suggested that the Fisheries and Coastal Growth Fund could be an avenue to explore for funding.

Mr C Francis informed Members that the majority of the recreational angling sector were in favour of the Co-Developed Principles. There were some stakeholders who felt that the measures should be statutory, but the engagement materials and stickers have been welcomed and are readily being used. Recreational stakeholders generally seem happy with the slot size in the Co-Developed Principles.

The Chairman invited Mr Peter Morgan from the Angling Trust to provide a comment. Mr P Morgan stated that the Co-Developed Principles had generally been well received and accepted within the recreational sea angling community. He stated that the community want

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to protect and conserve the species and can see the benefits of the management approach being taken.

36. End of Season Spotlight: Scallop Fishing in the Solent (November 2025-March 2026)

DCO Birchenough provided an initial overview of this agenda item and the subsequent papers and inputs to follow. Following the conclusion of the 2025/26 Solent Scallop Fishery on 31st March 2026, the performance of the fishery could be considered following the introduction of additional effort management, in the form of a reduction in daily fishing hours from 08:00-16:00 to 08:00-14:00, in response to Member's consideration of data from the Solent Scallop Survey and the identified need to explore additional effort controls to support a sustainable fishery. DCO Birchenough outlined that the fishery's performance is informed by compliance & enforcement, Fishery Performance Indicators, and insights from a Permit Holder who was active in the scallop fishery.

DCO Birchenough provided an overview of the background on the Solent scallop fishery, covering the development of management and PDCO Dell provided Members with geographic information, fleet dynamics, an overview of regulatory tools (both national and local), current management measures, fishing gear used in the fishery, and the compliance approach taken.

DCO Birchenough presented on the first aspect of the fishery, the introduction of a new Category A Permit Condition in November 2025, providing Members with an overview of the drivers and process for introducing additional effort controls in the Solent Scallop Fishery ahead of the 2025/26 season to support a sustainable fishery. DCO Birchenough outlined that, following the autumn post-season Solent Scallop Survey in 2025 and a full analysis for Solent Scallop Survey Data for 2024-2025, a number of key points (detailed in the agenda item report) were identified which formed a driver for actioning a review of permit conditions, permit fees and limitations on the number of permits under a Category A Solent Dredge Permit. DCO Birchenough gave an overview of the review process and opportunities for stakeholders to participate through consultation and the resolution at an Extraordinary meeting of the TAC to reduce fishing effort to support a sustainable fishery through a reduction in daily fishing hours from 08:00-16:00 to 08:00-14:00.

PDCO Dell presented to Members on in-season compliance with the additional effort management giving an overview of the compliance statistics (detailed in the agenda item report), including the numbers of patrols and inspections carried out as well as the recording of 77 sightings of fishing vessels engaged in the Solent scallop fishery, the submission of 10 intelligence reports related to suspected non-compliance, and the occurrence of 5 Offence Reports resulting from instances of non-compliance, relating to the issuing of 2 Fixed Administrative Penalties with 3 investigations ongoing. PDCO Dell outlined that during the season, non-compliance in the Solent Scallop Fishery was identified across 4 vessels with 3 demonstrating non-compliance on 2 occasions. Senior IFCO Adam Parry provided input to Members from an on-the-ground perspective, stating that overall, the fleet had responded well to the additional management with feedback that the rationale was understood and that it was beneficial that November had been kept open for this season. Senior IFCO Parry outlined that most of the fleet have robust measures in place to support compliance with minimum conservation reference size (MCRS) regulations, including setting gauges bigger than the MCRS of 110mm, and having bottom towed fishing gear (BTFG) closed areas on plotters. Senior IFCO Parry reflected that there were detections of non-compliance relating to BTFG closed areas and one instance of breaching the new curfew, but that use of the drone was beneficial in this regard as well as ongoing work with IFCO Payton to provide BTFG prohibition area waypoints for uploading onto fishers' plotters. Senior IFCO Parry outlined that the majority of the fishers welcomes the presence of the patrol vessel and boarding teams during the season with minimal disruption to fishing activities. Joint working opportunities were also

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explored with the MMO, allowing for communication across multiple objectives and remits. Senior IFCO Parry noted that good catches were reported from the start of the season in November, with catch levels trailing off towards the end of the season with most vessels turning to other fishing methods in the month of March.

IFCO Churchouse presented to Members on Fishery Performance Indicators, including both fisher-dependent data from Permit Holder submitted catch returns during the season and fisher-independent data from the Southern IFCA Monitoring Programme through the Solent Scallop Survey carried out three times per year, and a Mid-Season Observer Programme, implemented for the first time in 2026. IFCO Churchouse provided Members with an overview of data on fishery participation, noting that 40 out of 49 eligible applicants took out their Category A Permit for the 2025/26 season, with 26 Permit Holders in total active within the Solent Scallop Fishery, 20 of which worked consistently (present in the fishery for 3 or more months) and 10 working for 5 days or more in each of 3 months or more during the season. IFCO Churchouse provided an overview of Scallop catch levels and LPUE during the season, noting a 39.5% decrease in total tonnage compared to the 2024/25 season (241.8 tonne to 400.1 tonne), with the total caught lower than all previous seasons except 2022/23. IFCO Churchouse covered the geographical distribution of catches and the analysis of catch data as Landings Per Unit Effort (LPUE), looking at variations within and between seasons, with LPUE lower than in the 2023/24 season, and the November LPUE being lower than all previous seasons except 2022/23.

IFCO Churchouse provided a verbal overview on early reflections from the February and April Solent Scallop Surveys and the Mid-Season Observer Programme. Regarding the Solent Scallop Survey, IFCO Churchouse outlined that the initial results appeared positive with improvements in Catch Per Unit Effort (CPUE) in the spring 2026 survey compared to the previous two springs and more increases than decreases in CPUE at site level comparing between spring 2025, autumn 2025 and the spring 2026 survey. IFCO Churchouse noted that scallop length was increased in the spring survey compared to the previous year but that this was not consistent with other previous surveys and that the proportion of scallops over MCRS was lower in some areas than previously seen with larger numbers of under MCRS scallops being seen.

Permit Holder Mr Steve Boyd, who has actively worked in the Solent Scallop Fishery during the 2025/26 season, was invited to address Members to provide an insight into reflections on the 2025/26 season and expert observations on potential gear management solutions which could further support the ongoing sustainability of the fishery. Mr Boyd spoke about the condition of scallops and that the current industry standard N-Viro dredge was helping to reduce impact to the condition of scallop in The Solent which contributes to keeping catch rates up throughout the season. Mr Boyd expressed some concern regarding the number of vessels operating in the fishery and that this may adversely impact the scallop condition in the longer term, expressing concerns regarding predators such as whelk being able to feed on damaged scallops and overall increases in mortality. Mr Boyd stated that there could be further changes made to the scallop dredges used in the fishery, such as having a ladder system similar to an oyster dredge which would not require teeth and therefore have benefits for both the marine environment and the stock, and that there could be benefit in having a specific dredge design for The Solent fishery to promote continued innovation for sustainable fishing. It was recognised that changes to the gear type used in The Solent may have short-term economic impacts but that overall, there would be long-term benefits. Mr Boyd also commented on the relationship between the Solent scallop fishery and the Manila clam fishery and how the level of fishing effort in one or the other in a given year can influence effort levels in each fishery in subsequent years, emphasising the need to monitor fishing effort in this regard to ensure that both fisheries can remain sustainable. Mr Boyd re-emphasised the importance of the fishing gear, commenting on the inability to use a pump-scoop dredge within

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The Solent and that fishers would like the ability to use this gear type as a more environmentally friendly form of dredge to fish for Manila clam. The CEO commented that work has been done to investigate this matter further with detailed outputs and summaries of current findings provided to the Authority within the last 12 months. At present significant resource would be required to address the data and evidence gaps to inform the potential to progress this matter further.

DCO Birchenough concluded by outlining that Southern IFCA seeks to continue exploring ways in which the Solent Scallop Fishery can be developed to ensure a sustainable fishery is maintained, and to explore where improvements to the fishery can be made to support both the marine environment and the socioeconomics of the Scallop fishers, recognising the intrinsic links between this fishery and local coastal communities. DCO Birchenough outlined that Southern IFCA are committed to commencing a wider review of the management of dredge fishing in The Solent in the 2026/27 Financial Year and will also be delivering the Solent Scallop Research Programme.

Members discussed the use of different gear types with input from PDCO Dell on the relevant regulations and the requirements that these impose, emphasising the partnership working between Southern IFCA, the MMO and the fishing industry in delivery within The Solent fishery. Members also discussed potential avenues for future research which may aid in understanding the use of different types of fishing gear and associated impacts. The CEO outlined the research that is planned to take place to further understand fishing gear used in the Solent Scallop Fishery and that this will be delivered during the current Financial Year. The CEO also outlined that the Authority would be seeking to further investigate the potential for gear innovation, noting the factors that would need to be considered in this regard including marine protected area management and existing national regulations.

Mr M Cornwell queried whether The Solent scallop fishery overlapped with a whelk fishery. Members discussed that there is overlap between the two fisheries, and whether there is any impact from this, for example potential toxicity from crab bait used in whelk fisheries which could then possibly impact scallop but noting that this is not something that has been observed in The Solent. DCO Birchenough informed Members that dead scallop shell had previously been sent to Cefas for analysis, and no attributable cause had been found.

Mr N Hornby reflected that the decision taken to introduce additional management measures in challenging circumstances had appeared to have been beneficial on the stock from the evidence presented and that this is additionally positive due to the collaborative process undertaken with industry to deliver this.

Dr H Guille commented that other scallop stocks nationally are seemingly not doing well, and this emphasises the importance of the good work done in The Solent. Dr Guille also reflected on the wider context, referencing the objectives of the King Scallop FMP for harvest control rules and management of scallop stocks and that this is already being delivered in The Solent, as well as the objective relating to fishing gear improvements to support sustainability and the marine environment, stating that this would be a key driver in being able to continue to explore factors relating to fishing gear in this fishery. Dr Guille also referenced the UK Scallop Fishery Improvement Project (FIP) which Southern IFCA are involved with, that includes many of the same objectives, with slightly more of an industry focus.

ITEMS FOR DECISION

37. The Poole Harbour Fishery Order 2015 – Management Plan (2026 Update)

IFCO Meredith-Davies presented to Members the 2026 Update to the Poole Harbour Fishery Order 2015 (The Order) Management Plan: 2025 Revision, outlining that an annual review of

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the Management Plan is required to be carried out under the terms of The Order.

IFCO Meredith-Davies informed Members that for the 2026 review only inconsequential updates to grammar and sentence structure had been identified as being required and therefore the review did not seek to introduce any significant changes to the Management Plan. IFCO Meredith-Davies stated that if the 2026 Update is agreed, the review and outcomes will be referenced in the Management Plan and the 2026 Update version made available on the Southern IFCA website in accordance with the requirements under The Order.

The recommendations were proposed by Mr R Stride and seconded by Mr S Kingston-Turner. Nine Members voted in favour, Mr R Milton and Mr T Havelock abstained.

Resolved

38. That Members agree that no updates are required to the Poole Harbour Several Order 2015 Management Plan: 2025 Revision (2026 Update).

39. That Members approve that the Management Plan: 2025 Revision (2025 Update) is published on the Southern IFCA website.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

40. Several/Regulating Order (SRO) Defra Review Outcome

DCO Birchenough informed Members that the Aquaculture and Policy Team at Defra had previously contacted Southern IFCA as the grantee of The Poole Harbour Fishery Order 2015 (The Order) to inform of upcoming changes to the way Defra process all future Several and Regulating Order applications, specifically relating to cost recovery for expenses incurred in relation to new applications. Southern IFCA formally responded to this consultation in February 2025 providing information on the importance of aquaculture in Poole Harbour, its history and the ecosystem benefits provided by the sector, detail of how The Order is managed and delivered by Southern IFCA, concerns over implications for cost recovery on the Authority and Leaseholders, the risk of loss of aquaculture activity and the beneficial services provided if cost recovery cannot be managed to minimise impact to operators and regulators, and suggested considerations on timescale, avoiding creating barriers to entry and cross-organisational working with associated funding potential.

DCO Birchenough outlined that the outcome of the consultation had been received with five responses provided by regulators and industry representatives. Members were informed that Defra had confirmed arrangements for payment schedules of associated costs at approximately £35,000 per Order at 2026 rates. It was outlined that where Several/Regulating Orders are held by IFCAs, Defra would expect IFCAs to recover the costs from the beneficiaries of the Order and an alternative route would be for IFCAs to use flexible permitting byelaws.

DCO Birchenough outlined the implications for Southern IFCA, that there would be no change under the life of the current Order which expires on 1st July 2035 and that post this date, there would be costs incurred for either the seeking of a new Order or the development of a Byelaw. It was outlined that the Association of IFCAs intends to raise concerns regarding this matter with the Shellfish Association of Great Britain and it was recommended that the appropriate route for future management of aquaculture by the Authority be considered in conjunction with stakeholders during the 2028-29 Financial Year.

Members discussed the policy context of this and where the need to explore such a process may have arisen from. Members discussed that taking a byelaw management route would require considerations of the timeframes required to make a byelaw and have it ratified by the Secretary of State. It was also discussed that aquaculture does require suitable and

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appropriate management to support a sustainable industry and whether costs could be spread over multiple years, in addition Members discussed cost comparisons between an Order and a Byelaw. The CEO outlined that it is difficult to quantify the cost for developing a permitting byelaw but that quantifying costs of other regulations developed in the interim helps to provide an indication. The CEO also outlined that discussions would take place with existing Leaseholders and any other interested parties at the appropriate time and that Southern IFCA would review what process other authorities may choose to follow for Orders which expire sooner.

41. Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Byelaw: Monitoring & Control Plan Outputs 2025/26 Season

IFCO Mullen presented Members with the outputs from the On-Site Monitoring Programme (MCP) under the Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Byelaw Monitoring and Control Plan ahead of the 2026/27 fishing season. IFCO Mullen provided an explanation of how the MCP had been developed and the relevant Monitoring Variables under the On-Site Monitoring Programme.

IFCO Mullen outlined that for the landings data Monitoring Variable, measured as Landings Per Unit Effort (LPUE) (kg/day) calculated from landings data from monthly catch returns submitted by Permit Holders for the 2025/26 season, the Threshold Trigger Level (TTL) had not been reached, with the average LPUE value for the season being 83.52 kg/day (TTL = 78.25 kg/day). IFCO Mullen informed Members that while below the current lowest rolling 5-year average, the average LPUE for 2025/26 was 15.34% higher than for 2024/25.

IFCO Mullen informed Members that for the Poole Harbour Bivalve Survey Monitoring Variable, measured as Catch Per Unit Effort (CPUE) (kg/m of dredge/hour) calculated from data obtained during the 2026 annual survey, the TTL had not been reached, with the average CPUE being 43.79 kg/m of dredge/hr (TTL = 34.60 kg/m of dredge/hr). IFCO Mullen outlined that whilst the average CPUE value was below the current lowest 5-year rolling average, it was 0.7% higher than for the 2025 survey.

IFCO Mullen informed Members that, based on the LPUE TTL and CPUE TTL having not been reached, it was recommended that no additional management is required to support a sustainable Manila clam fishery for the 2026/27 season and gave an overview of the process of issuing permits and the In-Season Monitoring Programme which will run through the 2026/27 season. IFCO Mullen also outlined that under the review of permit conditions proposed for this Financial Year, the Monitoring Variables under the MCP would be reviewed, including the potential to add in TTLs for Common Cockle, to ensure that the TTLs continue to reflect robust evidence from the fishery and any annual changes.

42. Fisheries Management Plans

PO Wright provided an overview of the matters captured in the Executive Summary, providing updates on the Bass Fisheries Management Plan (FMP), Whelk FMP and Channel Demersal Non-Quota Species FMP. PO Wright provided an overview of the four Tranche 4 FMPs currently under consultation, the Wrasses Complex FMP, Seabream FMP, Celtic Sea and Western Channel Demersal FMP and Celtic Sea and Western Channel Pelagic FMP, outlining the proposed goals and actions. PO Wright provided a summary of the points contained in the consultation responses that had been submitted by Southern IFCA, thanking Members and stakeholders for their input.

PO Wright informed Members that a public consultation on Scottish led demersal FMPs had concluded in March 2026, with three of the FMPs being relevant to the Southern IFCA District; the Northern Shelf Cod FMP, the Northern Shelf Hake FMP and the North Sea and Eastern

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Channel Whiting FMP. PO Wright provided an overview of the comments made in Southern IFCA's joint consultation response to all three of these FMPs, with the full response provided as an annex to this agenda item. PO Wright outlined that there are also three relevant pelagic FMPs being led by Scottish Government as Joint UK FMPs; the Northern Shelf Mackerel FMP (covering the whole Southern IFCA District), the North Sea Herring FMP (covering the eastern part of the District under ICES area 7d), and the Northern Shelf Blue Whiting FMP (covering the whole Southern IFCA District). PO Wright informed Members that Southern IFCA had attended a pre-consultation event on these FMPs with public consultation timetabled for summer 2026.

Mr R Stride updated Members after a recent meeting of the Bass Management Group, outlining that research by the University of Essex had been looking at spawning periods in relation to current closed seasons with the spawning period for the majority of the coast appearing to be later than previously thought. Members discussed the potential causes of this shift including warming waters, noting that stakeholders were seeing similar on the coast to the results of the research project. Members discussed potential implications for management and whether this may be able to be integrated into the Bass FMP implementation process.

Mr N Hornby queried whether the negotiations with the EU regarding the SPS agreement had been considered in relation to the FMP process at a national level. DCO Birchenough stated that some of the work at the international level had driven a change in language used in the FMPs being drafted, recognising the need to incorporate national and international determinations into the ability to deliver actions under the FMPs. The CEO outlined that Defra have indicated that FMPs will continue to be implemented but alongside a necessary focus on wider matters such as international negotiations. The CEO informed Members that IFCAs were requesting that consideration is given during the implementation process as to the tools used for management, considering the different types of measures that can be used and the role that IFCAs can have at a local level, seeking to support national delivery but recognising different limitations of different organisations and the need to consider cross-sector implementation. Members discussed resourcing challenges around the implementation of FMPs and the potential impacts of climate change on how policy goals and actions in the FMPs can be delivered.

43. Date of Next Meeting

To confirm the date of the next meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee on the 20th August 2026 at Southern IFCA, Unit 3 Holes Bay Park, Sterte Avenue West, Poole Dorset BH15 2AA.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 16:37.

Chairman:

Date:

Review of Pot Fishing Management in the Southern IFCA District: Progress Update

Report by DCO Birchenough

A. Purpose

To provide Members with an update on a review of pot fishing management in the Southern IFCA District which is to take place following the removal of the proposed Pot Fishing Byelaw from the MMO QA system, aiming to scope future pot fishing needs and potential management requirements.

B. Annex

- **Annex 1** – Stakeholder Letter ‘Important Stakeholder Update regarding Management of Pot Fishing within the Southern IFCA District’
- **Annex 2** – Community Drop-In Surgeries: Process & Outcomes Graphic

1.0 Introduction

- At the Authority meeting in June 2026 Members resolved to undertake a review of the Southern IFCA Pot Fishing Byelaw, based on a number of considerations, including outcomes of the Southern IFCA Community Drop-In Surgeries held across the District over a 16-month period.

2.0 Community Drop-In Surgeries

- 12 Community Drop-In Surgeries were held across the District with 14 ports/harbours represented, 91 stakeholders engaged and 112 matters raised. The intention of these forums was simple but purposeful; to get out into local communities, listen first-hand to the experiences and challenges our stakeholders face, and create opportunities for open and informal discussion in accessible settings.
- The forums provided valuable insight into matters of importance to both individuals and the collective industry with engagement being overwhelmingly constructive and positive. Participants demonstrated a strong willingness to share experiences, raise concerns and contribute ideas aimed at improving outcomes across sectors.

