

Southern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority

Pia Bateman – Chief Executive Officer



Unit 3 Holes Bay Park
Sterte Avenue West
Poole, Dorset, BH15 2AA
01202 721373
enquiries@southern-ifca.gov.uk

28th January 2026

Dear Member,

MEETING OF THE TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE – 5th February 2026

The Meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) will be held in the meeting room at Unit 3 Holes Bay Park, on **Thursday 5th February 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 – 6th November 2025

To confirm the Minutes of the Technical Advisory Committee meeting held on 6th November 2025 (Marked A).

To confirm the Minutes of the Extraordinary Technical Advisory Committee meeting held on 4th December 2025 (Marked B).

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) **Solent Dredge Permit Fishery 2025/26 Season – Status Update** – to receive a report from DCO Birchenough and PDCO Dell (Marked C)

ITEMS FOR DECISION

6. Net Fishing Byelaw: Year 2 Net Permit Review

To consider a report from IFCO Mullen (Marked D)

GUEST SPEAKER

- 7. The Angling Trust** – to receive a presentation from Hannah Rudd, Head of Marine at The Angling Trust

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

- 8. Solent Scallop Survey Report 2025** - to receive a report from IFCO Churchouse (Marked E)
- 9. Whelk LPUE Pilot Project: Year 1 Report** – to receive a report from IFCO Mullen and PO Wright (Marked F)
- 10. Solent Bivalve Survey Report 2025** – to receive a report from IFCO Churchouse (Marked G)
- 11. Juvenile Fish Survey Report 2025** - to receive a report from IFCO Perrins (Marked H)
- 12. Fisheries Management Plans** – to receive an update report from PO Wright (Marked I)
- 13. Date of Next Meeting**
To confirm the date of the next meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee on the 7th May 2026 at Southern IFCA, Unit 3 Holes Bay Park, Sterte Avenue West, Poole Dorset BH15 2AA.

SOUTHERN INSHORE FISHERIES & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE – 6th November 2025

Minutes of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), held virtually via Microsoft Teams at 14:00 on Thursday 6th November 2025.

Present

| | |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|
| Dr Antony Jensen | Chairman, MMO Appointee |
| Mr Richard Stride | Vice Chairman, MMO Appointee |
| Dr Simon Cripps | MMO Appointee |
| Ms Elisabeth Bussey-Jones | MMO Appointee |
| Dr Heidi Guille | MMO Appointee |
| Mr Colin Francis | MMO Appointee |
| Mr Stuart Kingston-Turner | Environment Agency |
| Dr Richard Morgan | Natural England |

Principal Deputy Chief Officer (PDCO) Sam Dell, Deputy Chief Officer (DCO) Dr Sarah Birchenough, IFCO’s Ms Hester Churchouse, Ms Celie Mullen, Ms Chelsea Perrins, Mr William Meredith-Davies and Project Officer Ms Imogen Wright were also present. Cllr Paul Fuller, Chairman of the Authority also attended.

Election of Chairman and Vice Chairman for 2025-2026

1. That Dr Jensen be elected as Chairman for the year 2025-2026. This motion was proposed by Dr S Cripps and seconded by Ms E Bussey-Jones. All Members were in favour.
2. That Mr R Stride be elected as Vice-Chairman for the year 2025-2026. This motion was proposed by Ms E Bussey-Jones and seconded by Dr S Cripps. All Members were in favour.

Apologies

3. Apologies for absence were received from CEO Pia Bateman, Mr Neil Hornby (MMO Appointee), Mr Mark Cornwell (MMO Appointee), Mr Gary Wordsworth (MMO Appointee) and Ms Rachel Irish (MMO).

Declarations of interest

4. The following non-pecuniary interests were declared: Dr Simon Cripps (Agenda Item 5b).

Minutes

5. Members considered the Minutes of the meeting held on the 21st August 2025 (Marked A). DCO Birchenough provided an update on Recommendation 45, stating that the Working Group of interested TAC Members to discuss data gathering and analysis in the Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Fishery would be explored in 2026 after all the data had been gathered from the 2025-26 fishing season.

Dr A Jensen noted that under item 58, with reference to the Community Drop-In Surgery to be held on the Isle of Wight, that the date had been required to be changed and would now be held on 13th November 2025.

The minutes were approved by mutual consent.

6. Members considered the Minutes of the Extraordinary meeting of the Technical Advisory Sub-Committee held on the 20th October 2025 (Marked B).

The minutes were approved by mutual consent.

SOUTHERN INSHORE FISHERIES & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE – 6th November 2025

PROGRESS REPORTS

7. Emergent Updates

DCO Birchenough updated Members that an Extraordinary TAC Meeting would take place on Thursday 4th December at 10:00 at the Southern IFCA Office to progress the Black Seabream workstream and that, following receipt of the agenda, any Members who are unable to attend are welcome to feed in with any comments or feedback that they wish to provide which will be read out at the meeting.

DCO Birchenough updated Members in relation to the Solent Scallop Fishery, specifically relating to an article published in that week's edition of the Fishing News, noting that Agenda Item 5c provided a specific update on the process undertaken with regard to a recent review of permit conditions. DCO Birchenough provided a copy of the article for Members to view and emphasised that, from the perspective of Southern IFCA, the review had been successful, being achieved in a short-time frame with significant engagement from permit holders and support for the approach taken, enabling a co-developed proposal to be agreed for additional management intervention in the Solent SCE Fishery ahead of the 2025/26 season to support a sustainable fishery. DCO Birchenough outlined that this process is however, not without its challenges, some of which are illustrated in the article by a minority of stakeholders.

PDCO Dell informed Members that Officers have been carrying out boarding and landing inspections in the fishery and noted that within the SCE fishery one vessel had landed approximately 1 tonne from a single fishing trip and inspected vessels had been landing up to 200kg of Manila clam from a day's fishing. PDCO Dell outlined that the majority of industry have been pleased with the fishery outputs so far and the team will continue to engage and monitor the fishery, including through the monitoring of landings data submitted by permit holders, as the season progresses.

Members discussed whether, in the face of high landings, permit holders would feel that the additional management was not required. PDCO Dell outlined that he did not think this would be the case and the reduced fishing hours had been well received, with no feedback to Officers along those lines to date. Dr S Cripps stated that if vessels are achieving the same catch per vessel as previous seasons but achieving this over a shorter time period then there is a benefit in having reduced hours. Mr R Stride agreed, stating that if catch rates over a shorter timeframe mean that the fishery sustains permit holders for a longer overall period and that there doesn't appear to be a socio-economic impact from the reduced hours then this is positive for the industry.

Members discussed the article, one query relating to whether there was feedback from industry regarding the alternative industry proposal put forward at the Extraordinary TAC Meeting, it was recognised that there was support by the majority of permit holders for the actions taken in the fishery and PDCO Dell reflected that there was also not feedback on this being received on the coast to date. Members discussed the review, supporting the level of consultation and the subsequent process which was undertaken.

PDCO Dell provided an update to Members that on 22nd October 2025, on behalf of Southern IFCA, he and Pia attended an award ceremony in Edinburgh where Southern IFCA were presented with the MSC Ocean Leadership Award, recognising Southern IFCA's outstanding commitment to sustainable fishing and exemplary leadership in advancing the future of our oceans.

PDCO Dell outlined that the select group of judges were particularly impressed by the innovative use of drone technology in Monitoring, Control and Surveillance activities, which has transformed enforcement across Poole Harbour's complex estuarine system and

SOUTHERN INSHORE FISHERIES & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE – 6th November 2025

demonstrates how cutting-edge technology can be responsibly applied in small-scale fisheries to achieve world-class outcomes. By integrating drones into fisheries management, Southern IFCA has delivered a modern, innovative and highly effective approach that ensures the Poole Harbour Clam & Cockle Fishery continues to meet the highest sustainability standards. The judges said that this initiative is a model of leadership, a blueprint for fisheries worldwide, and well deserving of the MSC Ocean Leadership Award. PDCO Dell reflected that this was and continues to be a team effort including Officers and Members and thanked all for their ongoing support.

Members stated their appreciation for the award and thanked all those involved for their hard work.

8. Marine Stewardship Council, Audit of the Poole Clam & Cockle Fishery 2025

IFCO Celie Mullen informed Members that the annual audit of the Poole Clam & Cockle Fishery against the MSC Standard had taken place on 26th September 2025. IFCO Mullen outlined that, as part of the audit, data had been provided to the auditors on stock analysis, compliance & enforcement within the fishery and any updated documents relating to management. IFCO Mullen also outlined that this was the first audit to consider the new Monitoring & Control Plan for Manila clam in the fishery, implemented in 2025, which had given the potential for increased scores for the fishery under the relevant Principle. IFCO Mullen stated that the audit had gone well with no issues identified by the auditors which required further input, the draft report is currently being reviewed by Southern IFCA with the opportunity to provide any comment ahead of its publication.

Dr A Jensen thanked the Officers for their work in this fishery and the level of preparation which is put into the audit each year.

Dr H Guille queried whether the new MSC Standard v.3 was in place yet and whether the fishery would need to do any additional work to meet the new standard. Dr S Cripps commented that the Standard v.3 has been withdrawn at present with a reworked version currently in development, any new version will have a lead in period. DCO Birchenough informed Members that she attends working groups held by MSC on updates to the certifying standard and that it was likely that any new version of the Standard would be applied to the fishery at the point of its next certification in 2028. Dr S Cripps added that the introduction of a new standard would not undermine the current certification of the fishery.

9. Solent Dredge Permit Byelaw, 2025/26 Season

DCO Birchenough outlined to Members the process that had been followed regarding the introduction of additional effort management in the Solent Scallop Fishery ahead of the 2025/26 season to support sustainable fisheries, and that this was reflected in the agenda paperwork for the Extraordinary TAC Meeting on 20th October 2025. DCO Birchenough informed Members that, based on best available evidence, two initial proposals were developed by the Authority which were taken to public consultation, the public consultation receiving input from 80% of applicants for the 2025/26 season across individual responses, group responses and in-person engagement at consultation meetings. DCO Birchenough outlined that through this process there had been a lot of support from industry for the approach being taken by Southern IFCA to support a sustainable scallop fishery.

DCO Birchenough outlined that consultation feedback had been reviewed and summarised, with a lack of support for the two initial proposals and alternative proposals put forward. The consultation also provided information on applicants' intentions to fish during the 2025/26 season which helped inform understandings of potential levels of activity, and socio-economic

SOUTHERN INSHORE FISHERIES & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE – 6th November 2025

information based on potential management options. DCO Birchenough stated that a staged process was subsequently carried out to; 1) identify alternative management options from the consultation, 2) review those options, resulting in the identification of 14 alternative proposals, 3) conduct an Officer feasibility exercise on the 14 alternative proposals, 4) develop co-developed proposals, combining Authority and stakeholder input as well as recognising unintended consequences, and 5) applying a series of material considerations to those options. It was identified that the two co-developed proposals achieved a greater number of material considerations than the original two proposals taken to consultation.