3.0 Pot Fishing Management

- One of the common themes identified from the Community Drop-In Surgeries was concerns regarding the proposed Southern IFCA Pot Fishing Byelaw. Industry feedback on the proposed byelaw highlighted concerns over the data used to inform the byelaw, the appropriateness of planned management, changes in stocks of pot fished target species and the importance of pot fishing in the District.
- The proposed Pot Fishing Byelaw was made by the Authority in March 2022 and utilised best available evidence from 2018-2020, plus comments received via Formal Consultation in 2022. The aim of the proposed Byelaw was to ensure that pot fishing in the District is carried out in a sustainable way, to deliver social and economic benefits associated with sustainable pot fisheries. The proposed Byelaw contained provisions relating to the introduction of commercial and recreational pot fishing permits, marking of pot strings, a pot limit for whelk pots & the use of pot tags, the use of escape gaps and recreational catch limits & reporting.
- In considering the points and concerns raised by industry through the Community Drop-In Surgeries, the Authority also reflected on other aspects of the development and progress of the proposed Byelaw including the byelaw quality assurance (QA) process and national considerations.
- In reviewing all the considerations relevant to the management of pot fishing in the Southern

IFCA District, the Authority resolved to remove the proposed Pot Fishing Byelaw from the MMO quality assurance system to undertake a review of future pot fishing needs and potential management requirements based on current best available evidence.

Confirmation has been received from the MMO and Defra that the proposed Pot Fishing Byelaw has now been removed from the QA process. Southern IFCA will now commence a review of pot fishing across the District, working with industry and wider stakeholders to fully understand the needs of the pot fishing sector and potential routes for management.

4.0 Review Process & Next Steps

- All stakeholders who have indicated that they take part in pot fishing under their application for a Southern IFCA Fish for Sale Permit have been sent a letter ([Annex 1](#)) providing an update on the management proposed for pot fishing activities within the District and the proposed next steps in the review process. Stakeholders were also sent a graphic showing the delivery of the Community Drop-In Surgery process and the outcomes ([Annex 2](#)).
- In the autumn, Southern IFCA will be running a **Pot Fishing Roadshow**, as a first opportunity for engagement to feed into the review process. The Roadshow will consist of a series of quayside engagement sessions specific to pot fishing to hear stakeholders' thoughts and ideas and discuss any areas of concern regarding pot fishing in the District, to help inform the review at an early stage.
- Outcomes of the initial stage of the review, which will include a full scoping exercise on future pot fishing needs and potential management requirements will be provided for consideration at the **TAC in February 2027**, for the inclusion of further stages of the review in the **Annual Strategy for 2027/28**.

4th August 2026

Important Stakeholder Update regarding Management of Pot Fishing within the Southern IFCA District

Dear Stakeholder,

Southern IFCA are contacting you as you have indicated that you take part in pot fishing on your Fish for Sale Permit application. We are writing to provide an update on the management proposed for pot fishing activities within the Southern IFCA District.

Firstly, the Authority would like to thank all pot fishing stakeholders for their continued constructive engagement with Southern IFCA on the importance of pot fishing in the District, the concerns and needs relevant to different species, potting methods & geographic areas, and feedback on the development of previously proposed management measures. The expertise and knowledge held and shared by industry is vital in ensuring that management remains appropriate and supports a sustainable marine environment, thriving stocks and a sustainable fishing industry.

What have we been doing?

Across a 16-month period, Southern IFCA have held 12 **Community Drop-In Surgeries** across the District, with 14 ports/harbours represented and 91 stakeholders engaged.

The Authority has now considered the key outcomes, themes and priorities identified through direct engagement with members of the inshore industry and wider community of stakeholders as part of this Community initiative. The intention of these forums was simple but purposeful; to get out into local communities, listen first-hand to the experiences and challenges our stakeholders face, and create opportunities for open and informal discussion in accessible settings.

The forums provided valuable insight into matters of importance to both individuals and the collective industry with engagement being overwhelming constructive and positive. Participants demonstrated a strong willingness to share experiences, raise concerns and contribute ideas aimed at improving outcomes across sectors.

Thank you to all who took part in this initiative and shared their thoughts and ideas with us. A graphic showing the delivery of this process and the outcomes is included with this letter to demonstrate, across 112 matters raised, what Southern IFCA have done and are actively doing to ensure that these matters can be addressed and help play a central role in shaping future planning, policy considerations and operational focus moving forward.

What does this mean for pot fishing management?

One of the common themes identified from the Community Drop-In Surgeries was concerns regarding the **proposed Southern IFCA Pot Fishing Byelaw**. Industry feedback on the proposed Byelaw through the Community Drop-In Surgeries highlighted concerns including:

- *that the data used to inform the proposed Byelaw is no longer relevant, nor was it relevant at the time the Byelaw was made*
- *the planned management is no longer relevant and consultation outputs are out of date*

- *that potting is hugely important in the West of the District and the proposed Byelaw could close businesses*
- *that District wide crab stock concerns need to be considered as well as changes in stock status and associated challenges (for example an increase in octopus)*
- *that industry wants to explore seasonal closures and other options, noting that pressures on pot target species have changed over the last 5 years*
- *that industry would like to see outcomes of data programmes that Southern IFCA have undertaken that industry have fed into, and that better evidence is now available*
- *that there are financial and practical challenges around escape gaps*
- *that there is less ability year on year to diversify outside of pot fisheries*

The proposed Pot Fishing Byelaw was made by the Authority in March 2022 and utilised best available evidence from 2018-2020, plus comments received via Formal Consultation in 2022. The aim of the proposed Byelaw was to ensure that pot fishing in the District is carried out in a sustainable way, to deliver social and economic benefits associated with sustainable pot fisheries. The proposed Byelaw contained provisions relating to the introduction of commercial and recreational pot fishing permits, marking of pot strings, a pot limit for whelk pots & the use of pot tags, the use of escape gaps and recreational catch limits & reporting.

In considering the points and concerns raised by industry through the Community Drop-In Surgeries, the Authority also reflected on other aspects of the development and progress of the proposed Byelaw including:

Byelaw Quality Assurance Process: Following submission of the proposed Pot Fishing Byelaw to the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) for quality assurance in 2022, progression of this Byelaw has experienced several delays. It is recognised that a significant time period has passed since the Byelaw was submitted to the MMO by Southern IFCA, and as such, the Byelaw package submitted may not reflect current understandings of the District's pot fisheries.

National Considerations: Since the development and submission of the proposed Pot Fishing Byelaw by Southern IFCA, the implementation of the Crab & Lobster Fisheries Management Plan (FMP) and the Whelk FMP has progressed, with an indication that the goals & actions detailed in the FMPs would be considered by Defra when reviewing any proposed local pot fishing management. There is also ongoing national work exploring potential management for pot fished species as an outcome of the relevant FMPs, this includes the South West Crab Trials and the implementation of new measures, such as the step increase in Lobster Minimum Conservation Reference Size (which also has relevance for escape gap requirements). It is important that Southern IFCA is able to consider measures or actions being explored and implemented at a national level and the associated implications for pot fishing at a local level to ensure that management is aligned where needed.

In reviewing all the considerations relevant to the management of pot fishing in the Southern IFCA District, the Authority resolved to remove the proposed Pot Fishing Byelaw from the MMO quality assurance system to undertake a review of future pot fishing needs and potential management requirements based on current best available evidence.

The Authority has written to the MMO and Defra and can now confirm that the proposed Pot Fishing Byelaw has been removed from the quality assurance process. Southern IFCA will now commence a review of pot fishing across the District, working with industry and wider stakeholders to fully understand the needs of the pot fishing sector and potential routes for management. An initial phase of this review will run until end of March 2027, to inform the direction of any further review stages during the 2027-28 Financial Year.

How can I get involved?

We welcome input from all pot fishers across the District and the wider stakeholder community to this review process. Southern IFCA are committed to recognising the symbiotic relationship which exists when well managed inshore fisheries reap environmental and socioeconomic benefit and seek to deliver this through partnership working, co-development and industry collaboration.

Southern IFCA have committed to fostering empowered engagement that gives stakeholders a voice, builds confidence, drives meaningful actions and creates ownership, ensuring that stakeholders can understand decision-making processes and importantly, **where stakeholders can input into these processes**, demonstrating where **stakeholder engagement has shaped management decisions** and how fishers are collectively **driving stewardship through shared accountability**.

Pot Fishing Roadshow – Autumn 2026

In the autumn, Southern IFCA will be running a **Pot Fishing Roadshow** as a first opportunity for engagement to feed into the review process. The Roadshow will consist of a series of quayside engagement sessions specific to pot fishing to hear your thoughts and ideas and discuss any areas of concern regarding pot fishing in the District, to help inform the review of pot fishing management at an early stage.

We will send out dates/times/locations in due course, and we encourage all those engaged in pot fishing to use this opportunity to input any evidence or information you feel the Authority should be aware of as part of the review and discuss with Officers in an informal setting any specific species, gear types, management measures or other considerations that you feel are important and impactful to pot fishing in the District.

The Authority is committed to working with stakeholders to explore sustainable management of pot fisheries that can achieve multiple aims, objectives and benefits. We thank you for your continued engagement on pot fishing and recognise the importance of the relevant fisheries to supporting a robust and sustained inshore fishing industry and local coastal communities.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S. Birchenough".

Dr Sarah Birchenough
Deputy Chief Executive Officer
Southern IFCA

START

Over 16 months, Community Drop-in Surgeries were held across the District to engage directly with industry and community stakeholders. These sessions were deliberately informal and accessible, designed to listen to lived experiences, understand challenges in the inshore fishing sector and encourage open and constructive dialogue. Engagement was highly positive, with a strong willingness from stakeholders to share concerns, raise frustrations and suggest improvements...



Lyme Regis
West Bay
Weymouth
Lulworth Cove
Kimmeridge
Swanage
Poole
Mudeford
Lymington
Yarmouth
Ventnor
Warsash
Bembridge
Portsmouth

14
Ports/Harbours
represented *

91
Stakeholders
engaged

2 commercial hand gatherers
3 charter vessel owners
1 marine nature conservation
2 NGOs
8 'other'
7 merchants/processors/premises
6 recreational sea anglers

112
Matters
Raised

12
Surgeries
Held

we are listening ...

...to concerns regarding the Southern IFCA Pot Fishing Byelaw currently in QA with the MMO

...to concerns regarding **access to fisheries** across the District

...to calls for increases in **Minimum Conservation Reference Sizes**

...to calls for review of **Essential Fish Habitat Policy**

& we are doing ...

we did...

31

addressed within 5 working days

9

timetabled for delivery: 'Specified Actions' under 2026-2027 Annual Strategy

21

timetabled for delivery: 'Key Delivery Objectives' under 2026-2027 Annual Strategy

1

timetabled for delivery: 2026-2027 Research & Policy Team Plan

23

relevant to work delivered by/or where regulatory responsibility fell within remit of another organisations, and therefore matters raised were **signposted**

27

...to concerns regarding the Southern IFCA Pot Fishing Byelaw currently in QA with the MMO

...to concerns regarding **access to fisheries** across the District

...to calls for increases in **Minimum Conservation Reference Sizes**

...to calls for review of **Essential Fish Habitat Policy**

see overleaf...

Continued from overleaf...

You said...

concerns regarding the Southern **IFCA Pot Fishing Byelaw** currently in QA with the MMO...

...current management proposals seen as out of date - not reflecting current data, the changing ecosystems and the acute stock pressures seen in pot fisheries.

concerns regarding **access to fisheries** across the District...

...increasing pressure on inshore grounds, concerns about spatial squeeze, displacement and the health of stocks under increasing pressure.

calls for increases in **Minimum Conservation Reference Sizes...**

...there is a need to increase size limits across a range of species within the District, which become relevant to all sectors.

calls for review of **Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) Policy...**

...that EFH are vague and disproportionate, with current restrictions limiting opportunities for sustainable fishing practice. You are calling for greater understanding of policy drivers and consideration of adaptable management.

...removing the Pot Fishing Byelaw from the MMO QA process to undertake a review, recognising the elapsed time since development. The review will evaluate whether the byelaw remains fit for purpose or requires adaptation to reflect current and emerging variables.

...reviewing byelaws which govern access to the District's fisheries, assessing fleet profiles and considering where evidence gaps may exist, to help better address concerns raised.

...reconvening the MCRS Review and aligning this with national policy outputs.

...revisiting the Net Fishing Byelaw EFH Policy Driver, exploring where there may be opportunity for net fishing to coexist, and looking at technologies to support sustainable practice.

...and we are...

GET INVOLVED

Taking the review outcomes to the TAC in February 2027



enquiries@southern-ifca.gov.uk

Speak to our officers on the coast

Speak to our officers 01202 721 373

www.southern-ifca.gov.uk

Respond to consultations

we want to hear from you...



The Solent Native Oyster Survey 2026: Report to Inform Solent Dredge Permit Byelaw Category B Permits Decision Paper

Report by IFCA Churchouse.

A. Purpose

For Members to consider the outcomes of the Solent Native Oyster Survey 2026 and the issuing of Category B Permits (authorising the use by a dredge to fish for take oysters of the species *Ostrea edulis*) for the 2026/27 and 2027/28 fishing seasons under the Solent Dredge Permit Byelaw (SDPB).

B. Recommendation(s)

1. That Members approve The Solent Native Oyster Survey 2026 report.
2. That Members maintain a closure of all BMAs for the harvesting of native oysters for the 2026/27 and 2027/28 seasons.
3. That Members do not initiate the permit application process for SDPB Category B Permits for the 2026/27 and 2027/28 seasons.

C. Supporting Documentation for Further Information

- Annex I – Solent Native Oyster Survey Report 2026

1 Introduction

- The Solent native oyster (*Ostrea edulis*) fishery is managed under The Solent Dredge Permit Byelaw (SDPB). Fishers are required to hold a valid Category B permit in order to harvest native oyster in The Solent.
- The Solent Dredge Permit Byelaw Management Intentions Document¹ is a supporting document for the SDPB and seeks to provide clarity of intention and process, which underpins future management decisions regarding the flexible permit conditions. Management decisions regarding the harvesting of Solent oysters are underpinned primarily by the outcomes of The Solent Native Oyster Survey, which provides evidence, as listed under Section 3.1 of the Management Intentions Document and specified for The Solent Native Oyster Survey under Section 4.0.
- For The Solent Native Oyster Survey, Catch per Unit Effort (CPUE) thresholds are given, developed in consideration of 2017 and 2018 baseline data, which are to be used to guide management. Above the threshold levels the Authority may consider management intervention. These are given as **5.00 kg m⁻¹ hr⁻¹ for CPUE average across a Bivalve Management Area (BMA)** and **15.00 kg m⁻¹ hr⁻¹ for CPUE averaged across an individual oyster bed**. In addition to CPUE thresholds, the Authority may also consider any other evidence when considering management intervention options.
- Category B permits under the SDPB have not been issued for any fishing season since the introduction of the SDPB in 2021 based on stock levels of native oyster in the Solent. Prior to this the fishery for native oyster was shut by specific areas or in its entirety since 2013 under the Southern IFCA 'Temporary Closure of Shellfish Beds Byelaw' on the basis of native oyster beds being 'severely depleted'.
- Due to consistently depleted levels of stock, The Solent Native Oyster Survey was changed from an annual to biennial survey from 2022.

2 Summary of Key Points

- The 2026 survey took place over 3 days from the 22nd – 24th July, using a local fishing vessel. A total of 16 shellfish beds were sampled with 70 tows completed across 5 of the Bivalve Management Areas (BMAs in The Solent). A total of 28 oysters ≥70mm (the Minimum

¹ [Management-Intentions-Documents-SDPB.pdf](#)

Conservation Reference Size – MCMS) were caught, measured, and weighed throughout the survey, while 243 oysters <70mm were recorded.

- The Eastern Solent (BMA 3) had the highest average CPUE, at 3.75 kg m⁻¹ hr⁻¹, followed by the Northern Solent (BMA 2) with an average of 2.03 kg m⁻¹ hr⁻¹. **No BMAs had a CPUE above the threshold value.**
 - The Eastern Solent CPUE value is generated from oysters sampled in 2 of 3 of the beds located in this BMA, corresponding to 12 oysters over 9 tows.
 - The Northern Solent CPUE value is generated from oysters sampled in 4 out of the 7 beds located in this BMA, corresponding to 6 oysters over 14 tows.
- The individual shellfish bed with the highest CPUE value was Ryde Middle (Eastern Solent – BMA 3) at 6.57 kg m⁻¹ hr⁻¹, corresponding to 11 oysters over 7 tows. **No individual beds crossed the threshold value.**
- Of the 16 sampled beds, 8 returned no oysters ≥70mm, and 2 returned no oysters at all.
- When compared to the 2024 survey, 3 of the 16 beds sampled saw an increase in average CPUE for oysters ≥70mm, 6 sites saw a decrease (though only one was to 0.00 kg m⁻¹ hr⁻¹), and 7 maintained a value of 0.00 kg m⁻¹ hr⁻¹.
 - A lower number of sites saw an increase in average CPUE of oyster ≥70mm between 2024-26 than between 2022-24 and a greater number of sites maintained an average value of 0.00 kg m⁻¹ hr⁻¹.
- A majority of oysters < 70mm were seen in all BMAs, ranging from 100% < 70mm oysters sampled in Southampton Water (BMA 4) to 57.1% sampled in Portsmouth Harbour (BMA 5).
- The majority of all oysters measured were between 20-39mm (78%), with oysters <50mm making up 87.6% of those measured, 50-69mm 1.6% and ≥70mm 10.8%.

3 Key Considerations

- CPUE remains low across all the Solent Oyster beds sampled in 2026, **below threshold values for both individual beds and BMAs.**
- Total number of ≥70mm native oysters caught in the 2026 survey was a decrease from the number seen in the 2024 survey (42, 33% decrease).
- The findings from the survey show no consistent improvement in average CPUE across the Solent. Whilst there are demonstrated increases in some areas, these are not consistent between years and all but one of the five BMAs samples showed a lower average CPUE than in the 2024 survey, with the increase in Langstone Harbour (BMA 6) only increasing from 0.00 kg m⁻¹ hr⁻¹ to 1.73 kg m⁻¹ hr⁻¹.
- While a large increase in < 70mm oysters were sampled in 2026 in comparison to 2024, of the 243 <70mm that were measured, 93% were below 50mm and in the majority still attached to substrate.
- None of the BMA CPUE trends documented through the Solent Oyster timeseries have been found to be statistically significant.
- The native oyster population in The Solent continues to show a fluctuating pattern of stock abundance, with the general trend being low CPUE and/or low oyster

4 Next Steps

- **Based on consideration of the data from the 2026 Solent Native Oyster Survey, including CPUE and other available data, the recommendation is that Members:**
 - **Maintain the closure of all BMAs for the next two years (2026/27 and 2027/28 fishing seasons).**
 - **Do not initiate the permit application process for SDPB Category B Permits for the 2026/27 and 2027/28 permit seasons.**

- Southern IFCA will continue to monitor The Solent Native Oyster Fishery in line with the SDPB and associated Management Intentions Document, recognising that the survey will continue to take place biennially with the next survey taking place in 2028.

Southern IFCA Survey Report

Solent Oyster Survey 2026

1. Introduction

As part of Southern IFCA's management of Bivalve species in the Solent, a survey is carried out to provide data on the population and range of native oyster (*Ostrea edulis*) within its traditional beds in the Solent. The survey was previously undertaken by CEFAS until 2011, with Southern IFCA commencing the survey again in 2014 following a requirement for data to inform local management of the fishery. From 2014 to 2022 the survey occurred annually (aside from 2020 due to COVID-19 restrictions) and became a biennial survey from 2022 due to consistently low stock levels across the Solent.

Survey data adds to an ongoing time series and provides a data source, as Catch Per Unit Effort (CPUE), which may be used, in conjunction with any other available evidence, to inform management of the Solent oyster fishery through the provisions of the Solent Dredge Permit Byelaw, as described in the Management Intentions Document¹. The Solent is separated into 6 Bivalve Management Areas (BMA), and data is collected from 5 of the 6 areas based on the location of oyster beds.

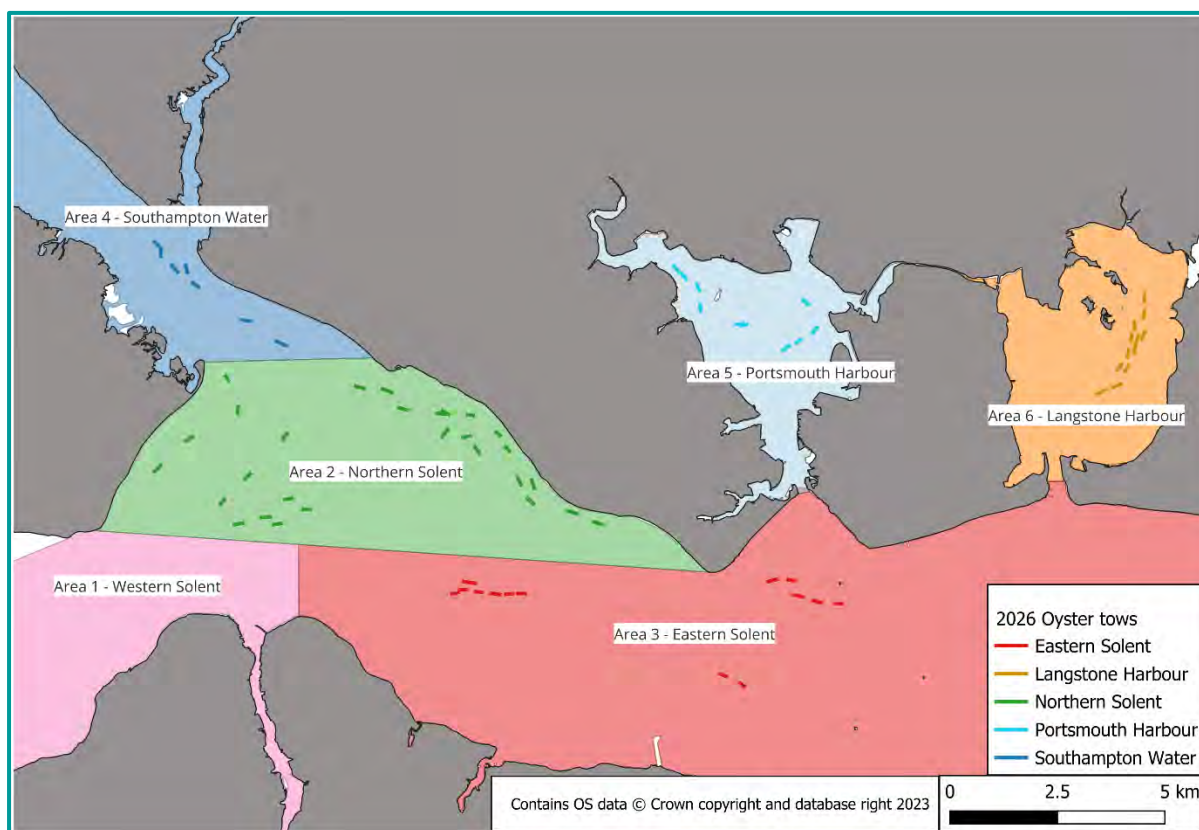


Figure 1: Map showing the Solent Bivalve Management Areas and the locations of the tows undertaken in the 2026 Solent Oyster survey.

¹ Solent Dredge Permit Byelaw Management Intentions document:
<https://secure.toolkitfiles.co.uk/clients/25364/sitedata/Redesign/Solent-Dredge-Fisheries/Management-Intentions-Documents-SDPB.pdf>

2. Method

Beds currently surveyed reflect adaptations from the historic CEFAS survey, combined with additional survey sites determined by Southern IFCA at the point at which the survey was recommenced in 2014. Sampling stations are distributed across these shellfish beds.

Sampling involves the chartering of a local fishing vessel to provide local knowledge and engage and involve stakeholders in the process of evidence collection. A 1.2m ladder dredge is used to undertake sampling, similar to those traditionally used within the fishery.

The Minimum Conservation Reference Size (MCMS) for Native Oyster is 70mm.

In 2026 the survey took place over 3 days between the 22nd and 24th of July.

At each station:

- The ladder dredge is towed for 2 minutes with the skipper choosing the direction/speed of the tow depending on conditions.
- The following metadata is collected:
 - Start and end time,
 - Start and end location,
 - Depth,
 - Speed.
- On completion of the tow the dredge is emptied onto the sorting table and the contents sorted, removing oysters and any other bycatch of interest.
- Oysters are measured across their widest edge, split into $\geq 70\text{mm}$ and $< 70\text{mm}$ (MCRS).
- Oysters $\geq 70\text{mm}$ were weighed before being returned to the fishery.
- Oysters $< 70\text{mm}$ were weighed where possible, though were often attached to rock or shell making accurate measurements difficult (note that the weight of oysters $< 70\text{mm}$ is not required for CPUE calculations).
- CPUE was calculated for each tow by dividing the weight of oysters $\geq 70\text{mm}$ sampled by the area of the dredge, then multiplying that figure by the duration of the tow ($\text{kg m}^{-1} \text{hr}^{-1}$). CPUE values for beds/BMAs were then calculated by averaging all the tow/bed CPUE values from within that bed/BMA.
- As required other commercial bycatch may be measured, and additional data on associated species in the dredge recorded.



Figure 2: The Ladder Dredge.

Solent Oyster Survey 2026

In 2026, no shellfish beds from the Western Solent (BMA 1) were sampled due to the distance to those beds and timing considerations. Historically, shellfish beds at Stanswood Bay have been analysed as Western Solent (BMA 1) but actually fall within Northern Solent (BMA 2). Therefore, to ensure appropriate analysis the Stanswood Bay beds have been included in the analysis for BMA 2 in the 2026 survey, and in comparison to previous survey years. Whilst this means there are currently no sampling sites in BMA 1, based on the outcomes of the survey there would be no change to the assessment of stock against relevant trigger threshold levels. In the future, in the event of an increase in native oyster stock, the Authority may reconsider additional sites for BMA 1.

3. Results

Across 5 BMAs in the Solent, 16 shellfish beds were surveyed completing 70 tows. In total, 28 oysters $\geq 70\text{mm}$ were caught, measured, and weighed, and 243 oysters $< 70\text{mm}$ were recorded. The CPUE values are calculated only for oysters $\geq 70\text{mm}$.

Area 1 - Western Solent				
Shellfish Bed	No. Tows	No. Oysters	% $\geq 70\text{mm}$	Average $\geq 70\text{mm}$ CPUE
BMA Total	0	0	0%	0
Area 2 - Northern Solent				
Shellfish Bed	No. Tows	No. Oysters	% $\geq 70\text{mm}$	Average $\geq 70\text{mm}$ CPUE
Bramble	5	15	20.00%	5.29
Thorn Knoll	3	0	na	0
Stanswood	2	2	50.00%	3.78
Calshot Spit	2	31	0.00%	0
North Channel	2	9	11.11%	5.37
Lee-On-Solent	8	7	0.00%	0
Browdown	5	3	33.33%	1.34
BMA Total	27	67	8.96%	2.03
Area 3 - Eastern Solent				
Shellfish Bed	No. Tows	No. Oysters	% $\geq 70\text{mm}$	Average $\geq 70\text{mm}$ CPUE
Spit Sands	5	6	0.00%	0
Sturbridge	2	27	3.70%	3.22
Ryde Middle	7	54	20.37%	6.57
BMA Total	14	87	13.79%	3.75
Area 4 - Southampton Water				
Shellfish Bed	No. Tows	No. Oysters	% $\geq 70\text{mm}$	Average $\geq 70\text{mm}$ CPUE
Hamble	5	71	0.00%	0
Chilling	2	17	0.00%	0
BMA Total	7	88	0.00%	0
Area 5 - Portsmouth Harbour				
Shellfish Bed	No. Tows	No. Oysters	% $\geq 70\text{mm}$	Average $\geq 70\text{mm}$ CPUE
Fareham	4	0	na	0
Bomb Ketch	2	6	50.00%	1
Portchester	4	1	0.00%	0
BMA Total	10	7	42.86%	0.2
Area 5 - Langstone Harbour				
Shellfish Bed	No. Tows	No. Oysters	% $\geq 70\text{mm}$	Average $\geq 70\text{mm}$ CPUE
Langstone	12	22	31.82%	1.73
BMA Total	12	22	31.82%	1.73

Table 1: Results summary of the Solent native oyster survey split into Bivalve Management Area (BMA) and shellfish bed. Average CPUE values are recorded in $\text{kg m}^{-1} \text{hr}^{-1}$ (kg per metre of dredge per hour) of oysters over 70mm.

3.1 CPUE

The average CPUE for each BMA was calculated by averaging the $\text{kg m}^{-1} \text{hr}^{-1}$ of oysters caught in all of the beds within that BMA. Section 4.3 of the Solent Dredge Permit Management Intentions Document sets baseline CPUE thresholds which indicate either a closure if CPUE is below the threshold, or the consideration of management intervention if CPUE is above the threshold. The threshold for individual beds is $15.00 \text{ kg m}^{-1} \text{hr}^{-1}$ and for individual BMAs is $5.00 \text{ kg m}^{-1} \text{hr}^{-1}$. It should be noted that CPUE values are one source of evidence that the Authority may consider in guiding management.

The Eastern Solent (BMA 3) had the highest average CPUE, at $3.75 \text{ kg m}^{-1} \text{hr}^{-1}$, followed by the Northern Solent (BMA 2) with an average of $2.03 \text{ kg m}^{-1} \text{hr}^{-1}$. None of the sampled BMAs have a CPUE value above the threshold value of $5.00 \text{ kg m}^{-1} \text{hr}^{-1}$. Considering the individual beds within these BMAs, for Eastern Solent, there were 2 beds where $\geq 70\text{mm}$ oysters were sampled, Ryde Middle at $6.57 \text{ kg m}^{-1} \text{hr}^{-1}$ and Sturbridge at $3.22 \text{ kg m}^{-1} \text{hr}^{-1}$, corresponding to 11 oysters over 7 tows and 1 oyster over 2 tows respectively. For the individual beds within Northern Solent, four out of the seven beds sampled oysters $\geq 70\text{mm}$, North Channel at $5.37 \text{ kg m}^{-1} \text{hr}^{-1}$ (1 oyster over 2 tows), Bramble Bank at $5.29 \text{ kg m}^{-1} \text{hr}^{-1}$ (3 oysters over 5 tows), Stanswood at $3.78 \text{ kg m}^{-1} \text{hr}^{-1}$ (1 oyster over 2 tows) and Browndown at $1.34 \text{ kg m}^{-1} \text{hr}^{-1}$ (1 oyster over 5 tows).

For the other three BMAs, average CPUE of oysters $\geq 70\text{mm}$ ranged from $1.73 \text{ kg m}^{-1} \text{hr}^{-1}$ (Langstone Harbour [BMA 6]) to $0.00 \text{ kg m}^{-1} \text{hr}^{-1}$ (Southampton Water [Area 4]).

The individual shellfish bed with the highest average CPUE of oysters $\geq 70\text{mm}$ was Ryde Middle (Eastern Solent – BMA3) at $6.57 \text{ kg m}^{-1} \text{hr}^{-1}$. None of the individual beds crossed the threshold value.

The Calshot Spit, Lee-On-Solent, Spit Sand, Hamble, Chilling, and Portchester beds returned oysters, however there were no oysters $\geq 70\text{mm}$ across 26 tows. Stations at Thorn Knoll, and Fareham returned no oysters.

Hamble (Southampton Water – BMA4) returned the greatest number of oysters with 71 caught, however 100% of these were $< 70\text{mm}$. Ryde Middle (Eastern Solent – BMA3) was the bed with the second highest number of oysters (54) and sampled the greatest number of $\geq 70\text{mm}$ oysters (11).

3.2 Length

All sampled BMAs displayed a majority of undersized oysters, with values ranging from 57.1% (Portsmouth Harbour – BMA5) to 91% (Northern Solent – BMA2). In Southampton Water (BMA 4) only undersized oysters were sampled.

Figure 3 shows that the dominant size class of sampled oysters in the 2026 survey were between 20 – 40mm in length, which accounted for 78% of measured oysters. 87.6% of sampled oysters were between 0 and 49mm, the majority of which were still attached to substrate.

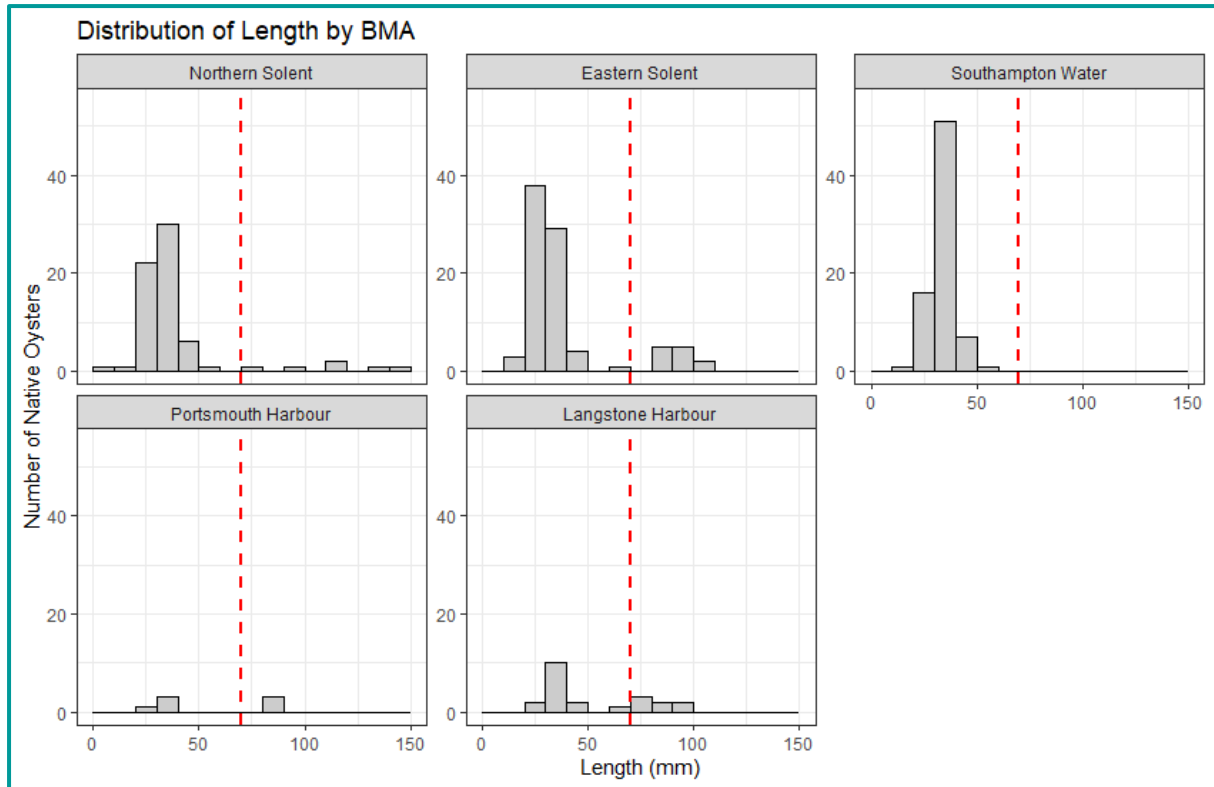


Figure 3: Length histograms by Bivalve Management Area of all Native Oysters sampled during the 2026 Solent Native Oyster Survey. The red dashed line indicates 70mm, the Minimum Conservation Reference size for native oysters.

3.2.1 Limitations

Saddle Oysters (*Anomia* sp.) are present in waters around the UK coast (Neal, 2004) and are visually similar to Native Oysters, especially at smaller sizes. This similarity can lead to misidentification and a distortion in count data for oysters <70mm. Weight data is based on oysters over 70mm and is therefore not affected.

4. Time Series

Figure 4 displays the average CPUE for oysters ≥ 70 mm for each shellfish bed from 2017 – 2026. No surveys occurred in 2020 due to COVID-19 restrictions. From 2022, the survey became biennial.

The general data pattern is inconsistent between survey years. CPUE values for individual shellfish beds have only crossed the threshold value of $15.00 \text{ kg m}^{-1} \text{ hr}^{-1}$ on three occasions during the timeseries, once in 2017 (Sturbridge, Eastern Solent – BMA3, $26.80 \text{ kg m}^{-1} \text{ hr}^{-1}$), once in 2018 (Ryde Middle, Eastern Solent – BMA3, $18.40 \text{ kg m}^{-1} \text{ hr}^{-1}$), and once in 2024 (North Channel, Northern Solent – BMA2, $17.55 \text{ kg m}^{-1} \text{ hr}^{-1}$).

When compared to the 2024 survey, the average CPUE for oysters ≥ 70 mm in 2026 increased for 4 of the 16 beds sampled. Bramble (Eastern Solent – BMA3) had an increase from $4.97 \text{ kg m}^{-1} \text{ hr}^{-1}$ to $5.29 \text{ kg m}^{-1} \text{ hr}^{-1}$, while Stanswood (Northern Solent – BMA2), Portchester (Portsmouth Harbour – BMA5), and Langstone (Langstone Harbour – BMA6) increased from $0.00 \text{ kg m}^{-1} \text{ hr}^{-1}$, to $3.78 \text{ kg m}^{-1} \text{ hr}^{-1}$, $1.00 \text{ kg m}^{-1} \text{ hr}^{-1}$, and $1.73 \text{ kg m}^{-1} \text{ hr}^{-1}$ respectively.

Solent Oyster Survey 2026

Six beds (Thorn Knoll, Calshot Spit, Spit Sands, Chilling, Hamble, and Fareham) maintained an average CPUE of 0.00 kg m⁻¹ hr⁻¹ from 2024 to 2026.

Six sites saw a decrease in average CPUE for oysters ≥70mm from 2024 to 2026, with two recording values of 0.00 kg m⁻¹ hr⁻¹ (Lee-On-Solent and Bomb Ketch). The remaining four sites decreased by 92% (Browndown), 69% (North Channel), 68% (Sturbridge), and 2% (Ryde Middle). The largest decrease in CPUE from 2024 to 2026 was seen at Browndown (14.46 kg m⁻¹ hr⁻¹ to 1.34 kg m⁻¹ hr⁻¹) and North Channel (17.55 kg m⁻¹ hr⁻¹ to 0.00 kg m⁻¹ hr⁻¹).

None of the BMA CPUE trends documented through the Solent Oyster timeseries have been found to be statistically significant (Kruskal Wallis test, $p < 0.05$).