DCO Birchenough outlined that, at each stage, any alternative proposals or elements of proposals which were not taken forward to the next stage were highlighted with a rationale provided as to why these proposals could not be taken forward. DCO Birchenough also outlined that longer-term proposals, although not suitable for incorporation into the current review, were noted including further understandings of SCE populations, for example in relation to predation and larval transport, working with other fisheries including international fisheries to share expertise, and the separating out of SCE into a separate permit from the current Category A Permit.

DCO Birchenough outlined that the two co-developed proposals were taken to the Extraordinary Meeting of the TAC on 20th October 2025, where they were considered by the Authority in conjunction with all best available evidence. The Authority also received representation from an applicant in the SDPB fishery, who put forward an alternative proposal stated as being supported by the majority of applicants who intended to fish for SCE in the coming season. The Authority, on the basis of all available information, proposed a new co-developed proposal which proposed to reduce daily fishing hours in the Solent SCE fishery from 08:00-16:00 to 08:00-14:00, this was agreed by Members at the Extraordinary TAC Meeting.

Applicants for the 2025/26 season were notified of the outcome of the review following the Extraordinary TAC Meeting and the status of their applications. DCO Birchenough stated that the 2025/26 season had started on 1st November and that the majority of Category A Permits had been issued. DCO Birchenough informed Members that Southern IFCA would continue to engage in and monitor the fishery through the 2025/26 season and that a wider review looking at longer-term management of the Solent bivalve fisheries would take place in 2026.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

10. Whelk Population Survey Report 2025

IFCO Mullen presented to Members the outcomes of the 2025 Whelk Population Survey which took place from March-July 2025 involving local commercial fishing vessels operating within key whelk fishing areas in the District: Lyme Bay, Weymouth Bay, Poole Bay and The Solent. IFCO Mullen outlined the purpose of the survey is to identify potential whelk stocks across the District and develop a timeseries dataset to monitor trends in abundance and size frequency between different areas, aiming to establish a robust evidence base to inform and support future management both at a local and national scale.

IFCO Mullen presented the key findings from the 2025 survey, highlighting differences between areas for 2025 and also an analysis of the data against the previous two survey years (2023 and 2024). IFCO Mullen informed Members that there are notable differences observed between areas surveyed which suggesting the potential presence of sub-populations and highlights the complexity around whelk populations in the District, supporting the continued gathering of evidence by this survey to support the development of a timeseries dataset.

Dr S Cripps commented that the report was very good and clearly set out. Dr Cripps raised a

SOUTHERN INSHORE FISHERIES & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE – 6th November 2025

question in relation to length frequency data and whether the data for Weymouth Bay, showing a greater number of larger individuals was indicative of a difference in fishing pressure compared to other areas or whether it was a function of the fishery removing the peak of individuals between 50-65mm which is seen in other areas. It was discussed that as the timeseries dataset develops, patterns and any changes between years will become more evident. DCO Birchenough commented that, at present, there is not enough understanding of variations in fishing effort within the whelk fishery to attribute patterns in effort to the survey outputs but that there are multiple data sources for fishing effort in these fisheries that could be interrogated in the future to help develop this understanding. Members also discussed whether slight differences in fishing gear may be contributing to variations between different areas.

Mr R Stride asked whether any observations had been made of differing results from differences in soak time and whether this had been accounted for. IFCO Mullen outlined that differences in soak times are being seen within the fishery and that the CPUE aims to counteract the soak time by including a time standardisation. It was noted that different soak times may affect the quantity of whelk caught due to changes in the tide, availability of bait and the capacity of the pot.

Dr H Guille commented that differences in results are likely to be related to differences in gear type and operation, noting that this was reflected in the report, but that there needed to be caution in attributing results to influencing factors rather than bias in the data. DCO Birchenough outlined that the survey was based on fishers collecting samples as part of normal fishing practice and that there will be variation in operations, which is recognised, but it is determined that this is partially offset by fishers using pots which are adapted to the conditions of each site and optimised to maximise catch potential in line with specific environmental conditions. The repeatability of the methodology allows for comparisons to be made over time recognising the caveats that exist within that methodology.

Members also discussed other related whelk survey work including genetic surveys from other areas which showed differences over small spatial scales and size at sexual maturity research from the District, which showed a larger SOM in Weymouth Bay than The Solent and potential implications for management. Dr A Jensen queried whether the survey work could be expanded to look at SOM, IFCO Mullen responded that engagement was taking place with academic institutions to explore beneficial further uses for the samples following the Southern IFCA analysis.

11. Fisheries Management Plans

Project Officer Wright provided an overview of the matters captured in the Executive Summary, outlining newly published documents and Defra blog posts which provide further detail to the updates provided.

Dr A Jensen commented that the Crab and Lobster Implementation Group were starting to think about publishing potential management options for crab and lobster under the relevant FMPs. Dr Jensen stated that the Crab and Lobster Science Group had expressed their wish to see any potential options ahead of publication so they could be reviewed with respect to available scientific evidence. Members discussed that Defra were exploring implementation of an increase in Minimum Conservation Reference Size (MCRS) for lobster and a prohibition on soft-shell crab either during late 2025 or early 2026 with discussion on the mechanism which may be used for this including licence variations or a Statutory Instrument. Members discussed that communication and engagement will be key for any new measures proposed to be introduced at a national level.

SOUTHERN INSHORE FISHERIES & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE – 6th November 2025

12. Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Byelaw Pilot Mid-Season Stock Observer Program

IFCO Mullen provided an overview of the outcomes of the pilot Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Fishery Mid-Season Stock Observer Programme, introduced in 2025 under the In-Season Monitoring Programme of the Monitoring & Control Plan for Manila clam in the Poole Harbour dredge fishery.

IFCO Mullen outlined that 36 tows were completed across 12 permitted vessels which had enabled the collection of samples to provide CPUE and length frequency data. The data from the survey indicated that the increase in the availability of over MCRS Manila clam in the fishery, potentially driven by warmer waters and increased growth during the summer, does not appear to be being impacted by fishing activity to a point where the increase in the proportion of the population cannot be seen, even in the area showing the highest levels of fishing activity. It was noted that it may be that additional growth has resulted in individuals reaching a size where they are more likely to be captured by a dredge but remain below the MCRS, with further data collection required to explore this further. Overall, the levels of Manila clam seen in the pilot mid-season survey showed a positive picture and indicated that, at current levels of fishing, the population seems sustainable by the midway point of the season.

IFCO Mullen noted that the Mid-Season Observer Programme provided a valuable opportunity for collaboration between Southern IFCA and permit holders of the PHDPB Fishery and thanked all those who participated in and supported the data collection efforts.

Dr A Jensen commented that the report was very good and clearly articulated the outcomes of the Pilot Program. Dr Jensen queried how fishers had responded to the Program, IFCO Mullen stated that fishers had been happy to be involved and had voiced their support for being able to contribute to data collection for the fishery to support a wider evidence base.

Dr S Cripps asked what the resource requirement was for carrying out the Program. DCO Birchenough outlined that the Program was delivered over 2 days using FPV Endeavour and that other deliverables were completed at the same time, for example monitoring of compliance within the fishery. Members discussed whether the resource input from Officers had been offset by the benefits of conducting the Program. It was outlined that the resource input had been beneficial, with the ability to collect data that complemented the annual data from the Poole Harbour Bivalve Survey, allowing for comparisons between the pre-season and mid-season point, and data which indicated differences in the fishery both spatially and between vessels. In addition, the additional engagement opportunity created with permit holders in the fishery and the ability to share expertise in fishing practice and data collection was very positive. It was outlined that it is Southern IFCA's intention to continue the Program in subsequent years.

13. Date of Next Meeting

To confirm the date of the next meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee on the 5th February 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 15:40.

Chairman:

Date:

SOUTHERN INSHORE FISHERIES & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE – 4th December 2025

Minutes of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), held in the meeting room at the Southern IFCA office in Poole at **14:00 on Thursday 4th December 2025**.

Present

| | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Dr Antony Jensen | Chairman, MMO Appointee |
| Mr Richard Stride | Vice Chairman, MMO Appointee |
| Mr Gary Wordsworth | MMO Appointee |
| Dr Heidi Guille | MMO Appointee |
| Mr Colin Francis | MMO Appointee |
| Mr Stuart Kingston-Turner | Environment Agency |
| Dr Richard Morgan | Natural England |
| Mr Gordon Chittenden | Marine Management Organisation |
| | |
| Ms Pia Bateman | Chief Executive Officer (CEO) |

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

Ms Hannah Rudd (Angling Trust) attended virtually in the public gallery.

Apologies

1. Apologies for absence were received from Ms E Bussey-Jones (MMO Appointee), Dr S Cripps (MMO Appointee), Mr N Hornby (MMO Appointee), Mr M Cornwell (MMO Appointee) and Mr Stuart Kingston-Turner (Environment Agency).

Declarations of interest

2. The following non-pecuniary interests were declared: Mr R Stride (Agenda Items 4 & 5), Mr G Wordsworth (Agenda Items 4 & 5), Dr Richard Morgan (Agenda Items 4 & 5).

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

4. The BSB Management Package: Policy & Supporting Documents

DCO Birchenough informed Members that the Policy and Supporting Documents provided were intended to be read together, providing transparency and clarity of process to deliver and implement the management intentions for black seabream (BSB) within three Dorset MCZs. DCO Birchenough outlined that the documents reflected a holistic delivery of two parallel policy objectives which allows for the achievement of Southern IFCA's legal duties under section 154 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 ('MaCAA') and to work with the Dorset community to facilitate improved understandings of BSB across the three MCZs.

DCO Birchenough provided a brief summary of each of the three policy documents and outlined that the supporting documents, the Black Seabream Literature Review and the Black Seabream Site Specific Evidence Packages, also formed part of the management package, underpinning the conservation assessments. DCO Birchenough outlined that the policy and supporting documents would be made available as part of the BSB management package and that Southern IFCA would deliver management for fisheries across the three Dorset MCZs in line with the outlined intention of process and delivery.

The CEO thanked Members for attending the meeting and emphasised the importance of the work on BSB within Dorset MCZs, highlighting its complexity and uniqueness. The CEO reflected on how the workstream had be re-routed based on improved understandings of the

SOUTHERN INSHORE FISHERIES & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE – 4th December 2025

fishery, the species, risk and gear/feature interactions, the route of designation of the species, the Conservation Objectives and the Southern IFCA's legal duties. The CEO outlined the need to resolve a large amount of work over several years into concise policy documents which are more accessible to a wider audience.

Reflecting on the uniqueness of the workstream, the CEO detailed that this stemmed from the need to consider management for a designated feature within an MCZ where the designation has been through a less familiar route, namely that BSB are neither rare nor threatened by the presence of fishing activity but that they are of ecological significance. In addition, the designation of the species in 2019 for the three Dorset MCZs was not based on a condition assessment and both the species and relevant fisheries remain data poor, with no metrics available to aid understandings of the health of BSB fisheries across those MCZs, both before designation and to date. The CEO also noted that predominantly, to date, Southern IFCA's management within MPAs has considered the commercial sector, and that, for this workstream there was a need to consider a wider range of sectors, with less familiarity in the application of management to the recreational sea angling and charter sectors. The CEO reflected that in learning more about these sectors through this work, the intrinsic importance of BSB beyond their designated status had become apparent, stretching into the community as a whole across Dorset and beyond, as well as being nationally important socioeconomically alongside designated status.