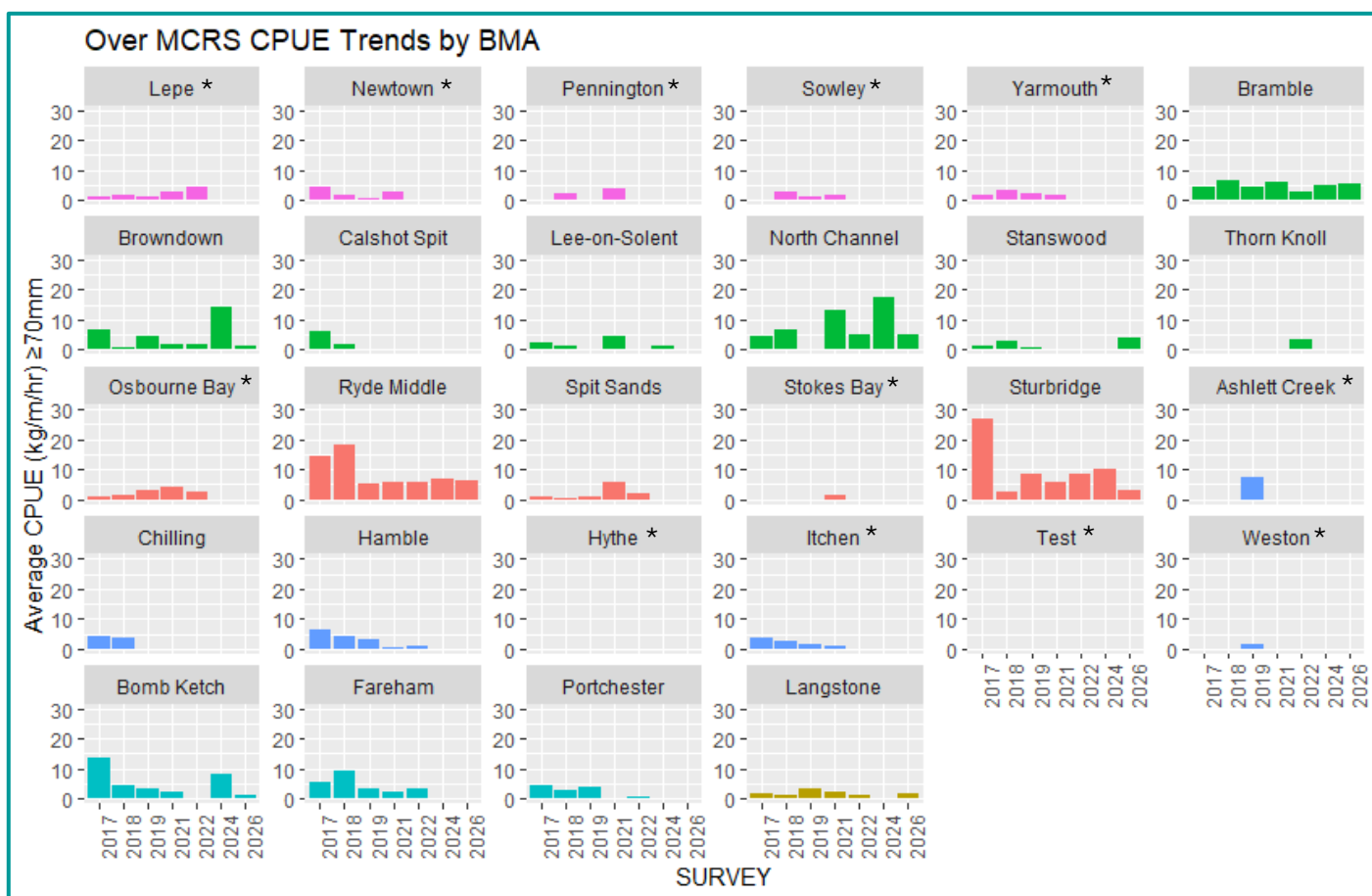


Figure 4: Timeseries of the Average Catch per Unit Effort (CPUE) (kg m⁻¹ hr⁻¹) values for oysters ≥70mm from each shellfish bed in the Solent from 2017 – 2026, excluding those years when surveys did not take place (2020, 2023, 2025). * Represents shellfish beds that have not been sampled in recent years due to maintained low stock levels & considerations of survey resourcing. Blank graphs represent a lack of catch ≥70mm or a lack of any catch, not a lack of sampling. BMAs: 1 - Western Solent, 2 - Northern Solent, 3 - Eastern Solent, 4 - Southampton Water, 5 - Portsmouth Harbour, 6 - Langstone Harbour.

5. Summary

- As displayed in Table 1 and Figure 4, CPUE remains low across all the Solent Oyster beds sampled and over the BMAs.

Solent Oyster Survey 2026

- None of the sampled BMAs or individual shellfish beds reached the respective CPUE threshold levels for consideration of management as set out in the Management Intentions Document ($5.00 \text{ kg m}^{-1} \text{ hr}^{-1}$ and $15.00 \text{ kg m}^{-1} \text{ hr}^{-1}$ respectively).
- For individual shellfish beds, Ryde Middle (Eastern Solent – BMA3) had the highest average CPUE for oysters $\geq 70\text{mm}$ ($6.57 \text{ kg m}^{-1} \text{ hr}^{-1}$)
- The Eastern Solent BMA had the highest average CPUE for the 2026 survey ($3.75 \text{ kg m}^{-1} \text{ hr}^{-1}$), which is consistent throughout the survey timeseries.
- The majority of measured oysters were between 20 and 39mm, accounting for 78% of all measured oysters (Figure 3).
- Overall, oysters recorded as $< 50\text{mm}$ made up 87.6% of those measured, oysters between 50 and 69mm made up 1.6% of those measured, and oysters greater than/equal to 70mm made up 10.8% of those measured.
- Comparing sampling undertaken in 2024 and 2026, the average CPUE of oyster greater than/equal to MCRS decreased at a greater number of sites (6) between 2024 and 2026 than increased (4).
- A decrease in average CPUE of oyster greater than/equal to MCRS was seen at a lower number of sites between 2024 and 2026 than between 2022 and 2024, however only four sites saw an increase, which is a lower number of sites than seen in the previous 2-year period. A greater number of sites maintained average values of $0.00 \text{ kg m}^{-1} \text{ hr}^{-1}$.

Conclusions

- The findings from the 2026 survey show no consistent improvement in average CPUE across the Solent. Whilst there are demonstrated increases in some areas, these are not consistent between years, suggesting a fluctuating pattern rather than a general increase across the Solent. At only one site was an increase in the CPUE of greater than/equal to MCRS oysters seen from successive surveys, increasing from 2022 to 2026. On the basis of consideration of CPUE and additional data underpinning the CPUE values, the data indicates that the native oyster population in the Solent continues to show a fluctuating pattern of stock abundance with the general trend being low CPUE and/or low oyster numbers.
- There are ongoing restoration efforts for native oyster in the Solent with the species subject to research and active restoration work. The data produced through this survey and made available through this report will be able to be utilised by such projects to provide information on stocks and changes over time within the Solent.

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Poole Harbour Bivalve Survey Report 2026 & Non-Technical Summaries Paper For Information

Report by IFCO Mullen

A. Purpose

To provide Members with the survey report from the Poole Bivalve Survey 2026 and non-technical summaries which have been produced for Permit Holders and the wider community.

B. Annex

1. The Southern IFCA Poole Harbour Bivalve Survey Report 2026
2. Poole Bivalve Survey Non-Technical Summary - Permit Holders
3. Poole Bivalve Survey Non-Technical Summary - Community

1.0 Introduction

- The Poole Harbour Bivalve Survey is carried out annually in the spring, prior to the opening of the dredge fishery under the Poole Harbour Dredge Permit byelaw (PHDPB).
- The survey provides a consistent annual time series dataset of harvested bivalve species to support sustainable management of the PHDP fishery.
- The outputs complement fishery landings alongside other data sources to inform reviews of the fishery and management measures under PHDP byelaw. Data contributes specifically to the monitoring of Manila clam under the **On-Site Monitoring Programme** of the fishery's **Monitoring and Control Plan (M+CP)** and provides evidence to support the **Marine Stewardship Council (MSC)** certification of the Poole Harbour Clam & Cockle Fishery.

2.0 Summary of Key Points

- The attached report (Annex 1) provides an overview of the dataset collected in the 2026 survey. The survey was carried out over 3 days, over the period of the 17th-22nd April 2026.
- The report analyses length frequency data, Catch Per Unit Effort (CPUE) data for the period of 2024-26, and catch data (as landings data provided by permit holders), for Manila clam and common cockle as the two main commercially harvested species. Analysis compares data between survey sites, corresponding to catch reporting zones, for the survey year and to previous survey years (2024-2026).
- 2026 also marked the introduction of a Manila clam Condition Index, with a condition score assigned to measured clams from each sample tow. The index provides an indication of stock condition following harvest and establishes a baseline against which future surveys can be compared, including comparisons with other dredging methods used within the District.

Manila Clams (*Ruditapes philippinarum*)

Condition Index: 2,012 (95%) of the measured Manila clam were classified in condition index 1, providing an initial indication that the population seems to experience minimal disturbance from the pump scoop dredging process during harvesting. This dataset will be added to in future survey years.

CPUE Trends: Manila clams exhibited higher CPUE in muddy, fine-sediment areas of the harbour. Total CPUE of Manila clams in the harbour was statistically lower than that seen in 2024 though statistically similar to that seen in 2025, with some areas showing increased abundance compared with the 2025 survey. Zones 6 and 7 displayed the highest total CPUE in 2026 and an increase from the previous survey, though post-hoc Dunns testing with holm adjustment revealed no statistical differences ($p > 0.05$). Though several zones exhibited lower CPUE than in previous years, no significant differences were seen between survey years ($p > 0.05$). Observed variations are therefore likely to reflect natural fluctuations in stock abundance rather than a sustained decline. Holes Bay displayed a decline in total CPUE over the past 3 surveys, though not statistical significant, the p-value was close to that of significance ($p = 0.0516$).

Size Distribution: The average shell length across the harbour was above MCRS at 36.2mm in 2026 (n=2243). Average length for each survey year was significantly different ($p < 0.01$) and a narrower spread of length data in 2026 indicates a less variable size distribution compared to 2024 and 2025. Mean shell length exceeded the MCRS at all sites except sites 17 and 19. In Zone 3, the length-frequency distribution of Manila clams in 2026 differed significantly from both 2024 and 2025 ($p < 0.05$), with the 2026 distribution shifted towards larger clam sizes while in zone 5 and zone 9, distribution indicated a smaller modal clam size in 2026. For the remaining zones, the 2026 dataset was comparable to previous years ($p > 0.05$).

Landings Data: Total landings (286.0 tonnes) increased in 2025 from the previous fishing season (2024 = 240.4 tonnes). The last 3 years shows no significant differences in total landings suggesting the fishery is stable. Zones 8 and 10 remain the favoured zones for Manila clam harvesting and were supported by high CPUE values in the 2026 survey. Other less targeted zones such as 5, 6 and 7 also showed high CPUE levels in the 2026 survey.

Common Cockles (*Cerastoderma edule*)

CPUE Trends: Common cockles were more abundant in sandy, coarse sediments of the harbour. Average total CPUE was 44.98kg/m/hr in 2026 and statically lower compared with the previous two years although, this difference is most likely attributable to the unusually high cockle abundance recorded in zones 1 and 3 during the 2024 and 2025 surveys. All zones displayed statistically similar total CPUE, over MCRS and under MCRS CPUE compared to previous seasons ($p < 0.05$).

Size Distribution: Average cockle shell length has remained similar over the last 3 survey years with all sites displaying average length above the MCRS. The length-distribution profile for 2026 shows a similar spread of sampled sizes as seen in 2024 and 2025. At a zonal level, zone 7 and zone 10 displayed statistically different length distribution in 2026 compared to both 2024 and 2025 ($p < 0.05$), with the 2026 distribution indicating smaller modal cockle sizes. 2026 appeared to be statically similar in other zones between years ($p > 0.05$).

Landings Data: Annual cockle landings have consistently increased over the last 3-year period with an increase of 208.6% from 2024 to 137.6t in 2025. Zones 1, 2, 3 and 8 displayed significantly higher landings in 2025 than all other zones and all zones displayed statistically similar landings for each month between years ($p > 0.05$).

Fishery Management:

Monitoring and Control: The annual average Manila clam CPUE value calculated under the M+CP methods for the 2026 survey was 43.79 kg/m of dredge/hr (excluding unfishable zones, Holes Bay), which is above the CPUE TTL of 34.60 kg/m of dredge/hr (by 9.19 kg/m of dredge/hr), the CPUE TTL was not reached. The annual average LPUE value for the 2025/26 season was 83.5 kg/day, above the LPUE TTL of 78.25 kg/day by 5.25 kg/day, the LPUE TTL was not reached. At the TAC meeting in May 2026, Members resolved that **no further management** was required ahead of the 2026 fishing season to support a sustainable fishery.

3.0 Next Steps

- The report will be published on the Authority's website.
- From 2026, SIFCA will produce non-technical summaries highlighting key findings from surveys in an accessible format for a wider range of stakeholders. Annexes 2 and 3 of this report contain two non-technical summaries, **Annex 2 – Permit Holders Summary** and **Annex 3 - Community Summary**. Members are invited to provide feedback on these summaries.
- Southern IFCA will continue to monitor the commercial Manila clam stock under the M&CP through the In-Season Monitoring Programme and the On-Site Monitoring Programme. The Authority will explore the addition of Common cockle through the scheduled review under the PHDPB in 2026/27.

1.0 Introduction

The Poole Harbour Bivalve Survey is an annual assessment conducted by the Southern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (Southern IFCA) to monitor the health and sustainability of commercially viable shellfish beds within Poole Harbour, UK. Since 2015, the survey has provided data on key bivalve species, including the common cockle (*Cerastoderma edule*) and Manila clam (*Ruditapes philippinarum*), to inform fisheries management and conservation efforts.

The Poole Harbour clam and cockle fishery operates under the Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Byelaw which permits the use of pump-scoop dredges (Figure 1) to manage the fishery sustainably and to avoid an adverse effect on Marine Protected Areas within Poole Harbour. The fishing season runs from 25th May to 23rd December annually with 45 permits issued each year. The byelaw regulates a number of elements of the fishing operation including gear type/construction, spatial and temporal restrictions, and catch reporting. Fishers must submit a monthly catch return indicating, for each day fished, the hours fished, the quantities of species caught and the buyer(s). Fishers must also indicate fishing location data from 11 shellfish catch zones (zones). In 2018, the fishery achieved certification under the Marine Stewardship Council's Sustainability Standard, with re-certification under MSC in 2023. The survey data also contributes to an annual audit for this certification.



Figure 1. An example of the pump-scoop dredge used within the Poole Harbour Dredge Permit

1.2 Monitoring and Control Plan

A Monitoring and Control Plan (M&CP)¹ was developed as part of the 2024 Southern IFCA Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Review, to support management of the Poole Harbour dredge fishery for Manila clam under the Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Byelaw and associated permits. The M&CP provides a comprehensive framework for monitoring the fishery and incorporating feedback into management decisions. Management of the permitted Manila clam fishery is guided by the M&CP through defined trigger thresholds, using the most up-to-date data from the latest fishing season and survey results collected under the On-Site Monitoring Programme.

1.3 Method

The 2026 survey took place between the 17th and the 22nd April 2026 and comprised of data collection using local permit holder fishing vessel "David's Dream". A total of 26 of the 27 planned sites were sampled across the 11 zones within the harbour. Site 2 was not surveyed due to tidal constraints (Figure 2). A pump-scoop dredge was used in accordance with standard fishing practices and relevant management measures. The dredge is inherently size-selective, reducing the amount of post-capture measuring required to ensure compliance with Minimum Conservation

¹[Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Fishery Monitoring and Control Plan](#)

Poole Bivalve Survey 2026

Reference Size (MCRS). Although, as the sampling methodology is consistent each year, accurate comparisons can be made.

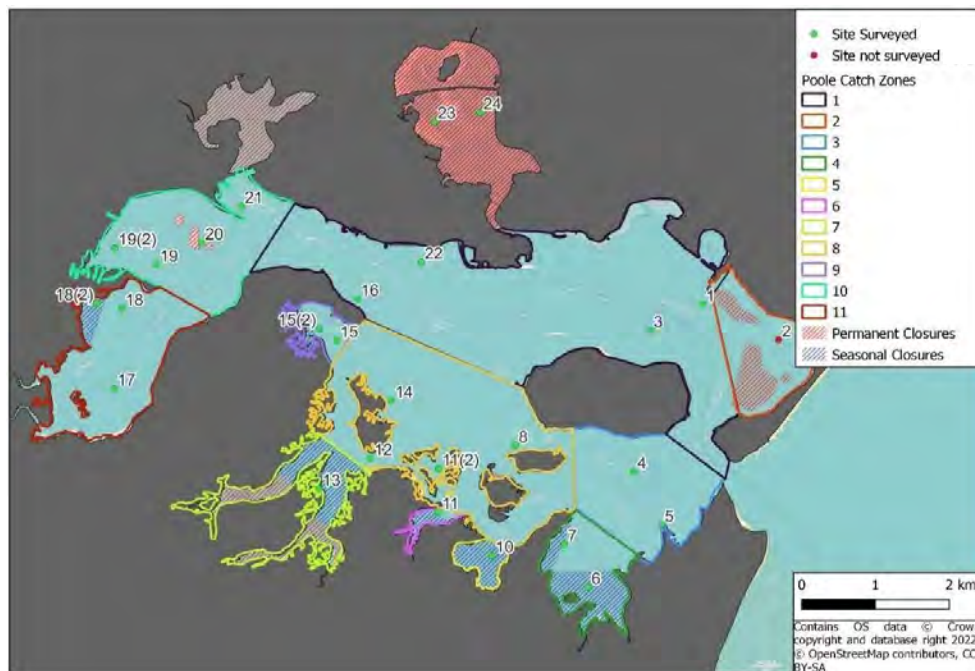


Figure 2. A map of the surveyed sites across the 11 Poole Catch Zones. Survey sites are marked with a green icon, whereas sites not surveyed are marked with red. Permanent fishing closures are highlighted in red hash and seasonal closures (opening times 1st July-31st October annually) are highlighted in blue hash.

The following methodology was followed:

- Three dredge tows were conducted within approximately 20m of a predetermined central point of 27 sites. This central point is consistent across all survey years.
- After 2 minutes the dredge was brought inboard, and all bivalves retained and labelled to the corresponding site number and dredge tow.
- Each species was identified, and the first 50 individuals of each species were measured across their widest axis to the nearest millimetre.
- The first 50 Manila clams were assigned a condition index category ranging from 1 to 5 (Table 1)
- Manila clams and common cockles were separated into above and below their relative MCRS (35mm and 23.8mm respectively) and weighed.
- Following measurement, all samples were returned to shellfish production areas of the same classification.

Table 1. The Manila clam condition index scale.

Condition Index	1	2	3	4	5
Features	No visible damage	Edge of shell shipped	Hinge broken/ shell cracked	Shell punctured	Shell crushed/ dead
Example					

2.0 Results

Data analysis focuses on the primary commercial species within the harbour, Manila clam and common cockle. Other species found during the survey are harvested at a smaller scale and include American Hard-Shell clam (*Mercenaria mercenaria*), the Native clam (*Ruditapes decussatus*), the Pacific oyster (*Magallana gigas*), the spiny cockle (*Acanthocardia aculeata*) and the blue mussel (*Mytilus edulis*).

Length frequency data was analysed by site and zone, whereas Catch Per Unit Effort (CPUE) data was calculated as kilograms per meter dredge per hour (kg/m/hr) for each of the 11 zones and Holes Bay. CPUE is separated into: CPUE_{total}: total catch per unit effort, CPUE_{over}: catch per unit effort for individuals over MCRS and CPUE_{under}: catch per unit effort for individuals under MCRS.

Data was analysed using a combination of Excel and Rstudio.

Summary infographics of the two main harvested species can be found below, which summarise the CPUE_{total} outputs and length-frequency distributions across the fishery during the pre-season sampling. The CPUE for each zone is compared with the previous survey conducted in 2025. Length-frequency data for the 2026 survey are presented as pie charts, illustrating the proportion of clams and cockles sampled that were above and below the MCRS.