The CEO stated that the development of management presented at the meeting is a success story, aligned with the national IFCA Vision and the Southern IFCA Vision as well as being aligned with other legal duties. The CEO reflected that the Authority are working hard in the co-development of management in fisheries across the District, part of the BSB workstream being a good example of turning this from theory into practice and providing a blueprint for future work in other fisheries across the organisation.

The CEO stated that the workstream applies a dual legal approach with two legal functions applied in parallel. The resulting management solutions, with the support of the Dorset community, champions proportionate, holistic management which collectively seeks to improve understandings of BSB populations and meets two defined objectives while remaining true to the IFCA function. The CEO highlighted that there is a consensus across all sectors as a unified collective to protect BSB for the common good with the proposed management providing a solution to beginning this process.

Dr A Jensen thanked Officers for the coherence and conciseness of the documentation included in the agenda. Mr G Wordsworth commented on the quality of the workstream outputs and the development of a coherent solution which achieved community support whilst meeting all the relevant objectives.

Dr Richard Morgan set out the current position from Natural England (NE). Dr Morgan stated that NE had reviewed earlier drafts of the relevant conservation assessments and supporting documents and felt that there were some areas where further clarity and rationale was required, which was subsequently provided by Southern IFCA. Dr Morgan reflected on the uniqueness and complexity of the workstream and that Southern IFCA had done as much as possible in providing documentation to support the management proposed. NE aims to be consistent in their provision of advice, considering that advice has been provided on BSB elsewhere, for example for Kingmere MCZ. Dr Morgan commented specifically on the defined breeding season for BSB and that, notwithstanding agreements made previously by the Authority, NE's advice is that March to July should be used as the breeding season to account for the early aggregation stage, which would be consistent with NE Advice on Operations for the three MCZs. NE support that the management for bottom towed fishing gear (BTFG) will further Conservation Objectives with respect to protecting the supporting habitat from damage

SOUTHERN INSHORE FISHERIES & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE – 4th December 2025

and avoiding disturbance, but feel that for recreational sea angling seasonal spatial closures should be included to address the impact of disturbance from this gear type due to the data gaps which exist on the effort levels and the potential impact at a level 'likely significantly' to affect BSB. Dr Morgan stated that the word 'significantly' in the Conservation Objectives is important as it acknowledges that there can be a level of disturbance but when that becomes significant there can be impacts, however this is complex as NE are not able to state at what level impacts would be considered significant and it may not be possible to reach a point where this is known. On this basis NE advise that there needs to be precaution applied through the application of seasonal spatial closures, consistent with advice provided to other authorities. Dr Morgan stated that the IFCA's need to balance environmental protection with the socioeconomics of the industry is understood by NE and that it is recognised why, following the consultation and the impact assessment, the use of seasonal spatial closures is not a preferred approach by the Authority. Dr Morgan stated that in terms of the relevant conservation assessments, NE are not able to agree that the measures in place for recreational sea angling are sufficient to further the Conservation Objectives but, because of existing evidence gaps, support the commitment to further the evidence base and recognise that the additional measures proposed or already in place do contribute to furthering the Conservation Objectives. NE also recognise the commitment to evidence gathering which they would welcome being part of, and the commitment to review management with the ability to be adaptive if required. Dr Morgan stated that NE would abstain in voting but noted that NE are not objecting.

Dr A Jensen thanked Dr Morgan for NE's considered and positive input.

ITEMS FOR DECISION

5. Primary Policy Objective: Satisfying Section 154 of the MaCAA

DCO Birchenough outlined the Primary Policy Objective, namely to satisfy section 154 of the MaCAA by furthering the Conservation Objectives within each of the three Dorset MCZs. DCO Birchenough stated that the furthering of the Conservation Objectives was from a baseline position of no management and in this case related to a quantification of existing management measures in place in the Southern IFCA District.

DCO Birchenough informed Members that the recommendation is supported by the Black Seabream Marine Conservation Zone Assessment Package, which goes through a staged process from screening through to Part A and Part B assessments with the addition of a gear risk assessment, determined as appropriate for determining the level of risk posed by different gear types to designated features. The conclusion of the Assessment Package is that appropriate mitigation measures are in place through existing management under the BTFG Byelaw 2023, the Southern IFCA Minimum Conservation Reference Size (MCRS) Byelaw and external spatial restrictions in place for the Lulworth Ranges, providing a range of spatial and technical tools which are collectively furthering the Conservation Objectives for the MCZs.

DCO Birchenough provided specifics on the existing management measures outlining that the highest risk gear type, BTFG, had been eliminated from 100% of two of the MCZs, Poole Rocks and Southbourne Rough, and across 93% of the Purbeck Coast MCZ, noting that the remaining area does not contain habitat relevant to the BSB designated feature, which is supported by NE. This is complemented by the enforcement of the MCRS for BSB of 23cm, applicable to all commercial and recreational fishers across all gear types and the entirety of the supply chain. The external spatial closures in place periodically for the Lulworth ranges equates to 32% of the relevant breeding season across 33% of the footprint largest MCZ, Purbeck Coast, this can be extended to 54% when the outer ranges area is also closed. These closures apply to all sea users encompassing all commercial and recreational fishing activity.

SOUTHERN INSHORE FISHERIES & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE – 4th December 2025

DCO Birchenough outlined that these measures are providing protections to BSB over and above the breeding season as all measures apply year-round and also, for the MCRS regulation, more widely than the footprint of the MCZs, applying District-wide. Therefore, this combination of management tools allows the Conservation Objectives for the three MCZs to be furthered and accordingly there is no risk to hindering the achievement of the Conservation Objectives, thus satisfying the Primary Policy Objective.

DCO Birchenough informed Members that Formal Advice had been sought from NE on the Conservation Assessment Package and that further information had been sent by Southern IFCA on two matters raised by NE relating to the breeding season and recreational sea angling. DCO Birchenough outlined that the NE Formal Advice letter and the Southern IFCA response had been provided to Members as part of the agenda item. DCO Birchenough informed Members that a subsequent meeting had been held with NE where these points were discussed in more detail and NE then provided a summary position which Dr Morgan has set out verbally at this meeting. DCO Birchenough outlined that the Conservation Assessment Package had been updated to reflect additional clarity around the two points raised by NE, relating to the District-specific best available evidence on BSB breeding season which had informed the decision to proceed with April to July, and newly emerging evidence from tagging work in the Sussex IFCA District which also supported this as being an appropriate seasonal window. DCO Birchenough also referenced recreational sea angling, and that more context and clarity had been added to the Conservation Assessment Package on how the gear risk assessment was carried out.

Mr G Wordsworth discussed that the statutory MCRS of 23cm under the Southern IFCA MCRS Byelaw is small and queried when Southern IFCA may be in a position to review the regulated MCRS applied within the District. The CEO outlined that the Southern IFCA can take action to review a regulation at any point, if underpinned by the appropriate evidence, and that the direction of management for BSB will provide evidence to help guide that process. The CEO outlined that the current development and implementation of Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs) will also inform this process and that further understandings of national direction on MCRS will help support appropriate resource allocation within Southern IFCA to District-specific reviews.

Dr H Guille discussed the potential uncertainty over the spawning season and asked Dr Morgan for clarity on the evidence supporting the inclusion of March. Dr Morgan responded that there is some published evidence that includes reference to March, including that relevant to the District, and that it is related to the aggregation of the species not necessarily observations of direct breeding. Dr Guille asked what the rationale had been for the Authority not to include March on a precautionary basis. DCO Birchenough responded that the Authority had considered March to July as an option alongside April to July in conjunction with the best available evidence and had resolved to take forward April to July based on that evidence. The CEO added that, in making this determination Members had considered the evidence alongside considering proportion and precaution in the context of furthering the Conservation Objectives.

Dr Guille queried whether the evidence gathering through the Co-Developed Principles would facilitate an evidence base on which any future determinations to consider including March could be made. DCO Birchenough outlined that the data collection programme, as one of the Co-Developed Principles, is designed to run year-round allowing for data collection both within and outside of the breeding season to facilitate comprehensive understandings of BSB within the MCZs underpinning an adaptive management approach. Dr A Jensen commented that there was also still evidence to come from the Angling for Sustainability Fishing Industry Science Partnership (FISP) Project which will also aid understandings of BSB movements in and around the MCZs. Dr Guille suggested that wording could be made clearer in the

SOUTHERN INSHORE FISHERIES & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE – 4th December 2025

documentation as to the intention for year-round data collection to support an evidence base and an adaptive management approach.

Dr A Jensen read out a comment which had been provided by Member Mr S Kingston-Turner, who was unable to attend the meeting. Mr Kingston-Turner discussed that he was supportive of the Policy Objectives but sought further clarity on how recreational sea angling was assessed as a medium risk over commercial net and rod & line fishing which was assessed as low risk under the gear risk assessment. Mr Kingston-Turner referenced the management measures already employed by the charter sector in relation to bag limits and increased MCRS, and ongoing studies indicating that released rod & line caught fish have the potential to return to their nests. It was queried whether retention of BSB by the recreational angling sector, currently reported in supporting documentation by number, could be reported by weight to compare to the commercial rod & line fishery. Mr Kingston-Turner stated that showing a heightened risk by recreational rod & line fishing may lead to increased management of the sector over commercial fishing activities and may influence NE opposition to this activity occurring within the MCZs.

DCO Birchenough responded that the classification of recreational rod & line as medium risk and commercial rod & line as low risk is related to observed levels of activity which currently take place within the MCZs. Levels of commercial rod & line activity are very low in both observations of the activity and catch levels for BSB as a target species based on best available evidence. The levels of activity observed for recreational activity, across both private and charter operators, are at a higher level and this forms the basis for the increased risk level from low to medium. It is recognised and captured in the Conservation Assessment Package, that there are mitigative measures already employed by the recreational sector and it is recognised that the overall impact, including the understanding of newer best available evidence on potential resumption of nesting activity following catch and release, is applicable to rod & line across all sectors and has been considered as such. The risk exercise is aimed to consider all relevant elements; however, the outcome is based on levels of activity rather than there being a greater impact. The development of management under the secondary policy objective does not seek to impact the recreational sector over the commercial sector with all measures, excepting the recreational bag limit, applying to all sectors. DCO Birchenough also outlined that weight data for recreational fisheries may be possible to collect through the proposed data collection programme, at present it is difficult for recreational fishers to record data in this way as it is not a standard reporting metric.

The recommendation was proposed by Dr H Guille, seconded by Mr G Wordsworth. 5 Members voted in favour, Mr R Stride and Dr R Morgan abstained.

Resolved

6. That, in combination, existing statutory spatial and technical measures applicable across the 3 Dorset MCZs are collectively 'furthering' the Conservation Objectives of the sites.