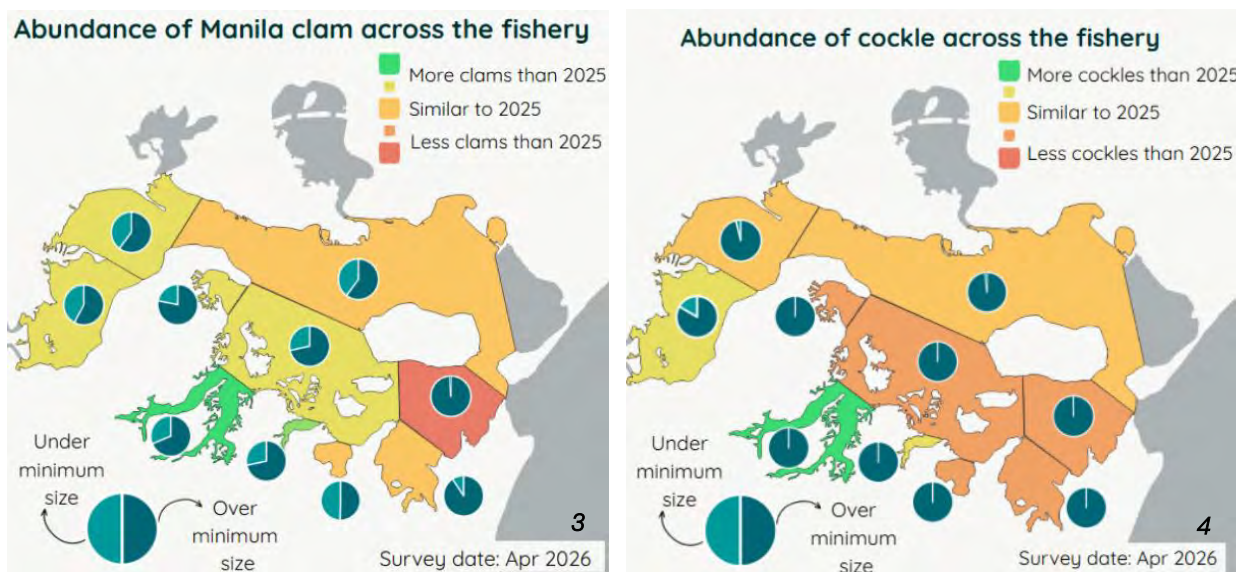


Figure 3 and Figure 4. A summarised infographic of CPUE and length distribution outputs of Manila clam and common cockle sampled in the 2026 Poole Bivalve Survey, compared to outputs from the 2025 sampling.

2.1 Manila clam Condition Index

This was the first year that Manila clam shells were evaluated using a five-point health condition index, with a score of 1 indicating a completely intact shell and a score of 5 indicating a crushed shell/ dead clam.

Out of 2,118 Manila clams measured, 95% were classified as Condition Index 1, while only 0.19% were classified as Condition Index 5 (Table 2). This distribution indicates that the clam population is relatively healthy and experiences minimal disturbance from the pump scoop dredging process during harvesting.

Poole Bivalve Survey 2026

Table 2. The statistics of Manila clam health condition index classification from the Poole Bivalve Survey 2026.

INDEX RATING	1	2	3	4	5
SUM	2012	68	14	19	4
%	95	3.21	0.66	0.42	0.19

2.2 Length Frequency Distribution Data

Statistical analysis of length data between sites in the 2026 dataset and comparisons of length data for the last three years showed statistical differences ($p < 0.01$ for both Manila clam and common cockle), however this is expected due to the range of sizes observed across the 81 dredges within the 27 sites of the Harbour in each survey.

2.2.1 Manila Clam

- The average size of Manila clam in 2026 varied from 46.77mm at site 8 ($n=22$) to 34.67mm at site 19 ($n=150$) (Figure 5).
- All sites had an average length above the MCRS (35mm) apart from sites 19 (34.67mm, $n=150$) and 17 (34.77mm, $n=117$).

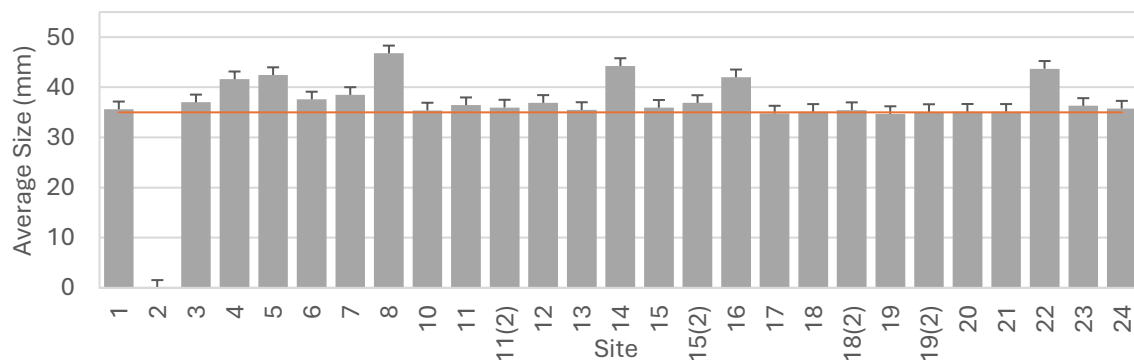


Figure 5. Average length of Manila clam across sites in the Poole Harbour Bivalve Survey 2026 around the MCRS value. Error bars have been added around the Standard Error. The Minimum Conservation Reference Size (MCRS) of 35 mm is indicated by a red line.

- The average size of Manila clam across the Harbour was 36.2mm in 2026 ($n=2118$). This is slightly lower than in 2025 (37.55mm, $n=2494$) and 2024 (37.34mm, $n=2436$), though the average size remains above MCRS cross all 3 years (Figure 6).
- Statistical analysis showed differences between all 3 years (p values < 0.01).
- In zone 3, the length-frequency distribution of Manila clams in 2026 differed significantly from both 2024 and 2025 ($p < 0.05$), with the 2026 distribution shifted towards larger clam sizes. Mean shell length increased from 38.0 mm in 2024 and 25.9 mm in 2025 to 41.9 mm in 2026.
- In Zones 5 and 9, the length-frequency distributions of Manila clams in 2026 differed significantly from both 2024 and 2025 ($p < 0.05$), with the 2026 distributions indicating smaller modal clam sizes. In Zone 5, mean shell length decreased from 38.4 mm in 2024 and 38.8 mm in 2025 to 35.4 mm in 2026. Similarly, in Zone 9, mean shell length decreased from 39.3 mm in 2024 and 39.4 mm in 2025 to 36.2 mm in 2026.

Poole Bivalve Survey 2026

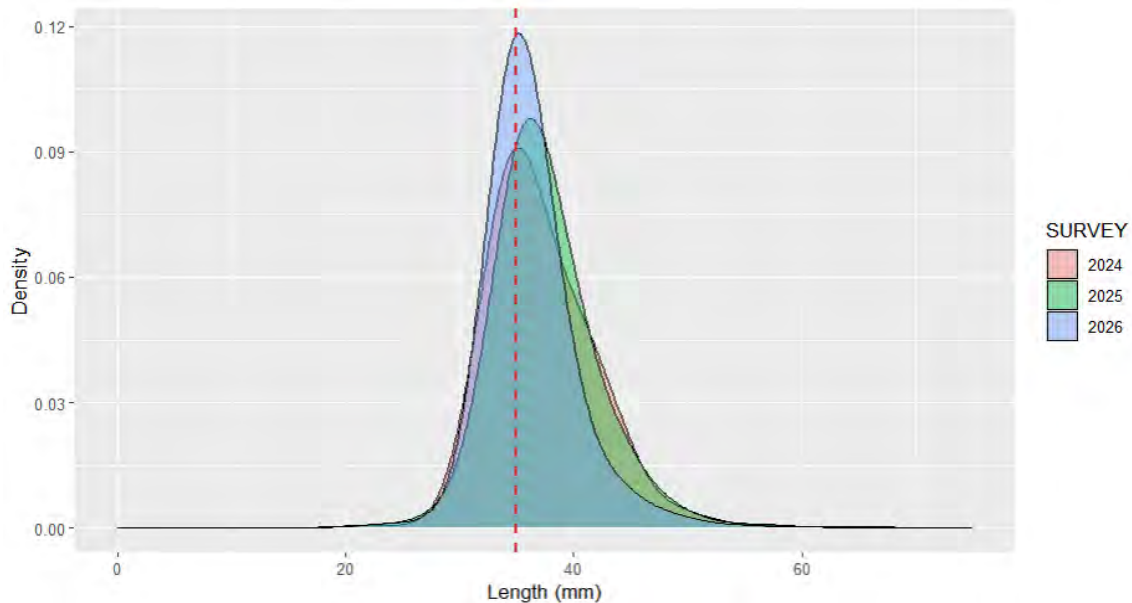


Figure 6. The length distribution of the Manila clam sample populations from 2024 (peach), 2025 (green), and 2026 (blue) is shown for comparison. The Minimum Conservation Reference Size (MCRS) of 35 mm is indicated by a red dashed line.

- For the remaining zones, the 2026 dataset was not statistically significantly different to previous years ($p > 0.05$).

2.2.2 Common cockle

- In the 2026 survey, the average size of cockle varied from 34.34mm mm at site 8 (n=89) to 24.92mm at site 18(2) (n=142).
- All sites had an average length above the MCRS length (23.8mm) (Figure 7).

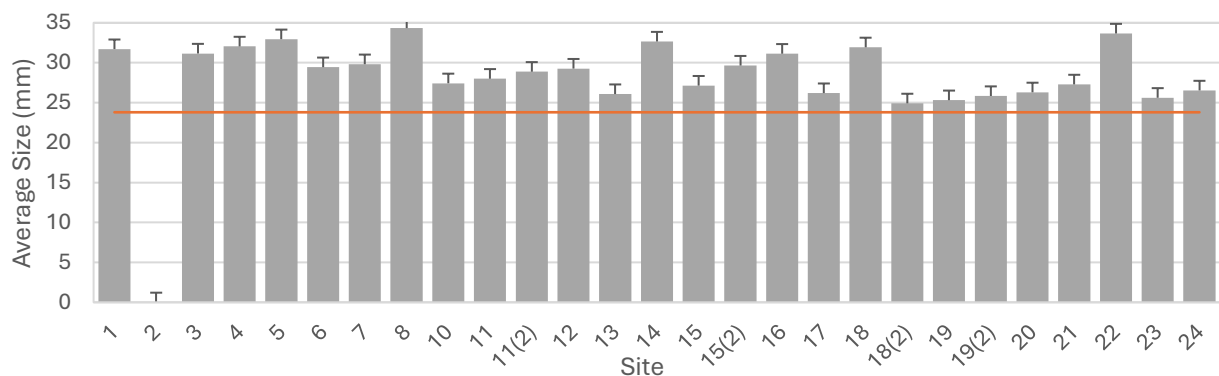


Figure 7. Average length of common cockle across sites in the Poole Harbour Bivalve Survey 2026 around the MCRS value. Error bars have been added around the Standard Error. The Minimum Conservation Reference Size (MCRS) of 23.8mm is indicated by a red line.

- The average size of common cockle across the Harbour was 29.23mm in 2026 (n=1832). This remains relatively consistent with the average sizes seen across the previous two years (2025: 29.76mm (n= 2128), 24: 29.73 (n=1987).
- The average size has remained above MCRS for the last 3 years (Figure 8).

Poole Bivalve Survey 2026

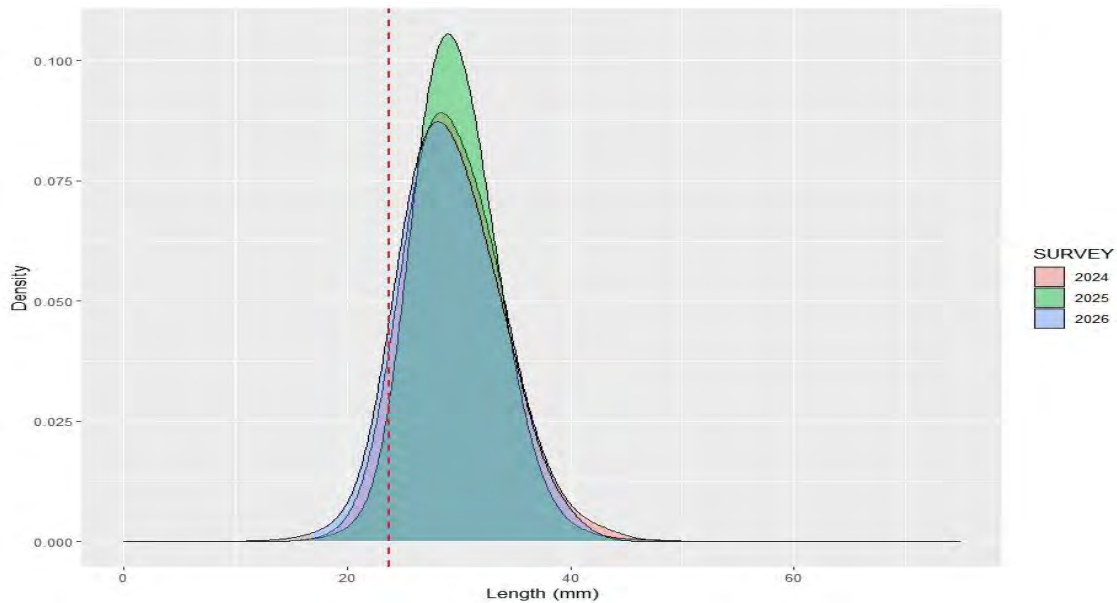


Figure 8. The length distribution profile of the common cockle sample population from 2024 (peach), 2025 (green) and 2026 (blue). The Minimum Conservation References Size (MCRS) of 23.8mm is indicated by a red dashed line.

At the zonal level, zones 7 and 10 exhibited statistically significant differences in length distributions in 2026 compared with both 2024 and 2025 ($p < 0.05$), with the 2026 distributions indicating smaller modal cockle sizes. In zone 7, the mean cockle length decreased to 26.1 mm in 2026, compared with 29.4 mm in 2025 and 29.6 mm in 2024. Similarly, in zone 10, the mean length was 26.3 mm in 2026, compared with 27.3 mm in 2025 and 28.2 mm in 2024.

2.3 Catch Per Unit Effort (CPUE)

The 2026 dataset has been analysed for any statistical differences between zones and the previous two survey years, 2025 and 2024. Statistical analyses were performed using a non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis test with subsequent Dunn's test.

2.3.1 Manila Clam

- In the 2026 survey, the average $CPUE_{total}$ across the harbour including Holes Bay was 43.98 kg/m/hr. The average $CPUE_{over}$ was 29.52 kg/m/hr and the average $CPUE_{under}$ was 14.16 kg/m/hr.
- Zones 6 and 7 showed the highest average $CPUE_{total}$ (96kg/m/hr and 84 kg/m/hr, respectively) (Figure 9).
- Likewise, zones 6 and 7 showed the highest average $CPUE_{over}$ (68.79kg/m/hr and 57.72kg/m/hr).

Poole Bivalve Survey 2026

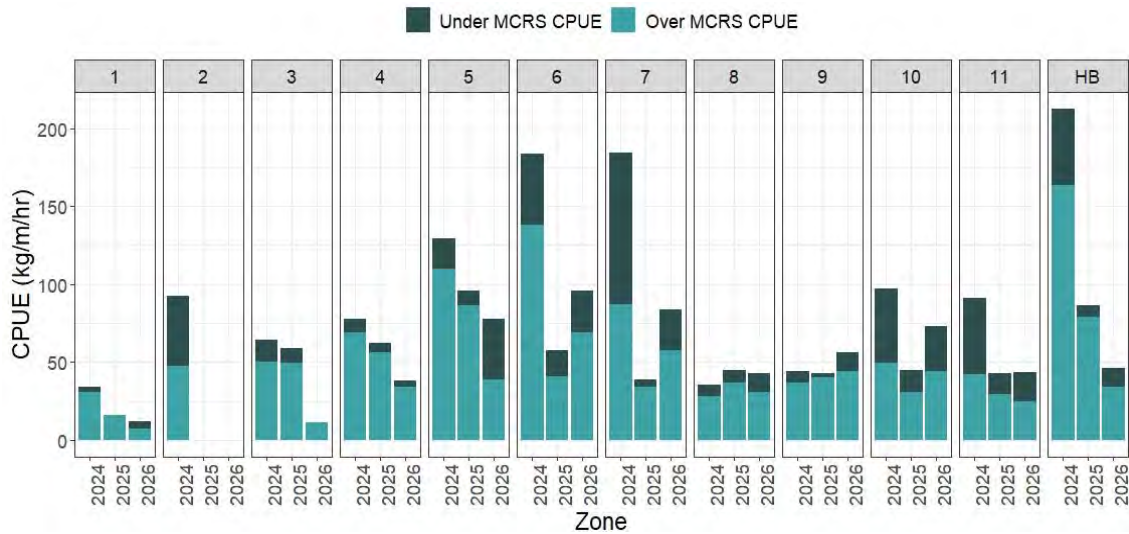


Figure 9. Average CPUE of Manila clam in each zone surveyed 2024-2026. Bars represent average CPUE_{total} per zone, divided into CPUE_{over}, light blue, and CPUE_{under}, darkblue.

- All zones showed a greater average CPUE_{over} in comparison to CPUE_{under} and Zone 5 showed the greatest average CPUE_{under} of 38.41kg/m/hr.
- Statistical analysis showed some statistical variances between catch zones for CPUE_{total}, CPUE_{over} and CPUE_{under} within the 2026 dataset (all p values <0.05).
- Post-hoc Dunns testing with holm adjustment revealed that zone 1 displayed significantly less CPUE across CPUE_{total}, CPUE_{over} and CPUE_{under} (CPUE_{total} =10.77kg/m/hr, CPUE_{over} = 7.05 kg/m/hr, CPUE_{under} = 4.67 kg/m/hr) compared to zone 10 (CPUE_{total} =67.89 kg/m/ hr, CPUE_{over} =43.92 kg/m/hr, CPUE_{under} 18.26 kg/m/hr).
- Zone 6 displayed a significantly greater CPUE_{over} (68.79kg/n/hr) compared to zone 1 (7.05kg/m/hr) (p<0.05) and zone 3 displayed a significantly lower CPUE_{under} (0.12kg/m/hr) compared to zones 5, 10 and 11 (38.41kg/m/hr, 28.94kg/m/hr and 18.26kg/m/hr, respectively).
- The CPUE_{total} of Manila clam across the harbour in 2026 was significantly lower than that seen in 2024 (p<0.05), although statistically similar to that seen in 2025 (p>0.05).
- At a zonal level, initial Kruskal-Wallis testing suggested statistical differences in CPUE_{total} and CPUE_{over} in zone 1 between years, but post-hoc testing with holm adjustment revealed no significant difference between years (Figure 10).
- While there were no statistically significant differences between years, Figure 10 suggests a declining trend in CPUE_{total} in zones 1,3,4, 5 and Holes Bay. However, this trend did not reach statistical significance, although the p-value in Holes Bay was close to the conventional significance threshold (p = 0.0516) (Figure 10).

Poole Bivalve Survey 2026

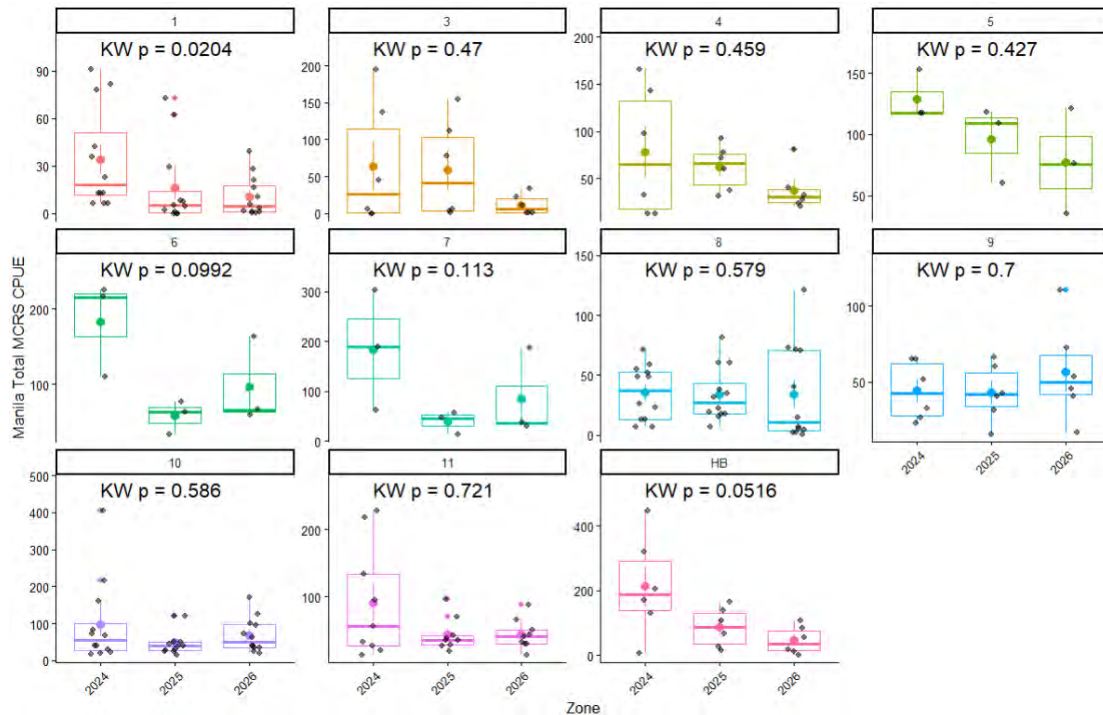


Figure 10. Box plots showing the Catch Per Unit Effort (CPUE) of Manila clams across zones from 2024–2026. Zones are distinguished by colour, with annual mean CPUE indicated by a point corresponding to the colour of each zone. The median CPUE is shown by the horizontal line within each box, while individual observations are represented by grey points. Error bars indicate the mean $\pm$ standard error.

2.3.2 Common cockle

- In the 2026 survey, the average CPUE_{total} of common cockle across the harbour including Holes Bay was 44.98 kg/m/hr. The average CPUE_{over} was 43.39 kg/m/hr and the average CPUE_{under} was 1.4 kg/m/hr.
- Statistical analysis indicated that CPUE_{total} was significantly lower in 2026 than in the previous two survey years ($p < 0.05$), declining from 53.37 kg/m/hr in 2024 and 93.18 kg/m/hr in 2025 to 44.98 kg/m/hr in 2026. This reduction likely reflects, at least in part, the unusually high cockle abundance recorded in zones 1 and 3 in the 2024 and 2025 surveys.
- In zone 1, CPUE_{total} in 2025 was 252.7 kg/m/hr, 155.69% above the mean of 98.83 kg/m/hr recorded across the last five surveys (2022–2026). In zone 3, average CPUE_{total} reached 346.12 kg/m/hr in 2024 and 399.44 kg/m/hr in 2025, representing increases of 72.6% and 99.1%, respectively, above the five-survey mean of 200.58 kg/m/hr. In 2026, average CPUE_{total} in these zones declined to 154.5 kg/m/hr in zone 1 and 138.121 kg/m/hr in zone 3, values more consistent with longer-term averages.
- In the 2026 survey, zone 1 showed the highest average CPUE_{total}, followed by zone 3 (154 kg/m/hr and 138 kg/m/hr, respectively). These two zones also displayed the highest CPUE_{over} (147.4 kg/m/hr and 138 kg/m/hr respectively) (Figure 11).
- All zones had a greater average CPUE_{over} compared to CPUE_{under}.
- There were no statistically significant differences in CPUE_{total}, CPUE_{over} and CPUE_{under} between zones for 2026 (all p values > 0.05).

Poole Bivalve Survey 2026

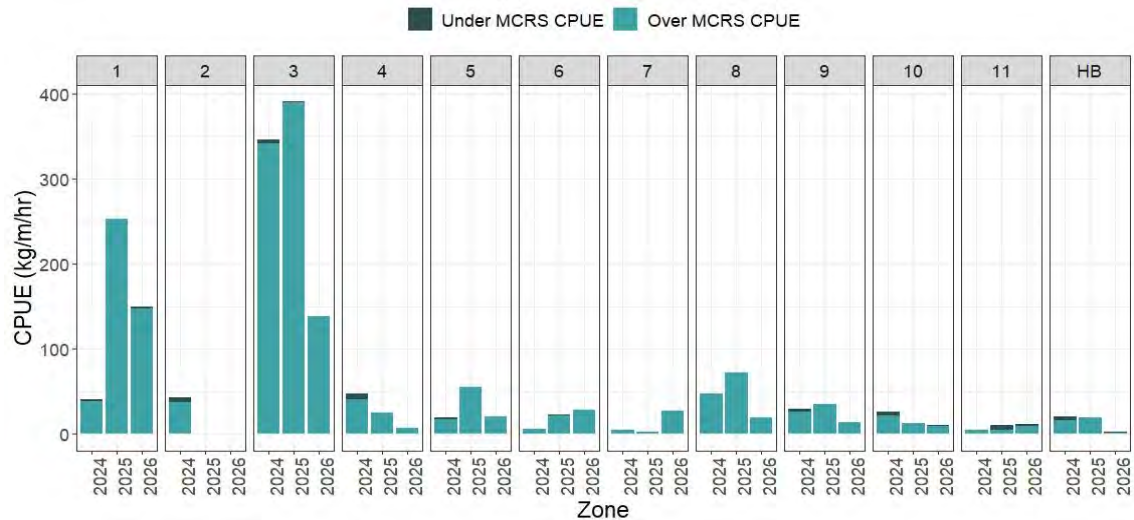


Figure 11. Average CPUE of common cockle in each zone surveyed 2024-2026. Bars represent average $CPUE_{total}$ per zone, divided into $CPUE_{over}$, light blue, and $CPUE_{under}$, dark blue.

- At a zonal level, initial Kruskal-Wallis testing suggested statistical differences in $CPUE_{total}$ between years in zones 4, 8, 9, 10 and HB, though post-hoc testing revealed no statistical differences between specific years ($p > 0.05$).
- Similar results were found for $CPUE_{over}$ in zones 4, 8 and HB, and $CPUE_{under}$ in zones 1 and 3 (Figure 12).

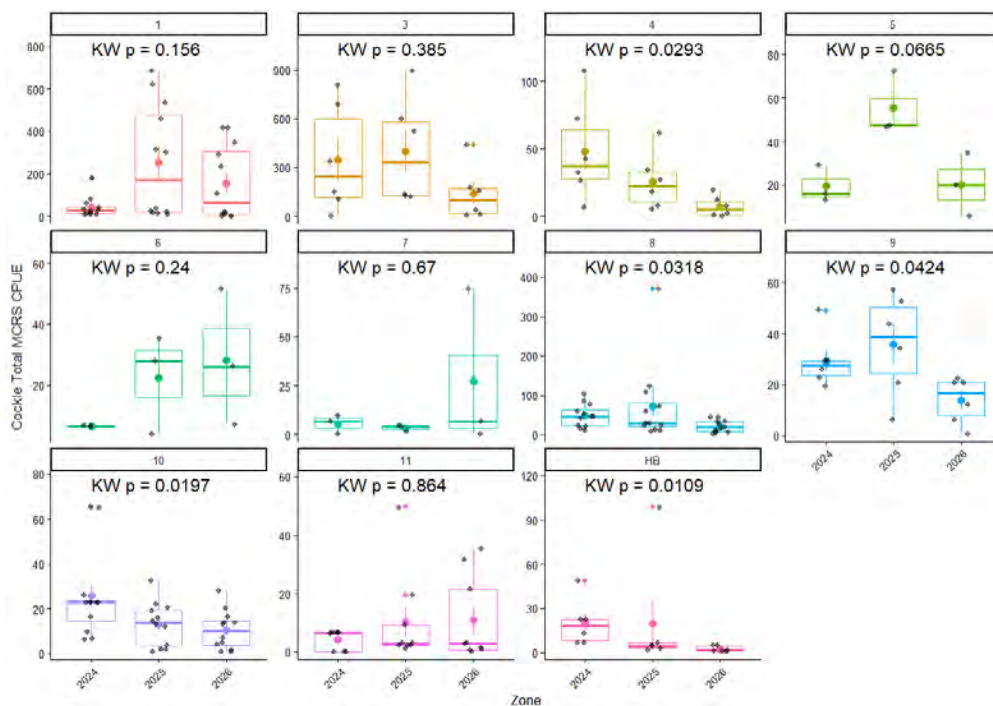


Figure 12. Box plots showing the Catch Per Unit Effort (CPUE) of common cockle across zones from 2024–2026. Zones are distinguished by colour, with annual mean CPUE indicated by a point corresponding to the colour of each zone. The median CPUE is shown by the horizontal line within each box, while individual observations are represented by grey points. Error bars indicate the mean $\pm$ standard error.

2.4 Seasonal Catch Data

- Quantities of Manila clam and common cockle caught each month by the fishery for the 2023, 2024 and 2025 fishing seasons are shown in Figure 13 and Figure 14, respectively.
- The fishing season runs from 25th May to 23rd December annually and therefore it should be noted that catch weight (kg) for May represents only a 5-day fishing period and December, a 23-day fishing period.

2.4.1 Manila Clam

- Previously, total landings of Manila clam showed a decline from 474.7 tonnes in the 2023/24 fishing season to 240.4 tonnes in the 2024/25 season. However, in the 2025/26 season, total landings of Manila clam increased to 286.0 tonnes.
- Statistical analysis revealed no significant difference in the total landings of Manila clam between the 2023, 2024 and 2025 seasons ($p>0.05$).
- Seasonal trends followed previous years', which showed an increase in landings in the mid-summer months followed by a slow decline towards the end of the fishing season in December.
- In 2025, all months, except May, displayed an increase in landings compared to the previous fishing season and Manila clam landings peaked in June at 55 tonnes.
- There were no statistical differences between landings each month within the last 3 years ($p>0.05$).

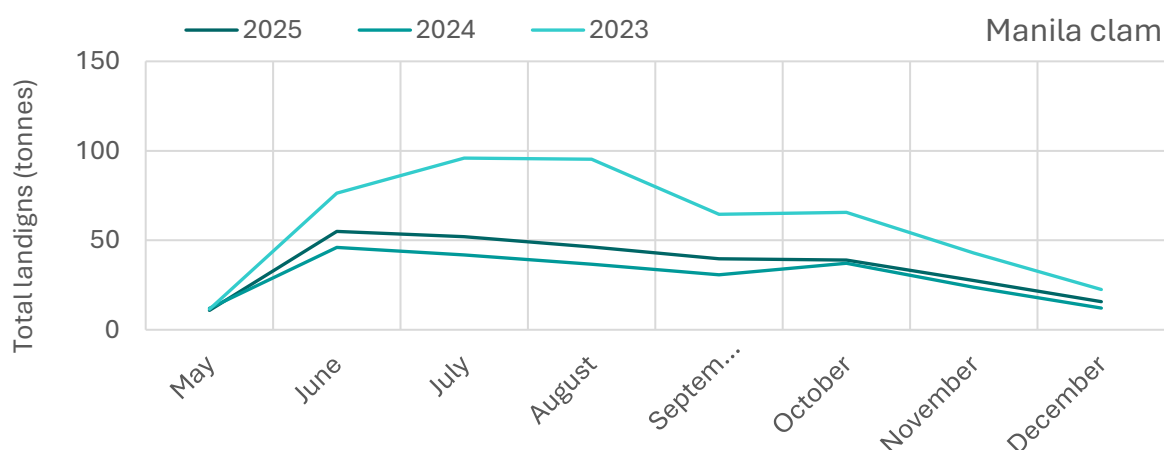


Figure 13. The monthly total catch (tonnes) of Manila clam submitted in catch returns from permit holders in the Poole Harbour Dredge Fishery for the 2023, 2024 and 2025 fishing seasons.

2.4.2 Common cockle

- The total weight of landed common cockle has consistently increased over the last 3 fishing seasons; 44.6 tonnes in 2023, to 91 tonnes in 2024 and 137.6 tonnes in 2025.
- Statistical analysis showed that there was no significant difference in the total landings of common cockle between 2023-25 ($p>0.05$).
- Seasonal trends typically follow an increase in landings in the mid-summer months. In 2025 there was a peak in landings in July at 79.5 tonnes, though this did not show any statistical difference between other months ($p>0.05$).

Poole Bivalve Survey 2026

- There was no statistical difference in landings of common cockle for each month between 2023-25 ($p>0.05$).

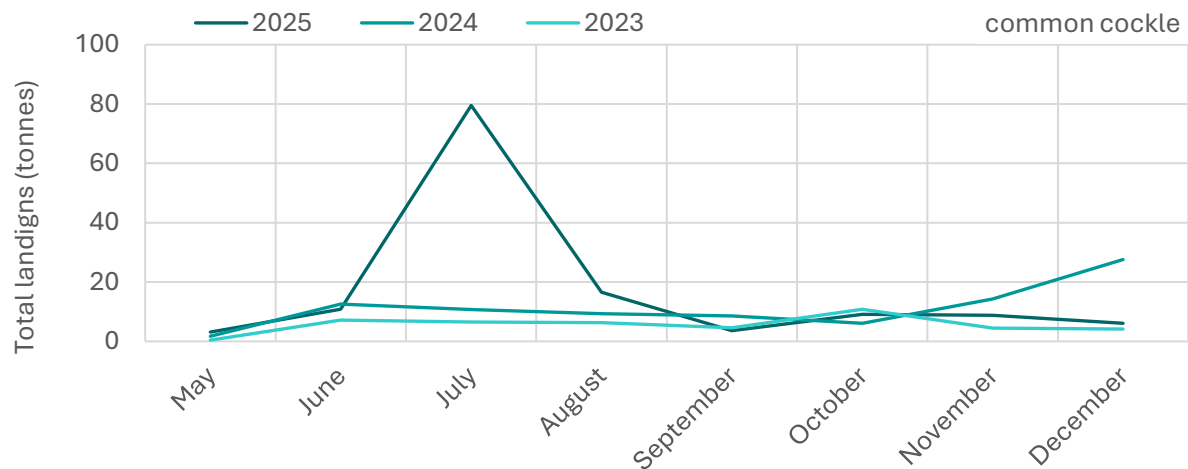


Figure 14. The monthly total catch (tonnes) of common cockle submitted in catch returns from permit holders of the Poole Harbour Dredge Fishery for the 2023, 2024 and 2025 seasons.

2.5 Zonal Catch Data

Since 2019, fishers have been required to report which fishing zones have been fished each day. This provides zonal application to catch data that can then be related to the catch zone analysis of the survey CPUE data where required. Note that there is no catch data for Holes Bay as this is a prohibited area year-round for the dredge fishery.

2.5.1 Manila clam

- Zones 8, 10 and 11 have consistently been favourable fishing grounds for Manila clam in previous years.
- In the 2025 fishing season, on average, significantly more Manila clams were harvested from zones 8 and 10 compared to other zones, at 147.3 tonnes and 66.3 tonnes respectively (all p values $p<0.05$).
- Compared to the previous two fishing seasons, Kruskal-Wallis testing identified statistical differences in zone 11 between years, though post-hoc Dunns test with holm adjustment revealed no statistical differences between 2026 and the previous 2 years ($p>0.05$) (Figure 15).

Poole Bivalve Survey 2026

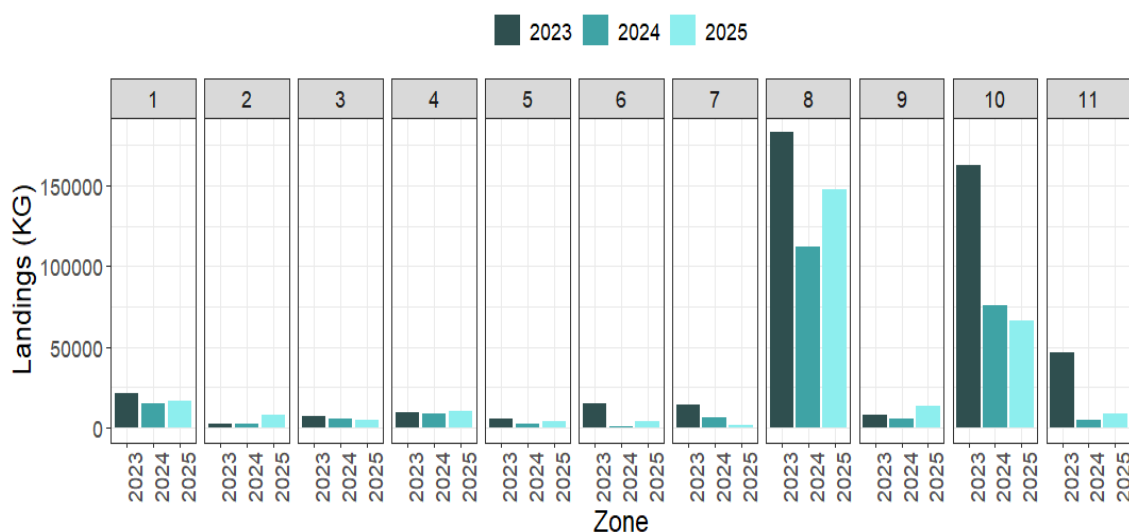


Figure 15. Landings of Manila clam between 2023-2025. Information was gathered by submitted catch returns from permit holders of the Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Fishery. Zonal distribution of catch has been categorised by year.

2.5.2 Common cockle

- Zones 1, 2, 3 and 8 were the favourable fishing grounds for common cockle within the 2025 fishing season (53.1t, 15.5t, 24.2t and 42.3t respectively) (Figure 16). These zones showed significantly higher landings than all other zones ($p < 0.05$) and were statistically similar to each other ($p > 0.05$).
- Zone 1 and zone 8 have shown consecutive increases in landings in the last 3 years though post-hoc Dunns testing indicated that 2025 was statistically similar to that seen in 2023 and 2024 ($p > 0.05$).

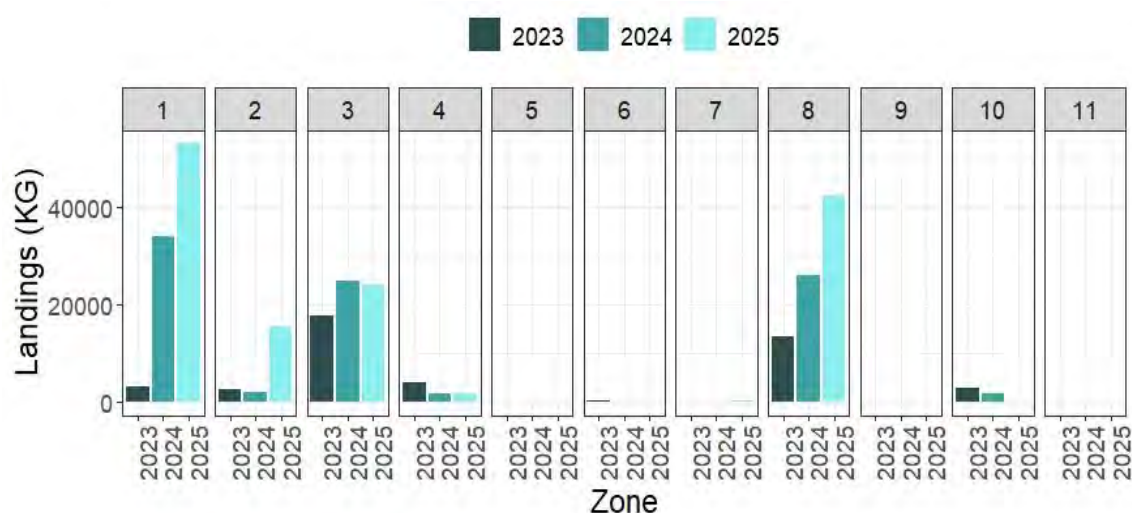


Figure 16. Landings of common cockle between 2023-2025. Information was gathered by submitted catch returns from permit holders in the Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Fishery. Zonal distribution of catch has been categorised by year.

3.0 Monitoring and Control Plan

The Monitoring and Control Plan (M&CP) On-Site Monitoring Programme is linked to Control Mechanisms activated by Threshold Trigger levels (TTLs) for two Monitoring Variables: Poole Harbour Bivalve Survey Data (CPUE TTL) and Landings Data (LPUE TTL) from monthly catch returns submitted by Permit Holders. The M&CP is linked to Manila clam data only at this time.

3.1 Monitoring Variable: Poole Harbour Bivalve Survey

- The annual average Manila clam CPUE value calculated under the M+CP methods for the 2026 survey was 43.79 kg/m of dredge/hr (excluding unfishable zones, Holes Bay), which is above the CPUE TTL of 34.60 kg/m of dredge/hr (by 9.19 kg/m of dredge/hr) (Figure 17).
- Therefore, **the CPUE TTL was not reached**.
- The annual average CPUE value is below the current lowest rolling 5-year average by 9.3 kg/m of dredge/hr.
- Statistical analysis showed there were no significant differences in CPUE between the survey data in 2026 year compared to any other year surveyed across the full timeseries dataset (2016-2026) (Figure 18).