7. Secondary Policy Objective: Co-Developed Principles

DCO Birchenough outlined that through this process Members had considered whether there were additional management opportunities relevant to the BSB fishery which could both complement the protections afforded by the existing management as well as support increased understandings of BSB fisheries over time. DCO Birchenough stated that in the absence of a condition assessment for the three Dorset MCZs at the point of designation and to the present day, and the concurrent development of a Seabreams FMP, Members

SOUTHERN INSHORE FISHERIES & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE – 4th December 2025

committed to the development of a shared principles model with the Dorset Community to explore additional opportunities.

DCO Birchenough outlined that, as duties under section 154 have been deemed to be met through existing management, the consideration of any additional management is underpinned by the Southern IFCA's duties under section 153 of the MaCAA. The process and development of the shared principles model is underpinned by Policy Drivers and Headline Objectives, to ensure clarity and transparency in the rationale for the Secondary Policy Objective. DCO Birchenough detailed the five-stage process undertaken to develop the Co-Developed Principles and the multiple opportunities provided during this process for engagement and consultation with the Dorset Community, including a large-scale informal consultation which saw the greatest level of participation by stakeholders in any informal consultation run by Southern IFCA to date. DCO Birchenough thanked the community both in Dorset and more widely for their engagement, responses and constructive inputs through the process and reflected on the benefits and positive dialogue that had come from this.

DCO Birchenough outlined that, considering the outputs of the informal consultation, Members of the TAC resolved at the meeting in August 2025 to take forward the Co-Developed Principles with no amendments. DCO Birchenough outlined the Co-Developed Principles and their application as being voluntary, applying during the period 1st April to 31st July and applying within the three Dorset MCZs, with the introduction of an MCRS of 28cm a Maximum Conservation Reference Size (MaxCRS) of 38cm, a 6 fish per person per day recreational bag limit, fishing and handling guidance and a data collection programme which would extend to being run year-round and apply to all sectors as well as including elements of fisher-independent data.

DCO Birchenough outlined that the implementation of the Co-Developed Principles across all three MCZs is a suitable management mechanism to both satisfy and facilitate progress towards achieve the Secondary Policy Objective, to advance understandings of BSB fisheries over time, satisfying both the Policy Drivers and the Headline Objectives.

DCO Birchenough detailed that the intention for the year 1 implementation of the Co-Developed Principles is to focus on engagement and awareness, seeking compliance with the Principles. DCO Birchenough referenced the suite of engagement tools that can be used in this regard, including engaging with partner organisations such as the Angling Trust. It is proposed that the first annual review takes place following the conclusion of the breeding season in 2026, seeking to incorporate community feedback on the application of the principles and the overall health of the fishery, analysis of data collected through the data collection programme, compliance & enforcement metrics, data from external sources, outputs from the FMP process and any emerging scientific evidence. DCO Birchenough outlined that an annual review would be carried out each year up to 2029 and a wider review would be carried out in 2030 which would incorporate any necessary revisions to the Conservation Assessment Package, including any updated NE Formal Advice or Condition Assessments which may have been completed for those sites. DCO Birchenough stated that the Authority could act to review management in response to any of the annual reviews if appropriate under defined processes.

Mr R Stride queried whether compliance with the voluntary measures would be considered through the annual reviews, stating views expressed through the consultation on a preference for statutory rather than voluntary measures. DCO Birchenough provided context on the consultation, that only a low number of respondents referenced the need for statutory measures over voluntary measures and explained that the ability is there for the Authority to explore statutory measures if it was felt the evidence supported this, compliance & enforcement outcomes being one source of evidence feeding into annual reviews. Mr C

SOUTHERN INSHORE FISHERIES & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE – 4th December 2025

Francis commented that recreational sea anglers would prefer measures to be statutory to support enforcement and embedding of measures for example in charter vessels enforcing measures on their vessels. Mr Gordon Chittenden commented that, having been involved in the development of the Seabreams FMP, the guidance from Defra is that they are keen to see the exploration of voluntary measures first to allow for the development of an evidence base to support any further intervention. The CEO reflected that through the co-development approach there is a sense of ownership provided to the community which can help facilitate the achievement of shared goals.

Dr R Morgan asked for clarity on whether the review process could include consideration of the addition of March to the breeding season. DCO Birchenough outlined that best available evidence from all relevant sources would feed into the review process and that it could be explored in the event that the evidence supports that consideration.

Dr A Jensen read out a comment provided by Mr S Kingston-Turner who stated that he was supportive of the proposed fishery and handling guidance which is very comprehensive.

Mr G Wordsworth discussed the resource requirements of annually reviewing the Co-Developed Principles and options for funding. The CEO outlined that management of MPAs falls within the Southern IFCA's duties and therefore funding couldn't be explored in that respect. The CEO recognised the resource requirement and also the extended input from fishers which is hoped to come through data collection in particular, outlining Southern IFCA's intention to work in partnership with other agencies and bodies to achieve collective benefit.

Mr Gordon Chittenden commented on the level of detail which had gone into the process and development of the Co-Developed Principles and that this provided an excellent base on which to build continued understandings of BSB fisheries.

Dr H Guille recommended that reference to the data collection programme being year-round should be added to the data collection forms and queried whether further engagement materials would be available to reflect the wider Co-Developed Principles in addition to the leaflet specific to the fishing and handling guidance. DCO Birchenough outlined that the guidance leaflet reflects one of the Co-Developed Principles and that the wider engagement materials detailed in Policy Document 3 would be utilised to provide information on the Co-Developed Principles as a whole.

Dr Guille discussed the proposed data collection forms, referencing the inclusion of the number of BSB caught under the MCRS and above the MaxCRS which might be retained. This will be added into the reporting form for fisher-dependent data as well as being part of fisher-independent data collection. PDCO Dell discussed the positive abilities for Officers to collect fisher-independent data and the range of mechanisms available to collect information on the relevant fisheries. PDCO Dell also reflected that stakeholders have been positive in working with Officers to collect data and facilitate observations. The CEO emphasised that this work would form a priority workstream into the new financial year.

The recommendation was proposed by Mr G Wordsworth, seconded by Mr Colin Francis. 6 Members voted in favour, Mr R Stride abstained.

Resolved

8. That the Co-Developed Principles are approved for application across the three Dorset MCZs in 2026.

SOUTHERN INSHORE FISHERIES & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE – 4th December 2025

9. Date of Next Meeting

To confirm the date of the next meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee on the 5th February 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 11:27.

Chairman:

Date:

DRAFT

Solent Dredge Permit Fishery 2025/26 Season – Status Update Paper For Information

A. Purpose

To provide Members with an update on the Solent scallop (SCE) dredge fishery, as managed under the Solent Dredge Permit Byelaw (SDPB) Category A Permits, following a reduction of daily fishing hours by 2 hours, introduced via an updated permit condition in November 2025.

1.0 Background

Following consideration of data from the Southern IFCA Solent Scallop Survey 2025 at a Members Working Group on the 9th October 2025, officers explored the options available to reduce effort in the SCE fishery by c.48%. These options were considered by the permit holders.

Following a period of consultation, at an Extraordinary TAC in November, Members resolved to introduce a reduction in fishing effort via a reduction in the daily fishing hours from 08:00-1600 to **08:00-14:00**. A full list of management measures can be found [here](#)

2.0 Permit Holders

- To date 40 Solent Permits have been issued, of which:
 - In November 2025 **25 vessels harvested SCE (63% participation in fishery)**
 - In December 2025 **18 vessels harvested SCE (45% participation in fishery)**
- This compares to previous seasons:
 - In November: between 48% (21/22 season) and 56% (22/23 season) participation
 - In December: between 42% (24/25 season) and 61% (21/22 season) participation

3.0 Monitoring and Control November 2025 to 25th Jan 2026

Southern IFCA have undertaken the following patrols between 1st November 2025 and 25th January 2026 (*Comparative figures are provided for previous seasons, noting these figures represent the period 1st November – 31st March*):

| | Shore | Sea | Drone | Total |
|------------------|-----------|-----------|----------|-----------|
| 2025-2026 | 18 | 13 | 8 | 39 |
| <i>2024-2025</i> | <i>10</i> | <i>19</i> | <i>6</i> | <i>35</i> |
| <i>2023-2024</i> | <i>9</i> | <i>13</i> | <i>0</i> | <i>22</i> |

4.0 SCE Fleet Non-Compliance & Enforcement Actions

| | MCRS | Curfew | BTFG Incursion | Pre-season |
|------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------|
| 2025-2026 | 3 (VWx2, 1xRFP) | 1 (1xFAP £1,000) | 3 (1xFAP £1,000, 2xRFP) | |
| <i>2024-2025</i> | <i>1</i> (VW) | | | <i>1</i> (AL) |
| <i>2023-2024</i> | <i>2</i> | | | |

VW: Verbal Warning, AL: Advisory Letter, OCF: Ongoing Case File, FAP: Fixed Administrative Penalty, RFP: Referred for prosecution, MCRS: Minimum Conservation Reference Size.

- To date, non-compliance in the SCE fishery has been identified across 5 vessels, with 2 vessels not complying on 2 occasions.
- All enforcement actions are undertaken in accordance with the Southern IFCA [Compliance & Enforcement Framework](#), which ensures a fair, effective and proportionate approach to compliance.

5.0 Catch Return Data for SCE November and December

The following provides the catch data for this fishery, as provided by Permit Holders, as total tonnage landed:

| | 2025/2026 | 2024/2025 | 2023/2024 |
|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| November | 113.5t | 172.7t | 186.5t |
| December | 58.3t | 79.5t | 94.3t |

6.0 LPUE (kg/hr/vessel) for SCE November and December

The LPUE catch data for this fishery, as provided by Permit Holders:

| | 2025/2026 | 2024/2025 | 2023/2024 |
|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| November | 3.18 | 4.01 | 8.92 |
| December | 3.62 | 3.91 | 7.45 |

7.0 Wider Contexts

- November 2025 saw the highest proportion of permitted fishers participating in the SCE fishery compared to all previous seasons, however for December 2025 the proportion was within the previously seen range.
- There is an early indication that catch levels this year are lower when compared to previous, with the overall tonnage lower than the previous two seasons for both November and December 2025. At a vessel level, both November and December also showed a lower LPUE (which accounts for differences in hours fished and number of active vessels) than the previous two seasons, although LPUE for December 2025 is increased from November 2025.
- IFCOs have a greater range of tools available to support detection of non-compliance via Themis, where IFCOs have used Themis to view I-VMS (Inshore Vessel Monitoring Systems) on under 12m fishing vessels this season which has supported detections of non-compliance and enhanced monitoring of the fleet, and use of drones, when compared to previous seasons.
- BTFG incursions and MCRS non-compliance could suggest less sizeable and/or available stock on the ground in permitted areas.
- Indications from industry as of the end of January is that permitted fishers are moving from fishing for SCE to fishing for Manila clam (CMM), the rationale for this is not clear but anecdotally information is that SCE remains on the ground and the change in target stock is not driven by low stock levels but could be that SCE is harder to find where as CMM appears to be readily available and easier to catch in quantity, the price for CMM is currently £6 per kilo.

8.0 Ongoing Actions 26 Jan – 31st March 2026

- IFCOs will continue to work in accordance with high risk, intelligence led tasking.
- The Mid-Season SCE Survey is scheduled to take place week commencing 9th February 2026, this survey aims to capture catch per unit effort (CPUE) and length frequency data at the mid-season point to complement data gathered in the pre- and post-season surveys.
- Mid-season catch sampling will be explored as part of the wider survey programme in February 2026, with the aim to gather CPUE data from a range of active fishing vessels across a range of spatial areas. This data will allow greater understanding of CPUE variations within the fishery at the mid-season point, as well as allow for comparisons to fisher-dependent LPUE data. This methodology will facilitate range of permit holders to participate in data collection programme.
- Southern IFCA attended a Cefas/IFCA SCE Workshop in January to discuss SCE survey methods and the potential for further development of inshore survey methods. The subsequent outputs are ongoing, with consideration of the potential to increase the range of data collected within the current survey programme to align data collection with the national Cefas survey and other IFCA surveys, aiming to facilitate the integration of inshore fisheries data into the national picture which is being used to inform FMP implementation.

9.0 Actions post Season (1st April 2026 onwards)

- Following the end of March, a full analysis of the 2025/26 season will be carried out.
- IFCOs will commence a wider review of the SDPB fishery in 2026 to encompass consideration of a longer-term management plan for SCE and other bivalves.

Net Fishing Byelaw: Year 2 Review

Report by IFCO Mullen

A. Purpose

For Members to consider the [1] outcomes of the Year 2 annual review of flexible permit conditions, permit fees and limitations on the number of permits under the Southern IFCA Net Fishing Byelaw, and [2] consider a recommendation to introduce a minimum cap on interactions with salmonids under the Monitoring & Control Plan, following discussion at a Member Working Group on the 8th January 2026 prior to a second round of consultation.

B. Recommendations

1. That Members consider that **no changes** are required to be made to flexible Permit Conditions, permit fees or limitations on the number of permits for Year 3.
2. That Members consider the **addition of a minimum cap on interactions with salmonids** under the Monitoring and Control Plan.
3. That Members note the subsequent updates to the relevant Policy Documents

C. Annexes

- **Annex 1:** Net Permit Area Monitoring and Control Plan, 2026 Update Sections 2.1 & 2.1.3
- **Annex 2:** Consultation Letters to Permit Holders (5th Dec 2025 & 23rd Jan 2026)

1.0 Background

- The Southern IFCA Net Fishing Byelaw¹ (NFB) defines three Net Permit Areas (NPA) in the District: Christchurch Harbour NPA, Southampton Water NPA and River Hamble NPA. A Net Permit for each NPA has associated Net Permit Conditions which provide flexible management measures for each NPA².
- A total of 13 Net Permits were issued across 8 permit holders under the NFB for the period 1st March 25 to 31st March 26 (Year 2 Permit Period).
- Under paragraph 26 of the NFB, the Authority (or a sub-committee thereof authorised by the Authority to do so) are required to review the suitability of flexible permit conditions, permit fees and permit numbers annually or, if required under paragraph (39), following the temporary closure of an NPA.
- Paragraph 37 of the NFB sets out the review procedure and lists the categories of available evidence which may be included to inform the Authority's decision-making process, which includes any consultation responses, alongside regard to the duties and obligations under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009, the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.
- The current review represents the second annual review of permits under the NFB, considering evidence relating to Year 2 Net Permits.

2.0 Key Considerations: Available Evidence Feeding into the Year Two Annual Review

- The NPA Monitoring and Control Plan (M&CP) informs the annual management of the permitted net fisheries ensuring that the Authority are using the best available evidence regarding understandings of interactions between net fishing practices and migratory salmonids within the District's harbours and estuaries.
 - The M&CP includes an (1) On-Site Monitoring Programme which provides triggers for different control measures based upon the type of data collected, in addition to (2) specified indicators of salmonid health over time, as provided by partner organisations.
 - In Year 2: **no Trigger Threshold Levels (TTL)** were reached under any of the 5 monitoring components, as set out in the On-Site Monitoring Programme (see S2.1.5 in Annex 1 to this report).
 - Data providing information on salmonid health over time 'Salmon Stock and Fisheries in England and Wales Annual Report 2024 (all rivers)' saw:
 - For Southampton Water- no change in the TTL interactions of 4
 - For Christchurch Harbour, a reduction of TTL interactions from 8 to 7.

¹ [Southern-IFCA-Net-Fishing-Byelaw.pdf](#), confirmed by the Secretary of State on 17th August 2023.

² [Southampton-Water-Net-Permit-Conditions.pdf](#), [River-Hamble-Net-Permit-Conditions.pdf](#), [Christchurch-Harbour-Net-Permit-Conditions.pdf](#)

| | Year 1 | | Year 2 | | Year 3 | |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| | <i>Southampton Water (inc. River Hamble)</i> | <i>Christchurch Harbour</i> | <i>Southampton Water (inc. River Hamble)</i> | <i>Christchurch Harbour</i> | <i>Southampton Water (inc. River Hamble)</i> | <i>Christchurch Harbour</i> |
| TTL: Interactions | 10 | 10 | 4 | 8 | 4 | 7 |
| Best available data | 2018-2020 | 2017-2020 | 2021-2023 | 2021-2023 | Minimum Cap reached | 2022-2024 |

- A consultation with Net Permit Holders occurred between 5th December 2025 and 23rd January 2026 via two stages of email correspondence (Annex 2) in addition to ongoing IFCO engagement.
 - Permit Holders were invited to consider both aspects of the review ([1] permit conditions, permit fees and permit numbers, [2] introduction of a minimum salmonid interactions cap):
 - Specific to the parameters of the consultation - one Permit Holder asked for a reduction in the cost of an annual permit and another Permit Holder provided a response which noted the permit conditions for the forthcoming season.

3.0 Review Outcomes – Permit Conditions, Permit Fees & Permit Numbers

- Following a review of best available evidence, it is proposed that **no changes are required** to be made to flexible permit conditions, permit fees or the number of permits for the forthcoming season.
 - The number of Net Permits available will remain at 17, as compatible with the outcomes of the Conservation Assessments for the NFB.
 - The calculations informing the cost of a Net Permit continue to accurately represent Authority expenditure in managing the NPA.

4.0 Review Outcomes – Update to Monitoring & Control Plan

- Following a review of best available evidence, it is recommended that **a minimum cap of 4 interactions be set over time, relevant to all NPAs.**
 - This recognises that the general decline in salmonid health is likely a result of multiple factors beyond that of the inshore fishing fleet.
 - This will allow for the net fisheries to remain active (working up to the minimum cap) without any unnecessary hiatus in fishing activity which could have a detrimental impact on the socioeconomics of the net fishing community.
 - In determining the minimum cap level, Members of the Authority considered Year 2 TTL interaction levels and that this would be maintained in the NPA with the lower TTL interaction for Year 3.
 - The Authority recognises the need to operate in accordance with the Policy Objectives which were defined for the Inshore Netting Review and continue to inform management of net fisheries within harbours and estuaries. The introduction of a minimum cap ensures that, based on best available data, the Authority are able to provide protection to migratory salmonids as they transit through the Districts harbours and estuaries, further the conservation objectives of Designated Sites and balance the social and economic benefit of net fisheries. The Authority will continue to be informed by best available evidence in this regard to ensure that Policy Objectives continue to be met, reflecting the Authority’s legislative duties.

5.0 Next Steps

- All relevant Policy Documents will be updated and shared on all relevant channels.
- Permit Holders will be notified in writing following the outcome of the TAC on 5th February 2026 and subsequently be provided with information regarding the Year 3 application process.
 - Year 3 Net Permits will be issued from 1st April 2026 - 31st Mar 2027 in line with the proposed updates. For subsequent years it is the intention that the permit validity will align with the financial year.
- Southern IFCA will continue to monitor the NPA in accordance with the M&CP.



Net Permit Area Monitoring and Control Plan

for Net Permit Areas, as designated under the Net Fishing Byelaw

Supporting Document as part of the Inshore Netting Review

2026 Update

Document Control

| | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Title | Southern IFCA Net Permit Area Monitoring and Control Plan |
| Author(s) | Pia Bateman, Deputy Chief Officer Sarah Birchenough, IFCO |
| Approver | The Southern Inshore Fisheries Authority |
| Approval date (draft) | Draft document approved on the 4 th of November 2021 at the Meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee |
| Approval date (final) | 9 th December 2021 at the Meeting of the Authority. |
| Owner | Southern IFCA |

Annual Revision History

| Date | Author | Version | Status | Reason | Approver(s) |
|--------------|----------|-------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| January 2025 | E Condie | 2025 Update | Final | Year 1 review of evidence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updated Threshold Trigger Values for Year 2 Year 1 outputs for Monitoring Components Addition of current best available evidence to Indicators of salmonid health over time | Technical Advisory Sub-Committee at the meeting on 6 th February 2025. |
| January 2026 | C Mullen | 2026 Update | TBC pending Authority approval | Year 2 review of evidence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updated Threshold Trigger Valeus for Year 3 Introduction of a minimum cap of 4 interactions relevant to all Net Permit Areas Year 2 outputs for Monitoring Components Year 2 current best available evidence to Indicators of salmonid health over time | TBC pending Authority approval |

Introduction

This Monitoring and Control Plan ('M&C Plan') has been produced as part of the Southern IFCA Netting Review to accompany the Southern IFCA Net Fishing Byelaw (NFB) and associated Net Fishing Permits.

This M&C Plan considers sites within the Southern IFC District which have been found to have a low functional linkage to a Special Area of Conservation (SAC), where Atlantic salmon are either a primary or qualifying feature of the SAC, or a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) where Atlantic salmon and/or sea trout are a notified feature or component of the SSSI. These areas will be subject to a permitted ring net fishery or a bottom set net fishery (in specified areas within the Net Permit Area only) under the provisions of the Net Fishing Byelaw.

The annual management of the permitted net fishery will be informed by this M&C Plan, this will ensure that the Authority are using the best available evidence regarding understandings of interactions between net fishing practices and migratory salmonids within the District's harbours and estuaries.

The M&C Plan will be subject to an annual review in line with the Review Procedure detailed in paragraph (36) of the NFB.

1.1 Areas Subject to a Monitoring and Control Plan

The following Net Permit Areas are defined in Schedule 2 of the NFB.

- Southampton Water Net Permit Area and River Hamble Net Permit Area

Following completion of a Functionally Linked Area (FLA) Assessment for Southampton Water and the River Hamble and based on the outcomes of the FLA Risk Model, it has been determined that within these areas there is a low functional linkage to the River Itchen SAC, the River Itchen SSSI and the River Test SSSI (Southampton Water). These areas fall outside principal or known migratory routes, refuge areas or pinch points used by salmonids to access the above-named SAC and SSSIs.