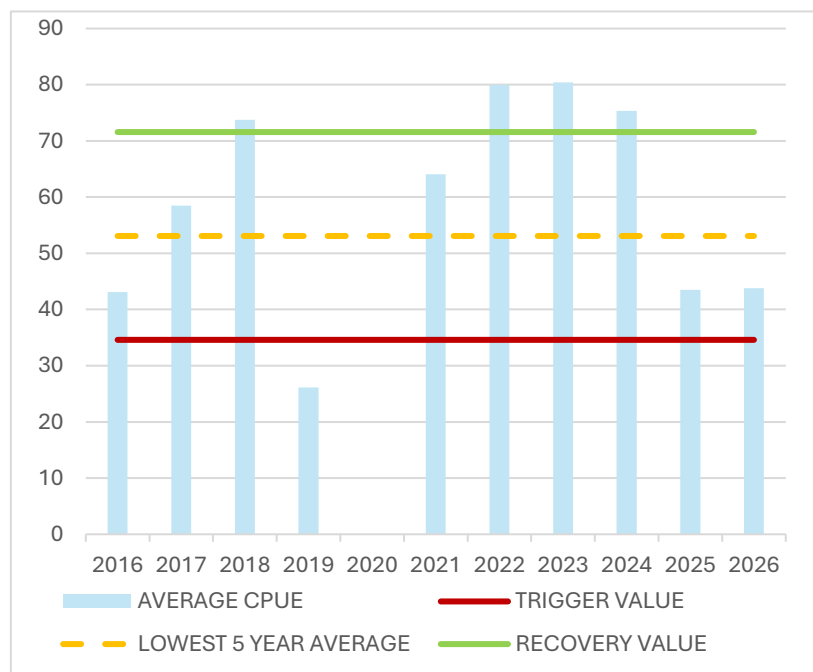


Figure 17. Graph shows the average CPUE (kg/m of dredge/hr) (n=27 sites) from 2016- 2026 surveys (blue bars), CPUE TTL (red), CPUE Recovery Threshold (RT) (green) and lowest 5-year rolling average used to calculate the TTL and RT values (orange).). Note there is no survey data for 2020 due to the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Poole Bivalve Survey 2026

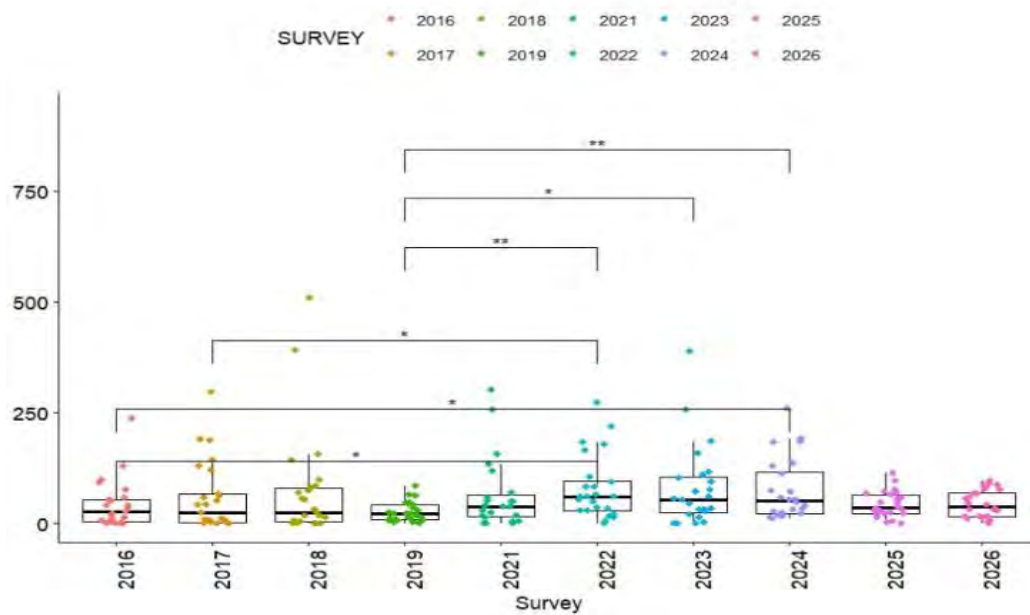


Figure 18. Box and whisker plots of the Poole Harbour Bivalve Survey CPUE data for the years 2016 to 2026, statistical differences ($p < 0.05$) between years are shown by the brackets above using a Dunn's Test with a 'holm' adjustment. "*" reflects a p value of < 0.05 , while "***" reflects a p value < 0.01 . Note there is no survey data for 2020 due to the Covid-19 Pandemic.

3.2 Monitoring Variable: Catch (Landings) Data

3.2.1 Annual average Landings Per Unit Effort

- The annual average Landings Per Unit Effort (LPUE) value for the 2025/26 season was 83.5kg/day, above the LPUE TTL of 78.25kg/day by 5.25 kg/day (Figure 19).
- Therefore, the LPUE TTL was not reached.

Poole Bivalve Survey 2026

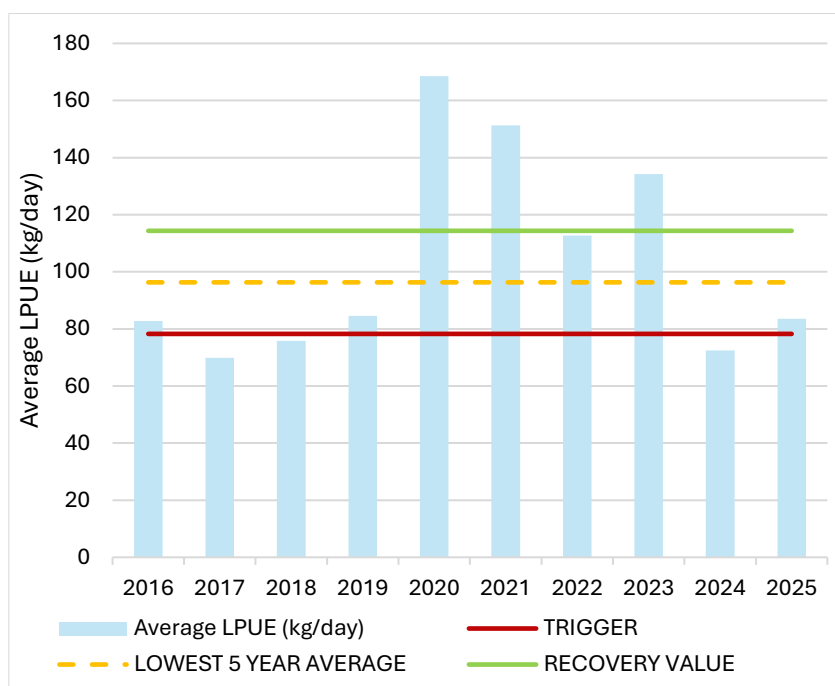


Figure 19. Graph shows the average LPUE (kg/day) from 2016- 2025 fishing seasons (blue bars), LPUE TTL (red), LPUE RT (green) and lowest 5-year rolling average used to calculate the TTL and RT values (orange).

3.2.2 Monthly Landings PER Unit Effort

- Analysis of monthly catch-return data for the 2025/26 season indicates that mean monthly Landings Per Unit Effort (LPUE) increased relative to the 2024/25 season (Figure 20).
- LPUE was higher in every month, with increases ranging from 6.0% in May (110.44 kg/day in 2025 compared with 104.17 kg/day in 2024) to 61.2% in August (118.84 kg/day in 2025 compared with 73.70 kg/day in 2024).

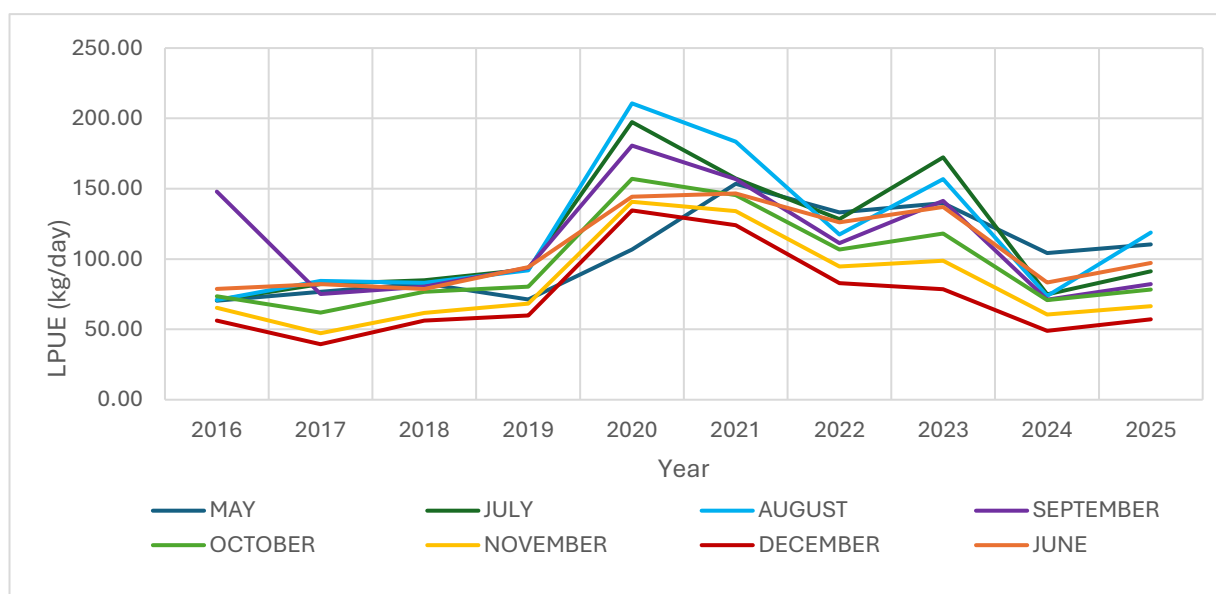


Figure 20. Monthly landings per unit effort (LPUE) of Manila clams in the PHDPF, as kg/day, from 2016-2025. Months are represented using trend lines highlighted in different colours.

4.0 Summary

4.1 Manila Clams:

CPUE Trends: The distribution of CPUE reflects environmental conditions influencing the habitat preferences of both species. Manila clams exhibited higher CPUE in muddy, fine-sediment areas of the harbour. Total CPUE of Manila clams in the harbour was statistically lower than that seen in 2024 though statistically similar to that seen in 2025, with some areas showing increased abundance compared with the 2025 survey. Although several Shellfish Catch Zones exhibited lower CPUE than in previous years, post hoc Dunn's tests with Holm adjustment identified no statistically significant differences between survey years. These observed variations are therefore likely to reflect natural fluctuations in stock abundance rather than a sustained decline.

Size Distribution: The average shell length of Manila clams was significantly lower in 2026 than in 2024, although was similar to that observed in 2025. The narrower spread of lengths in 2026 indicates a less variable size distribution compared with 2024. Mean shell length exceeded the MCRS at all sites except Sites 17 and 19. The 2026 survey showed greater variability in Manila clam size distribution compared with cockles, which were predominantly above the MCRS. Previous studies and zonal observations suggest that Manila clam growth varies across the harbour, with some individuals growing wider but remaining relatively thin, while others grow deeper but remain narrower. Consequently, thicker Manila clams may be retained by the dredge despite being below the MCRS in length. In contrast, the more uniform growth of cockles may reduce the likelihood of undersized individuals being retained.

Landings Data: Total landings increased in 2025 following a decline in landings shown in the 2024 fishing season. The last 3 years shows no significant differences in total landings suggesting the fishery is stable. Zones 8 and 10 remain the favoured zones for Manila clam harvesting and were supported by high CPUE values in the 2026 survey. Other less targeted zones such as 5, 6 and 7 also showed high CPUE levels in the 2026 survey.

4.2 Common cockle:

CPUE Trends: Common cockles were more abundant in sandy, coarse sediments of the harbour. Total CPUE was significantly lower in 2026 compared with the previous two years although, this difference is most likely attributable to the unusually high cockle abundance recorded in Zones 1 and 3 during the 2024 and 2025 surveys. Overall, CPUE appears to be returning to typical baseline levels while remaining the highest CPUE in zones 1 and 3.

Size Distribution: Average cockle shell length has remained similar over the last 3 survey years with all sites displayed average length above the MCRS. The length-distribution profile for 2026 shows a similar spread of sampled sizes as seen in 2024 and 2025.

Landings Data: Annual cockle landings have continued to increase over the last 3-year period by 208.6%, from 44.6t in 2023 to 137.6t in 2025. Zones 1, 3 and 8 were the most favoured for cockle harvesting areas in 2025. Zones 1, 2, 3 and 8 displayed significantly higher landings in 2025 than all other zones. Zones 1 and 3 also displayed high CPUE ahead of the 2026 fishing season.

Poole Bivalve Survey 2026

4.3 Fishery Management:

Monitoring and Control: The Southern IFCA continue to monitor the sustainability of Manila clam stocks through the M&CP, considering CPUE data derived from survey outputs and fisheries catch data from the previous fishing season, against Trigger Threshold Levels calculated under the On-Site Monitoring Programme. The M&CP will continue to be implemented for Manila clam within the fishery with both annual and in-season monitoring of stock levels and Southern IFCA are working to explore integrating Common cockle into the M&CP with corresponding trigger levels.

Management Recommendations: For the 2026/27 fishing season the Authority determined that no additional management intervention was required to support a sustainable fishery.

In summary, the fishery appears to be operating sustainably for both species. Observed changes in CPUE and population structure are likely to reflect natural fluctuations in stock abundance, with some zones showing decreases and other increases relative to previous surveys. Overall, the results do not indicate any consistent evidence of a decline in stock status across the fishery.

POOLE BIVALVE SURVEY 2026

The Poole Bivalve Survey is completed annually prior to the opening of the Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Fishery, focusing on target clam and cockle species. **This document summarises the findings of the 2026 survey, sampled in April 2026.**



WHY WE SURVEY...



To improve understanding of shellfish stocks and main fishing areas



Track changes in stocks each year



Guide management of the Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Fishery

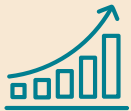
2026 SURVEY KEY FINDINGS...



Clam and cockle abundance varies between fishing areas and previous years. This is likely based on a number of factors.

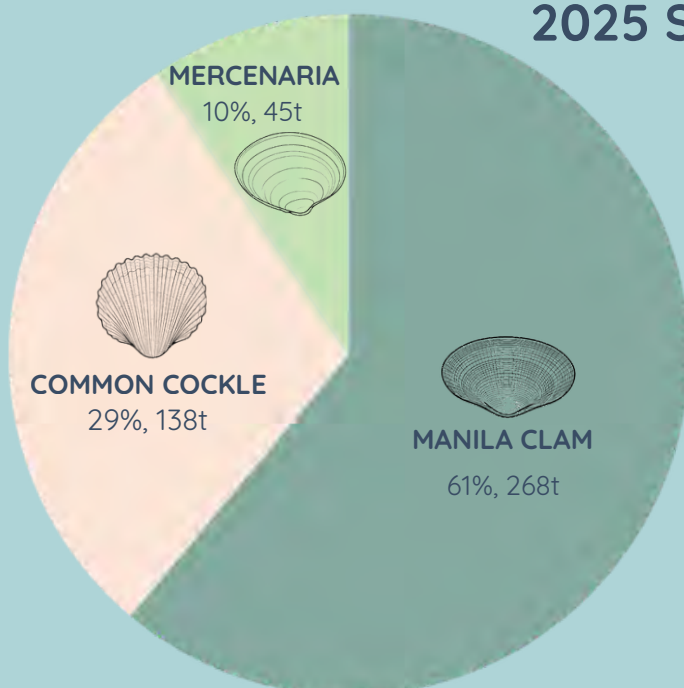


Overall, the clam and cockle stocks appear stable across the fishery.



Numbers of Mercenaria seen on the ground have increased in recent years. x3 more seen in 2022-2026 than previous years.

2025 SEASON LANDINGS OVERVIEW...



Proportion of landings by species
(May-December 2025)

Manila clam made up 61% of total landings (268t).

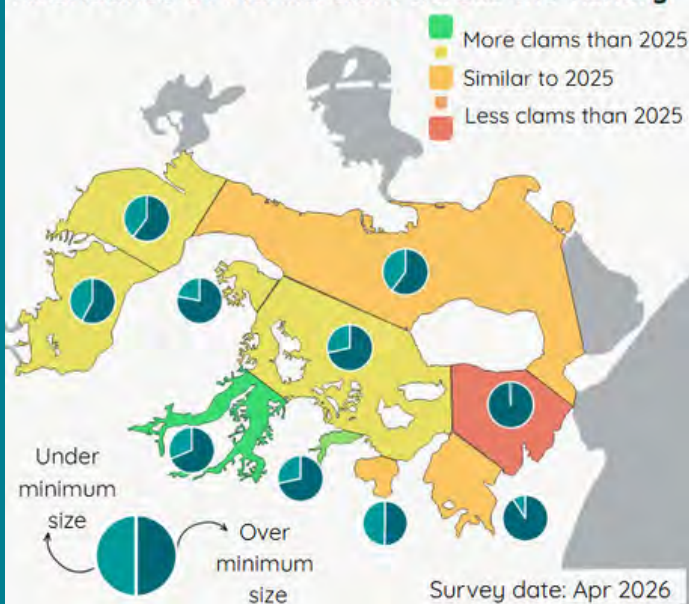
Cockle made up 29% (138t) and Mercenaria made up 10% (45t) for the season.

Manila clam landings per day increased by 15% compared to 2024.

Cockle landings per day decreased by 27% compared to 2024.

SPECIES SPECIFICS FROM THE SURVEY ...

Abundance of Manila clam across the fishery



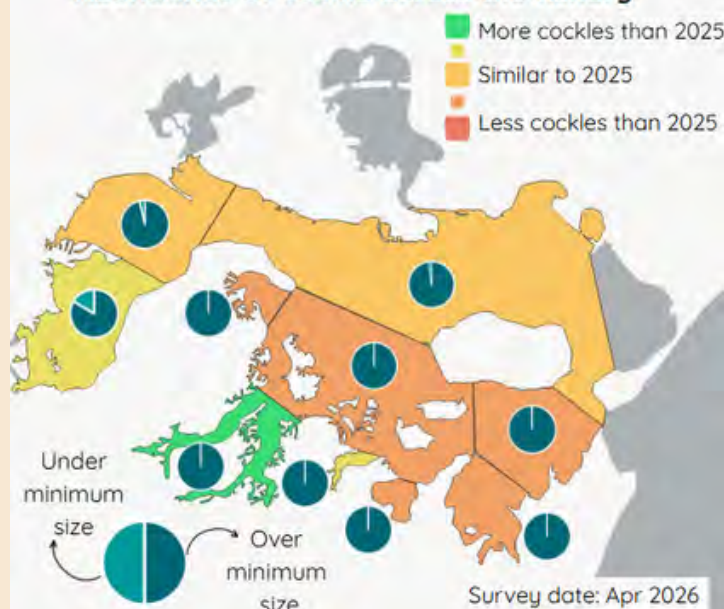
MANILA CLAM

- High abundance of clams were seen in established clam beds and the Harbour's main fishing grounds.
- Key fishing areas, including Wareham Channel, have consistently supported high numbers of clams over the past three years and showed an increase in abundance compared with the 2025 survey.
- Although some sites recorded fewer clams than last year, no significant changes were detected, indicating that overall stocks remain stable.
- 67% of clams sampled exceeded the minimum conservation reference size, suggesting healthy stock replenishment before the fishing season, helping to support the long-term sustainability of the fishery.