- Christchurch Harbour Net Permit Area

Following completion of a Functionally Linked Area (FLA) Assessment for Christchurch Harbour and based on the outcomes of the FLA Risk Model, it has been determined that within this area there is a low functional linkage to the River Avon SAC, River Avon System SSSI and Avon Valley SSSI. This area falls outside principal or known migratory routes, refuge areas or pinch points used by salmonids to access the above-named SAC and SSSIs.

1.0 The Monitoring & Control Plan

The M&C Plan considers an On-Site Monitoring Programme which provides triggers for different control measures based upon the type of data collected. The M&C Plan also considers information sources which can be analysed in order to provide up to date information on factors which can be used to suggest the health of salmonid populations over time.

Both the On-Site Monitoring Programme outcomes and the annual analysis of salmonid health overtime which will be to help inform the annual review of Net Permit Conditions, as set out in paragraph (36) of the NFB.

2.1 On-Site Monitoring Programme

Different Threshold Trigger Levels will be set for salmonids which are found (a) **dead in a permitted net type** or (b) **interacting with a permitted net type**. These trigger levels will activate a 'control mechanism'. Further details on control mechanisms can be found in Section 2.1.2.

Trigger threshold levels (TTLs) for Years 1, 2 and 3 were determined using Atlantic salmon 'run data', as this data is available for these species. Comparable data is not currently available for sea trout.

TTLs were set at **the value of more than or equal to 1% of the average of the last three year's Atlantic salmon run** following recommendation from the Net Fishing Working Group on the 10th June 2021, and approval at the August 2021 Technical Advisory Committee meeting.

A **minimum cap of 4 interactions** is applied to the TTL for salmonid interactions for all Net Permit Areas from Year 3, recognising that the general decline in salmonid health over time is like a result of multiple factors beyond that of the inshore fishing fleet and, on the basis that the salmonid run data is likely to continue to decline over time, the net fishery is able to remain active, working up to the minimum cap, without any unnecessary hiatus which could have a detrimental impact on the socioeconomics of the net fishing community.

A minimum cap of 4 interactions was determined considering the Year 2 TTL interaction and that this would be maintained in the NPA with the lower TTL interaction for Year 3. The Authority reserves the right to review the minimum cap in accordance with its wider legislative duties. In the event that the 3-year average increases, the TTL would increase accordingly across the relevant permit area.

2.1.2 Year 1 (1st December 2023 to 28th February 2025)

For Southampton Water (including the River Hamble), average run data for the River Itchen and River Test was calculated using the 'Salmon Stock and Fisheries in England and Wales Annual Report 2019' (all rivers) and 'Solent and South Downs Fish Monitoring Report 2020'. **The average 'run data' for years 2018 – 2020 gave a Threshold Trigger Level of 10.**

For Christchurch Harbour, average run data for the River Avon was calculated using the 'Salmon Stock and Fisheries in England and Wales Annual Report 2019' (all rivers) and 'Hampshire Avon Fish Counter at Knapp Mill Report 2020' (River Avon only). **The average 'run data' for years 2018-2020 gave a Threshold Trigger Level of 10.**

2.1.3 Year 2 (1st March 2025 to 31st March 2026)

For Year 2 of the M&C Plan, the run data has been established using data from the most recently available 3 years of data 2021-2023.

For Southampton Water (to include the River Hamble), average run data for the River Itchen and River Test has been calculated using the 'Salmon Stock and Fisheries in England and Wales Annual Report 2023 (all rivers)'. **The average 'run data' for years 2021 - 2023 is 431, the Threshold Trigger Level is therefore 4.**

For Christchurch Harbour, average run data for the River Avon has been calculated using the 'Salmon Stock and Fisheries in England and Wales Annual Report 2023 (all rivers)'. **The average 'run data' for years 2021-2023 is 824, the Threshold Trigger Level is therefore 8.**

2.1.3 Year 3 (1st April 2026 to 31st March 2027)

For Year 3 of the M&CP Plan, the run data has been established using data from the most recently available 3 years of data 2022-2024.

For Southampton Water (to include the River Hamble), the minimum cap level of 4 interactions has been reached. Based on average run data for the River Itchen and River Test, calculated using the 'Salmon Stock and Fisheries in England and Wales Annual Report 2024 (all rivers)', the average 'run data' for years 2022-2024 is 357, **the Threshold Trigger Level is set at the minimum cap of 4.**

For Christchurch Harbour, average run data for the River Avon has been calculated using the 'Salmon Stock and Fisheries in England and Wales Annual Report 2024 (all rivers)'. **The average 'run data' for years 2022-2024 is 656, the Threshold Trigger Level is therefore 7.**

2.1.4 Control Mechanisms

The following text is intended to supplement the Control Mechanism Flow Diagrams found below (figures 1 and 2) in order to provide further clarity regarding how and when control mechanisms will be activated. This section is also to be read in conjunction with reporting requirements specified in the On-Site Monitoring Programme [Section 2.1.3]

To ensure that the Authority are transparent in making management decisions in line with their duties under the Marine and Coastal Access Act, the Control Mechanisms are subject to two stages of intervention at Authority Level, as has been written into the control process. This process is legally binding under the paragraphs (38) to (39) of the NFB.

Stage 1: Southern IFCA Permit Byelaw Sub-Committee

In the event that a trigger point is reached (for either salmonid death or salmonid interaction), Southern IFCA Officers (IFCOs) will consider the circumstances which may have led to the breach in trigger point. This may include (but not be limited to) consideration of scientific data such as run data, water temperature, tidal flow, seasonality, setting of nets, time of day, assessment of salmonid (where feasible). In addition, IFCOs will consult with the Net Permit Holder as well as partner agencies in order to ascertain a full complement of information to inform the investigation.

A Southern IFCA Permit Byelaw Sub-Committee will then be informed of the outcomes of the investigation by proxy in order to consider actions. Actions will be determined within a two-week period of the investigation beginning. Please refer to Southern IFCA Standing Orders for further details on the remit and scope of the Southern IFCA Permit Byelaw Sub-Committee.

Stage 2: Technical Advisory Committee

If the Southern IFCA Permit Byelaw Sub-Committee deem the circumstances which lead to a trigger point being reached, warrant the fishery to remain closed, then a full review will be presented to the subsequent timetabled meeting of the TAC. As specified in paragraph (34) of the NFB, the Authority, may, for the purposes of managing a sustainable net fishery, attach to a permit, remove from a permit, or vary one or more flexible permit conditions in line with the provisions set out in the NFB.

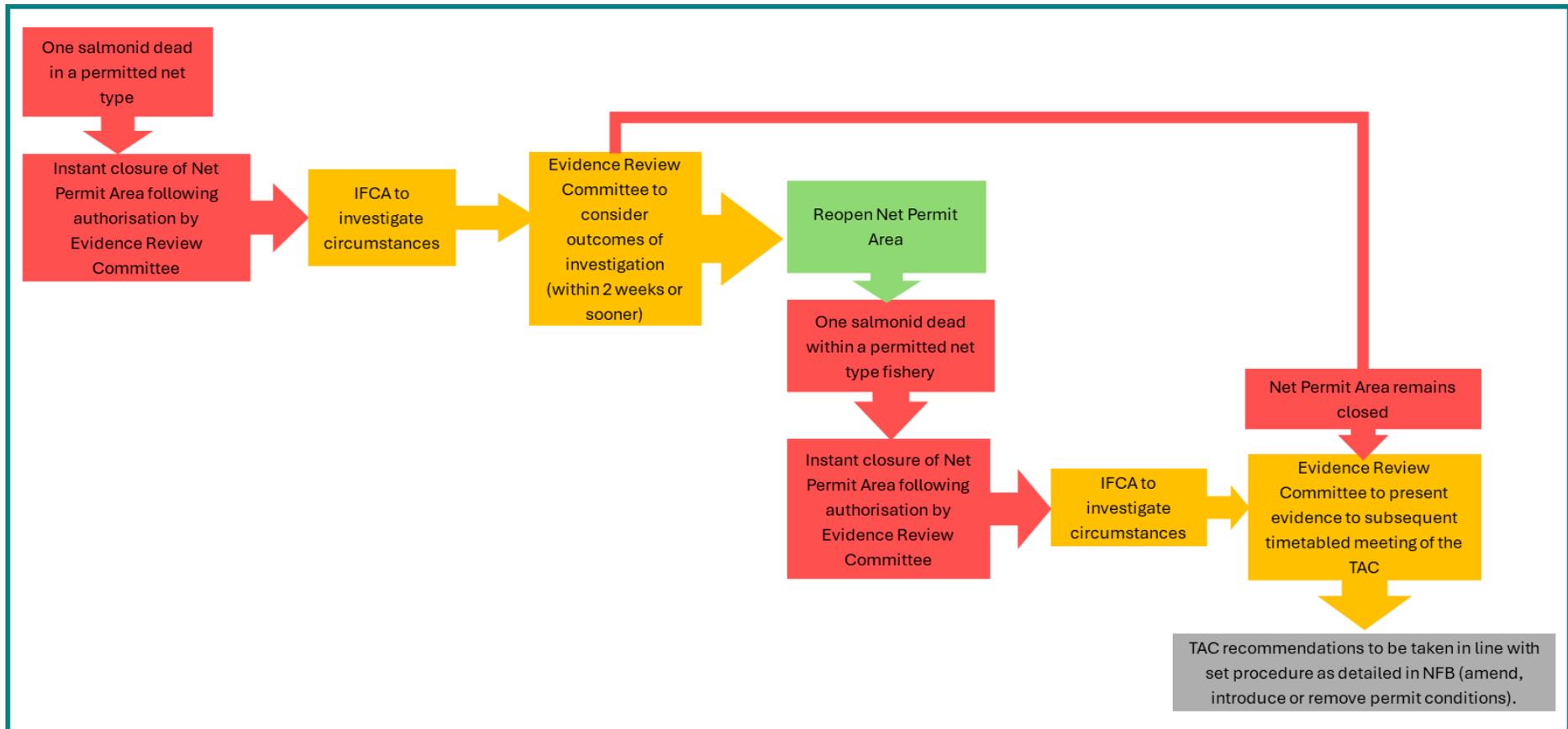


Figure 1: Salmonid mortality control mechanism flow diagram.