COMMON COCKLE

- Cockles were most abundant in established and frequently fished beds.
- Key areas, e.g Poole Town and Blood Alley have maintained moderate to high abundance over the past three years.
- Some sites recorded fewer cockles than in 2025, though no significant changes were detected.
- 98% of cockles sampled exceeded the minimum conservation reference size. This is likely influenced by the vessel's sorting riddle size, but consistent survey methods allow reliable comparisons between years and locations.
- Increased landings in recent years and stable survey abundance indicate that the cockle fishery remains sustainable.

Abundance of cockle across the fishery



2026 FIRST LOOK: FISHER OBSERVATIONS

- Fishers report good stock numbers on the ground
- Weed was abundant early in the season but has since declined, making grounds more fishable.
- High numbers of juvenile fish observed.
- Fishers remain optimistic about the fishery due to the abundance of young clams.

NEXT STEPS



The annual Mid-Season Observer Programme will take place in August to provide a snapshot of catches at the mid-season point.

Officers will continue monitoring monthly catch returns for the fishery throughout the 2026 season

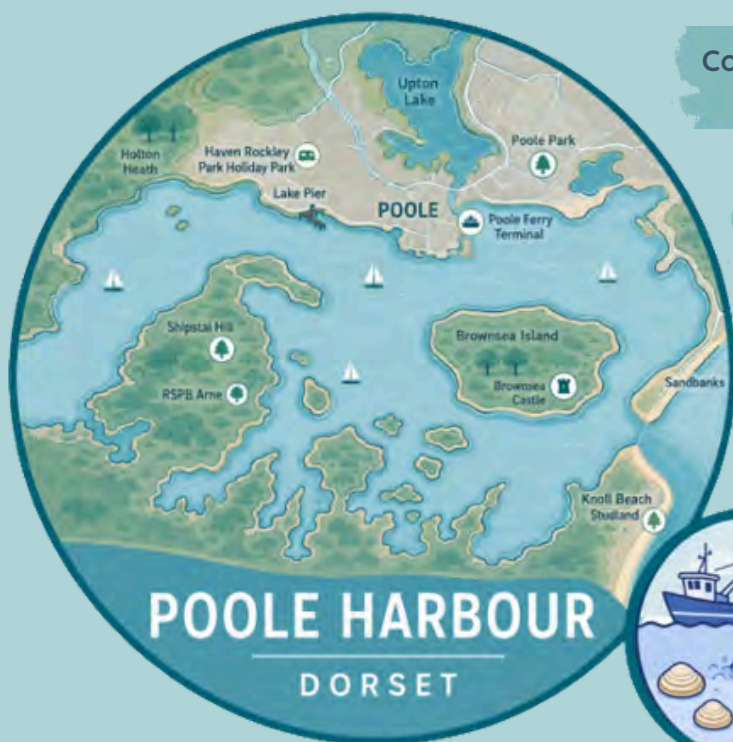


POOLE BIVALVE SURVEY 2026

This document outlines the results from the most recent Poole Bivalve Survey 2026, covering the Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Fishery.



FISHERY INSIGHT...

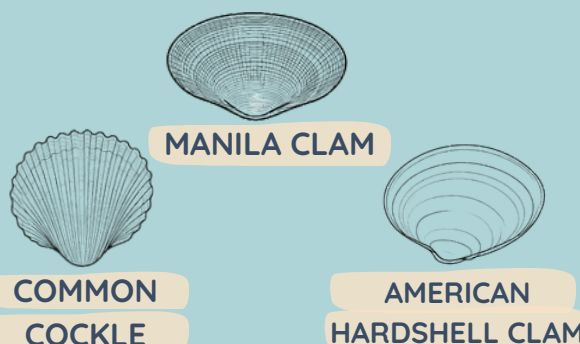


Commercial shellfish dredging has taken place in Poole Harbour for over 40 years.

Pump-scoop dredges are used to harvest clam and cockle species from established shellfish beds.

Compared with traditional dredges, pump-scoop dredges can reduce towing drag, increase fishing efficiency and improve catch quality.

TARGET SPECIES:



FISHERIES MANAGEMENT...

Poole Harbour is a designated **Special Protection Area**, **Ramsar Site** and **Site of Special Scientific Interest** for its ecosystem services, migratory bird species and its supporting habitats such as wetlands, seagrass and saltmarsh.

The fishery operates under a regulated permit system under the **Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Byelaw**, capped at 45 permitted vessels with flexible permit conditions, that introduce technical measures including spatial, temporal, gear and catch regulations, used to support adaptive and sustainable management.

A **Monitoring and Control Plan** is used to actively monitor the fishery and inform management decisions, through various techniques including an annual pre-fishing season survey. Data is also used to inform and support the Marine Stewardship Council certification of the Poole Harbour Clam & Cockle Fishery.

WHY WE SURVEY...



To improve understanding of shellfish stocks and main fishing areas



Track changes in stocks each year



Guide management of the Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Fishery

2026 SURVEY KEY FINDINGS...

 Clam and cockle abundance varies between fishing areas and previous years, likely based on a number of factors

 Overall, the clam and cockle stocks appear in good condition across the fishery.

 Numbers of American Hardshell clam seen on the ground have increased in recent years. x3 more seen 2022-2026 than previous years.

2026 FIRST LOOK: FISHER OBSERVATIONS

 Fishers report good stock numbers on the ground

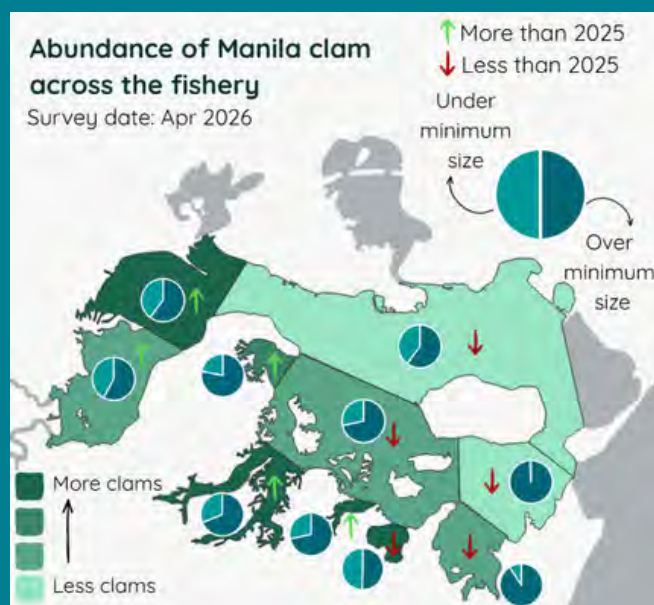
 Weed was abundant early in the season but has since declined, making grounds more fishable.

 High numbers of juvenile fish observed.

 Fishers remain optimistic about the fishery due to the abundance of young clams.

SPECIES SPECIFICS FROM THE SURVEY...

The following two sections provide species specific insights from the most recent survey.

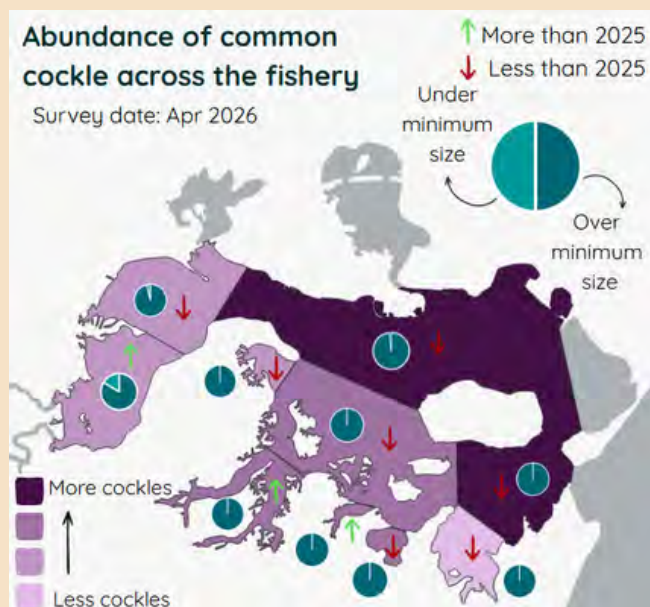


MANILA CLAM

- Clams show high abundance in areas where established clam beds occur and within the Harbour's key fishing grounds.
- Key fishing areas, including Wareham Channel, have consistently supported high numbers of clams over the past three years and showed an increase in abundance compared with the 2025 survey.
- Some sites recorded lower clam numbers than last year; however, further analysis found no significant changes, indicating that overall stocks remain stable.
- 67% of clams sampled were above minimum conservation reference size. This suggests ongoing recruitment and healthy stock replenishment prior to the fishing season, helping to support the long-term sustainability of the fishery.

COMMON COCKLE

- Cockles were most abundant in key cockle fishing grounds, where established cockle beds occur.
- Key areas such as Poole Town, Blood Alley and the Islands have maintained moderate to high abundance over the past three years.
- Some sites recorded fewer cockles than in 2025, but further analysis indicates that stocks remain stable.
- Most cockles sampled (98%) were above the minimum conservation reference size. This is likely influenced by the sorting process used on permitted vessels, but consistent survey methods allow reliable comparisons between years and locations.
- Increased landings in recent years, supported by stable abundance recorded in surveys, provide a positive indication of the current health of the cockle fishery.



Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Fishery 2026/2027 Paper For Information

Report by IFCO Mullen

A. Purpose

To provide Members with an update on the monthly analysis of Manila clam Landings Per Unit Effort (LPUE) data as Monitoring Variable 1 under the Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Fishery Monitoring and Control Plan In-Season Monitoring Programme for the 2026/27 season.

1.0 Introduction

- The Manila clam stocks within the Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Fishery are monitored in accordance with the **Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Fishery Monitoring and Control Plan (M+CP)** under the Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Byelaw, which includes an On-Site Monitoring Plan, In-Season Monitoring Programme, and SPA Monitoring Programme.
- During the May 2026 Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meeting, Members reviewed the findings of the Poole Bivalve Survey 2026 (**CPUE Threshold Trigger Level [TTL]**), and the landings from the 2025/26 fishing season (**LPUE TTL**) as monitoring variables linked to control mechanisms under the **On-Site Monitoring Programme**, in advance of the 2026/27 fishing season.

Following this review, considering that TTLs had not been reached for either monitoring variable, Members resolved that no additional management intervention was necessary to maintain Manila clam stocks at a sustainable level into the 2026/27 fishing season.

- The **In-Season Monitoring Programme** under the M+CP outlines monitoring indicators that are tracked throughout each fishing season to assess fishery condition. Although these indicators are not actively linked to a control mechanism, they provide supporting evidence for ongoing assessment and assist in informing Authority decisions, should a control mechanism be triggered under either the On-Site Monitoring Plan or the SPA Monitoring Programme.
- The In-Season Monitoring Programme for the 2026/27 season commenced on the 25th May 2026 at the beginning of the fishing season and is comprised of 2 Monitoring Variables:
 - **Monitoring Variable 1: Monthly Analysis of LPUE Data** derived from monthly Permit Holder catch returns.
 - **Monitoring Variable 2: Mid-Season Stock Observer Programme**, a snapshot of the Manila clam stock and catch composition on active fishing grounds at the mid-season point.

2.0 Monitoring Variable 1: Monthly Analysis of LPUE Data

- Monthly Manila clam catch return data, provided by Permit Holders, is analysed to provide average **LPUE (kg/day)** for each month, identify trends in data and allow for comparisons to previous fishing seasons.

Previous season trends:

- The monitoring programme has established a time series dataset to assess trends in the Manila clam stock within Poole Harbour.
- Analysis of catch data since 2016 shows generally lower landings per day during 2016–2019 compared to 2020–2023. These changes provide a broader picture of the fishery, which may be attributed to various factors, including changes in fishing efficiency, natural stock variability, and external factors such as environmental conditions.
- In 2024, the fishing season saw a decline in LPUE, resulting in the activation of the On-Site Monitoring Programme control mechanism, though it was determined that no further management was required when reviewing all best available evidence, including the stock survey outcomes for 2025 which showed that CPUE levels did not fall below the TTL.

- During the 2025/26 season, monthly LPUE was seen to increase again compared to 2024 by between 6% in May and 61.2% in August.

2026/27 Season:

- The data below relates to the catch data provided by Permit Holders for Manila clam for the first two completed months of the 2026/27 fishing season, allowing for an initial comparison with previous years.

For May 2026, the average total LPUE was **149.2kg/day**.

- This is an **increase of 35.1%** compared to the previous season (May 2025 =110.44kg/day) and an **increase of 43.2%** compared to 2024 (May 2024 = 104.17kg/day).
- The LPUE for May 2026 was a **2.8% decrease** when compared to the highest recorded May value (153.50kg/day in 2021) and a **111.9% increase** compared to the lowest recorded May value (70.39kg/day in 2016).
- Data shown in Figure 1.

For June 2026, the average total LPUE was **128.47kg/day**.

- This is an **increase of 32.1%** compared to the previous season (June 2025= 97.27kg/day) and an **increase of 54.1%** compared to 2024 (June 2024= 83.37kg/day).
- The LPUE for June 2026 was a **12.4% decrease** when compared to the highest recorded June value (146.64kg/day in 2021) and a **63.2% increase** compared to the lowest recorded June value (78.72kg/day in 2018).
- Data shown in Figure 1.

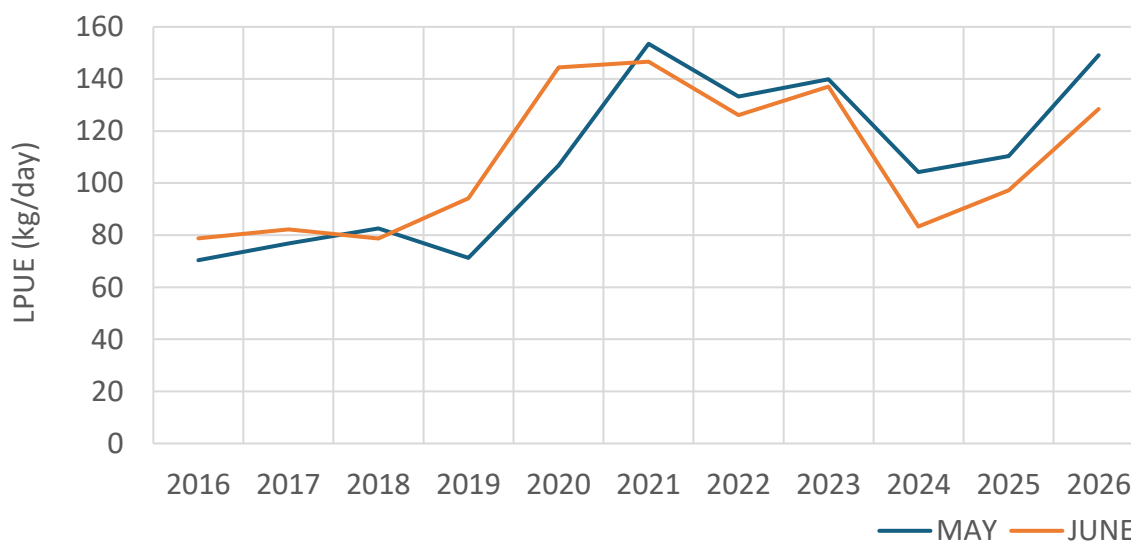


Figure 1: LPUE of Manila clam (kg per day) for the months of May and June, 2016-2026, based on data supplied by permit holders in the PHDP fishery through monthly catch return submissions.

3.0 Next Steps

- Southern IFCA will continue to monitor the trends of harvested stocks throughout the 2026/27 fishing season and analyse Manila clam data against the In-Season Monitoring Variable 1 under the M&CP.
- Under the In-Season Monitoring Variable 2, Southern IFCA will undertake the Mid-season Stock Observe Programme in August 2026.
- Ahead of the 2027/28 season, Southern IFCA will be carrying out a review under the PHDPB. As part of this process, the M+CP will be reviewed with the aim of including common cockle as a secondary monitored species, with the introduction of monitoring variables and associated control mechanisms.

Fisheries Management Plans Updates Paper For Information

Report by PO Wright

• **Purpose**

For Members to receive updates on the development of Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs).

1.0 Introduction

- FMPs, developed under the Joint Fisheries Statement (JFS) aim to carry out the objectives of the Fisheries Act 2020 by ensuring the continued provision of a shared natural resource for future generations, through the management of fish stocks, geographic area and fishing methods.
- Each FMP is developed by a delivery partner which, to date, includes Defra, Devolved Administrations, the MMO, Seafish, the AIFCA and industry bodies.
- The development process includes collaborative engagement between delivery partners and stakeholders and each FMP will be monitored, reviewed and adapted every 6 years.

The FMP Program

Tranche 1 & Tranche 2		Tranche 3		Tranche 4	
No. of Plans:	6	No. of Plans:	5	No. of Plans:	4
Relevant to SIFCA:	6	Relevant to SIFCA:	4	Relevant to SIFCA:	4
Development:	2021-2023	Development:	2023-2025	Development:	2023-2026
Publication:	Dec 2023 (*)	Publication:	Dec 2025	Publication:	Intended 2026
Implementation:	2024 - ongoing	Implementation:	2025 - ongoing	Implementation:	Intended 2026

(*) Mixed Flatfish FMP published in October 2024

2.0 Summary of Key Updates

Tranche 1 and Tranche 2 FMPs

- Channel Demersal Non-Quota Species FMP**
 - A cuttlefish stakeholder roundtable online meeting was held in August to discuss the outputs of the previously held cuttlefish roadshow, the responses to the cuttlefish questionnaire, and reviewing the Cuttlefish Action Plan. The meeting was attended by PO Wright and IFCA Mullen to represent Southern IFCA.

Tranche 3 FMPs

- Southern North Sea and Channel Skates and Rays FMP**
 - The Shark Trust and Defra have teamed up to highlight some of the species in the Skate and Ray FMP. This plan supports sustainable fishing of vulnerable species, by providing some clear identification information leading to: more accurate catch reporting, better information on stock health and stronger evidence for future management decisions. The species covered are: thornback, blonde, cuckoo and undulate ray.

- o An example of the information provided is given below:

Thornback ray: a familiar UK skate

- Recognised by thorny spines along the back
- Colour varies widely
- Found on sandy and muddy sea beds
- Common in the southern North Sea and English Channel
- Eats shellfish and small fish
- Grows up to about 1.3 metres long
- Can live 12 to 15 years
- Females can lay around 150 egg cases each year



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Tranche 4 FMPs

- There are no updates on the Tranche 4 FMPs at this time.

Scottish lead demersal FMPs

- There are no updates on Scottish lead demersal FMPs at this time. The public consultation on these FMPs closed in March 2026.

Joint UK FMPs for Pelagic Stocks led by Scotland

- There are five Joint UK FMPs for Pelagic Stocks being led by Scotland. Three of these FMPs cover part or all of the Southern IFCA District, related to the species North East Atlantic (NEA) mackerel (*Scomber scombrus*), North Sea Autumn Spawning (NSAS) herring (*Clupea harengus*) and blue whiting (*Micromesistius poutassou*).
 - o **North Sea Herring FMP** – covers ICES Area 4 and 7d which includes the eastern part of the District.
 - o **Northern Shelf Mackerel FMP** - covers ICES Area 2a, 4, 5b, 6, 7a, 7d-7h, 7j and UK waters of 12b which includes the whole of the District.
 - o **Northern Shelf Blue Whiting FMP** – covers ICES Area 2a, 4, 5b, 6, 7a, 7d-7h, 7j and UK waters of 12b which includes the whole of the District.
- The public consultation for the five proposed joint UK FMPs for Pelagic Stocks entered public consultation on **22nd July 2026**, the consultation is being administered by the Scottish Government. The public consultation closes on the **14th October 2026**.
- Southern IFCA are reviewing the relevant draft FMPs and are engaging with stakeholders on the relevant species.

3.0 Next Steps

- That Members note the report.
- The Southern IFCA FMP webpage continues to be updated with all new developments in the FMP program - [Fisheries Management Plans : Southern IFCA \(southern-ifca.gov.uk\)](https://www.southern-ifca.gov.uk/fisheries-management-plans).