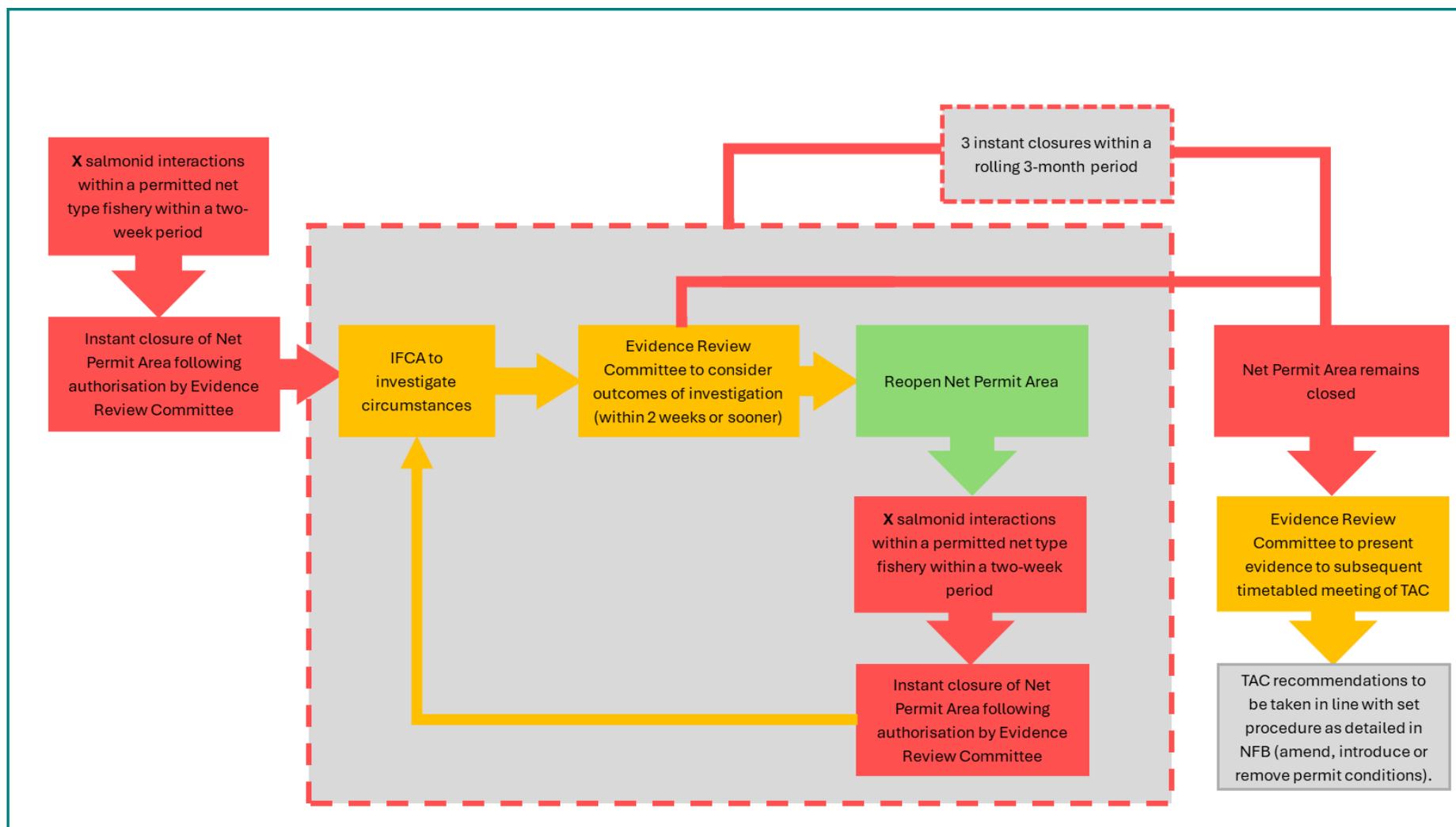


Figure 2: Salmonid interaction control mechanism flow diagram at point of implementation. For Year 2, X = 4 for Southampton Water and River Hamble Permit Areas. X = 8 for Christchurch Harbour Permit Areas.

2.1.5 On-Site Monitoring Programme

The On-Site Monitoring Programme captures five components of monitoring which will be conducted in each Net Permit Area. Each of the components will work in parallel, for example, any salmonid interaction will be counted in accumulation across all components. Further details of each Monitoring Component can be found in Annex 1 and outputs from Year 1 are detailed in Annex 3.

| MONITORING | | | | | CONTROL | YEAR 2 OUTPUTS |
|--------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Component | Net Permit Area | Data Requirement | Responsibility | Analysis | | |
| A: Salmonid Reporting | All Net Permit Areas | <p>Salmonid mortality:</p> <p>Permit holders to report instantly upon haul (where safe to do so) by text or phone if any dead or mortality wounded salmonids are detected.</p> | Permit holder, as a requirement of the Net Permit Conditions | Instant action upon receipt of information | See Figure 1 | No reported salmonid mortality in the Year 2 permit period. |
| | | <p>Salmonid interaction</p> <p>Permit holders to report to the Authority on the day of interaction of any salmonids/net interactions (which do not result in mortality)</p> | | Reporting forms collated & analysed within 5 working days by IFCA | | |
| B: Targeted Compliance | <p>Southampton Water: 4 patrols across two areas</p> <p>Christchurch Harbour: 3 patrols</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Patrols for 5% of total estimated net fishing trips during June to September (NB: period of peak migration as directed by best available evidence). Patrols will aim to provide data during different tidal states, times of day (night/day) and cover different spatial areas. | Southern IFCA to be tasked under TCG process | Instant action upon receipt of information | Mortality: see Figure 1 | <p>Ability to undertake targeted patrols and observer trips were based on fishing activity levels within Permit Areas. Throughout Year 2 activity in Permit Areas was very low, engagement with fishers throughout the year confirmed continued low level of activity resulting in limited opportunities for targeted patrols and no opportunities for observer trips. 1 targeted sea patrol, 2 targeted land patrols and 2 targeted drone patrols covered net permit areas.</p> |
| | | | | Patrol Reports to be analysed within 5 working days. | Interaction trigger reached: see Figure 2 | |
| C: Joint Agency Net Fishing Observer Trips | <p>Southampton Water: 3 ring net trips/2 bottom set net trips across two areas</p> <p>Christchurch Harbour: 3 trips</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Observer Trips for 5% of total estimated net fishing trips during June to September. Southern IFCA can commit to achieving 50% of annual target across all Net Permit Areas (4 observer patrols). | IFCA and the EA (Observer Requirement Condition of NFB) | Instant action upon receipt of information | Mortality: see Figure 1 | <p>A remote analysis of net fishing activity using the iVMS software, THEMIS over the period of 01/06/2025-30/09/2025, revealed limited potential net fishing activity of permit vessels within permit areas. It is acknowledged that not all activity can be detected using this software, for example the use of permitted non-powered vessels.</p> |
| | | | | IFCA Patrol Reports to be analysed within 5 working day/EA Patrol IR reports to be | Interaction trigger reached: see Figure 2 | |

| | | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | | Assistance from the Environment Agency will help to achieve 100% of the target. | | shared with IFCA and analysed upon receipt | | No mortality or interactions were detected through either Monitoring Component. |
| D: Non-targeted Compliance Patrols | All Net Permit Areas | Partner organisations to monitor compliance as tasked under the Southern IFCA TCG | Southern IFCA at TCG (via IR) | Instant action upon receipt of information | Mortality: see Figure 2 | 1 intelligence report has been received relevant to net fishing in permit areas. |
| | | | | Southern IFCA Patrol Reports to be analysed within 5 working day/EA Patrol IR reports to be shared with IFCA and analysed upon receipt | Interaction trigger reached: see Figure 2 | 11 non-targeted sea patrols and non-targeted drone patrols focussed in permit areas in Year 2. No non-targeted compliance patrols have identified any issues relating to non-compliance with net fishing in permit areas. |
| E: MMO Catch Recording App | All Net Permit Areas | Monitoring tool still in infancy at time of writing. It is hoped that in the future this tool can be used to complement the M&C Plan | Pending | Pending | Pending | The MMO catch app has not yet reached a development stage where it can be integrated into the monitoring of the net permit fishery. |

2.1.6 Indicators of Salmonid Health over time

These following data sources are to be used to support understandings of salmonid health overtime. The data sources selected are specific to Southampton Water and Christchurch Harbour to provide an indication of salmonid health based on the best available data from partner organisations. This information will be reviewed alongside data from the On-Site Monitoring Programme and collectively inform the Annual Review of the Net Permit Conditions. An explanation of the different data sources and how the data is calculated is provided in Annex 2.

| MONITOR | | | CONTROL | Most Recent Report ^{1,2} |
|------------------------------|--------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Relevance to Net Permit Area | Area | Data Source | Previous Data | |
| Southampton Water | River Itchen | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Salmon Stock and Fisheries in England and Wales (Annual report by EA, Cefas and Natural Resources Wales) Baseline data: 2019 | Principal Salmon River: Atlantic salmon population status | |
| | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2023: Compliance Level: 'At risk' 2028: Compliance Level predication: 'At risk' | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2024: Compliance Level: 'At risk' 2029: Compliance Level Prediction: 'At risk' |

¹ <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/68b818863f3e5483efdba927/SalmonReport-2024-summary.pdf>

² 2020 England Sea Trout Fishery Performance Results -FINAL Version

| | | | |
|--|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | <p>Previous data: 2023 Most recent data: 2024</p> | | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Salmon Stock and Fisheries in England and Wales (Annual Report EA, Cefas and Natural Resources Wales) SSD Annual Fish Monitoring Report (Annual report by EA) <p>Baseline data: 2015-2019 Previous data: 2019-23 Most recent data: 2020-24</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">Returning stock estimate (Atlantic salmon)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2021: 318 (Attainment of: 44% of Conservation Limit, 80% of 5-year rolling average) 2022: 133 (Attainment of: 22% of Conservation Limit, 33% of 5-year rolling average) 2023: 287 (Attainment of: 42% of Conservation Limit, 33% of Management Target, 72% of 5-year rolling average) <p>5-year average (2019-23): 386</p> | <p>2024: 187 (Attainment of: 37% Conservation Limit, 57% of 5-year rolling average) 5-year (2020-24) rolling average: 328</p> |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> England sea trout fishery performance results (Annual report by EA) <p>Baseline data: 2020 Most recent data: as per baseline</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Salmon Counter Update, Test & Itchen, October 2024 <p>Most recent data: 2024</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">Principal Sea Trout River: Sea trout population status</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2020: Compliance Level: 'Probably at risk' Oct 2024: 938 count (241% of 2015-23 average of 389) <p><i>(*) Provisional monthly counts may be adjusted on basis of further review, count includes stocked trout where these can't be identified and removed from the data.</i></p> | <p>No updated report since 2020 which remains the best available evidence.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2020: Compliance Level: 'Probably at risk' <p>No updated report since 2024 which remains the best available evidence.</p> |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Natural England Designated Sites (View webpage-periodic) <p>Baseline data: 2015 Most recent data: 2025</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">SSSI Condition Assessment for units which reference Atlantic salmon under the 'Rivers and Streams' reportable feature (NB relates to habitat rather than population status)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2015: 'unfavourable – no change' 2025: 'unfavourable – no change' | |

| | | | |
|------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| River Test | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Salmon Stock and Fisheries in England and Wales (Annual report by EA, Cefas and Natural Resources Wales) <p>Baseline data: 2019</p> <p>Previous data: 2023</p> <p>Most recent data: 2024</p> | <p align="center">Principal Salmon River: Atlantic salmon population status</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2023: Compliance Level: 'At risk' 2028: Compliance Level predication: 'At risk' <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2024: Compliance Level: 'At risk' 2029: Compliance Level Prediction: 'At risk' | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Salmon Stock and Fisheries in England and Wales (Annual Report EA, Cefas and Natural Resources Wales) SSD Annual Fish Monitoring Report (Annual report by EA) <p>Baseline data: 2015-2019</p> <p>Previous data: 2019-2023</p> <p>Most recent data: 2020-24</p> | <p align="center">Returning stock estimate (Atlantic salmon)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2021: 704 (Attainment of: 60% of Conservation Limit, 60% of 5-year rolling average) 2022: 506 (Attainment of: 49% of Conservation Limit, 43% of 5-year rolling average) 2023: 635 (Attainment of: 43% of Conservation Limit, 30% of Management Target, 55% % of 5-year rolling average) <p>5-year average (2019-23): 1,155</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2024: 396 (Attainment of: 48% Conservation Limit, 38% of 5-year rolling average) <p>5-year (2020-24) rolling average: 1,038</p> | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> England sea trout fishery performance results (Annual report by EA) <p>Baseline data: 2020</p> <p>Most recent data: as per baseline</p> | <p align="center">Principal Sea Trout River</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sea trout population status 2020: Compliance Level: 'Probably at risk' <p>No updated report since 2020 which remains the best available evidence.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2020: Compliance Level: 'Probably at risk' | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Salmon Counter Update, Test & Itchen, October 2024 <p>Most recent data: 2024</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data is split into 'Great Test' and 'Little River Test' <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Great Test <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oct 24 = 871 count (185% of 2015-23 average of 470) Little River Test <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oct 24 = 659 count (104% of 2015-23 average of 632) <p>No updated report since 2024 which remains the best available evidence.</p> | |

| | | | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | | | (*) <i>Provisional monthly counts may be adjusted on basis of further review, count includes stocked trout where these can't be identified and removed from the data.</i> | |
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Natural England Designated Sites (View webpage – periodic) <p>Baseline data: 2013 Most recent data: 2025</p> | SSSI Condition Assessment for units which reference Atlantic salmon under the 'Rivers and Streams' reportable feature (NB relates to habitat rather than population status) | |
| | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2013: 'unfavourable – no change' | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2025: 'unfavourable – no change' |
| Christchurch Harbour: Eastern harbour, excluding Main Channel and River Mude entrance | River Avon | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Salmon Stock and Fisheries in England and Wales (Annual report by EA, Cefas and Natural Resources Wales) <p>Baseline data: 2019 Previous data: 2023 Most recent data: 2024</p> | Principal Salmon River: Atlantic salmon population status | |
| | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2023: Compliance Level: 'At risk' 2028: Compliance Level predication: 'At risk' | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2024: Compliance Level: 'At risk' 2029: Compliance Level predication: 'At risk' |
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Salmon Stock and Fisheries in England and Wales (Annual report by EA, Cefas and Natural Resources Wales) SSD Annual Fish Monitoring Report (Annual report by EA) <p>Baseline data: 2015-2019 Previous data: 2019-23 Most recent data: 2020-2024</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hampshire Avon Fish Counter at Knapp Mill Report (Environment Agency Report) <p>Baseline data: 2020 Most recent data: 2022</p> | Returning stock estimate (Atlantic salmon) | |
| | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2021: 1,057 (Attainment of: 88% of Conservation Limit, 109% of 5-year rolling average) 2022: 837 (Attainment of: 57% of Conservation Limit, 87% of 5-year rolling average) 2023: 578 (Attainment of: 31% of Conservation Limit, 27% of Management Target and 3% of 5-year rolling average) <p>5-year average (2019-2023): 934</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2024: 553 (Attainment of: 23% Conservation Limit, 61% of 5-year rolling average) <p>5-year (2020-24) rolling average: 904</p> |
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> England sea trout fishery performance results (Annual report by EA) <p>Baseline data: 2020 Most recent data: as per baseline</p> | Principal Sea Trout River: Sea trout population status | |
| | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2020: Compliance Level: 'Probably at risk' | <p>No updated report since 2020 which remains the best available evidence.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2020: Compliance Level: 'Probably at risk' |

| | | | |
|--|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Natural England Designated Sites (View webpage – periodic) <p>Baseline data: 2010</p> <p>Most recent data: for one SSSI, 2021, other SSSI as per baseline</p> | <p>SSSI Condition Assessment for units which reference Atlantic salmon under the ‘Rivers and Streams’ reportable feature (NB relates to habitat rather than population status)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Avon Valley (Bickton to Christchurch) (1 unit) 2010: ‘unfavourable – recovering’ <p>The units mentioned below refer to Atlantic Salmon in relation to Freshwater Levels.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> River Avon System (9 units) 2021: ‘unfavourable – No Changes’³ | <p>No updated report since baseline and most recent data, 2021, which remains the best available evidence</p> |
|--|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Annex 1: Components of On-Site Monitoring Programme

A: Salmonid Interaction Reporting

The requirements for reporting salmonid death and salmonid interactions will be set under the Net Permit Conditions.

B: Targeted Compliance Patrols

The number of each type of net fishing trip per year within each fishery area has been estimated based on expert opinion, fisher communications and MMO fishing data (table A1). This data has been used to inform the number of trips for both the Targeted Compliance Patrols and the Joint Agency Observer Trips (see section C), where 5% of estimated trips has been used in the first instance to set a target for both monitoring components. Although fishing activity has remained lower than expected in year 1, the proposed patrol numbers will remain for year 2.

| Fishery Area | Estimated number of net fishing trips in Year 2 | | |
|----------------------|-------------------------------------------------|----------------|--------------------|
| | Ring Net | Bottom Set Net | Combined Net Trips |
| Southampton Water | 60 | 20 | 80 |
| Christchurch Harbour | 60 | n/a | 60 |

³ [Natural England – Designated Site Feature Conditions – River Avon SSSI](#)

Table A1: Estimated number of net fishing trips on which Monitoring Targets for year one will be based. Estimates are derived from expert opinion, fisher communications and MMO fishing data.

C: Joint Agency Observer Trips

Observer Trips will involve the deployment of a Southern IFCA Officer, or a person delegated by the Southern IFCA to conduct this function (this may include but is not limited to a person from another competent authority such as The Environment Agency) for the duration of a net fishing trip. Observer trips will be targeted towards peak salmonid migration conditions and fishers will be informed that they will be required to carry an observer on their next trip.

During the net fishing trip, the observer will record information related to:

- The type of fishing gear being used.
- The number of net hauls completed.
- Details (species and size) of all catch, both retained and discarded; and
- Details of any interaction with a salmonid.

The observer will be provided with a standardised record sheet which will detail the information required and will ensure that the data from the observer program is consistent, and any analysis of the data can be robust and quantifiable. Prior to the commencement of the observer program, participants will be required to demonstrate that they are competent in the identification of salmonids and other relevant species.

At a meeting of the Byelaw Working Group on 17th December 2020, Members agreed that observer trips should be 5% of total estimated net fishing trips for a particular gear type or a minimum of two trips whichever was higher. For demersal sole nets in Southampton Water, 5% of the total estimated net fishing trips is 1 trip therefore a minimum of two trips is applied here

D: Non targeted Compliance Patrols

Non-targeted Compliance Patrols refer to Compliance Patrols conducted by Southern IFCA and partner agencies in the normal delivery of their duties as opposed to patrols conducted for the purpose of observing net fishing activity. During these patrols Officers will be aware of the need to collect data on net fishing activity and any potential interactions with salmonids. Any intelligence relating to net fishing activity and/or interactions with salmonids will be submitted and analysed through the intelligence reporting system of a particular agency with intelligence reports marked for dissemination to other relevant authorities.

E: MMO Catch Recording

The newly implemented method of catch recording by the MMO for under 10 metre flag vessels fishing in UK waters is designed to provide an accurate picture of what is being taken out of the sea to be able to manage fish stocks and fishing opportunities for the future. Catch recording is a licence requirement which applies to the owners or operators of any licenced fishing vessel under 10m (non-sector only). Catch records can be submitted via the web, the specifically designed app, or the digital assist helpline. Fishers must submit catch records for quota species after landing but before the fish is moved from its place of landing. For non-quota species, fishers have 24 hours to submit the catch record. The catch record includes the date, port of landing, fish species, catch weight, the gear used and the sea area (defined as ICES statistical rectangle and sub-rectangle). For example, Christchurch Harbour is within sub-rectangle 30E82, Southampton Water falls within three sub-rectangles, 30E84 (from Fawley area north), 30E87 (entrance to River Hamble, River Hamble) and 30E88 (south of Fawley).

Annex 2: Components of Indicators of salmonid health over time

A: Principal Salmon River Status to include Population Status for Atlantic salmon

There are 49 rivers in England and 31 rivers in Wales which regularly support Atlantic salmon. Of these, 64 rivers are designated as 'principal salmon rivers' in the 'Salmon Stocks and Fisheries in England and Wales' annual report issued jointly by the Environment Agency, Cefas and Natural Resources Wales. The report used for the baseline data is for 2019. There are 42 principal salmon rivers in England and 22 in Wales, each of which has a Conservation Limit (CL) and a Management Target (MT). The CL and MT are used to give annual advice on stock status and to assess the need for management and conservation measures. [The report used for the Year 2 review is for 2024⁴](#).

The CL and MT are based on the number of eggs deposited and annual compliance with the CL is assessed using egg deposition estimates. These estimates are derived from returning stock estimates where this data is available or, for rivers without traps or counters, the estimate is derived from the run size based on rod catch data using estimates of exploitation and an appropriate adjustment for under-reporting. The Management Objective for a principal salmon river is that the river should meet the CL is at least four years out of five (at least 80% of the time). Compliance with this objective, i.e.,

⁴ Environment Agency, Cefas and Natural Resources Wales. 2024. 'Salmon Stocks and Fisheries in England and Wales in 2024', (<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/68b818863f3e5483efdba927/SalmonReport-2024-summary.pdf>)

the probability of a river meeting the Management Objective, classifies a river as 'At risk' (<5% probability), 'Probably at risk' (5-50% probability), 'Probably not at risk' (50-95% probability) and 'Not at risk' (>95% probability).

B: Returning stock estimate (Atlantic salmon)

The Environment Agency monitors stocks and fishery performance in most principal salmon rivers using fish counters, surveys of juvenile fish and collecting fisheries statistics. Based on this data collection, validated count data and a run estimate for salmon smolts and adults is provided for principal salmon rivers. The 'Salmon Stocks and Fisheries in England and Wales' annual report provides this verified data for all principal salmon rivers. The Environment Agency also produces a 'Solent and South Downs Annual Fish Monitoring Report' which provides details and results from all EA fish monitoring conducted in the Solent and South Downs area. This provides results from a variety of surveys including count data from fish counters on rivers in this area. This report has provided the baseline count data for 2020 for the Rivers Test and Itchen, [the most recent report informing the Year 2 review is for 2024^{6,5}](#).

For 2020 data for the River Avon, the Environment Agency have produced a report on data from the fish counter at Knapp Mill. Part of this report provides a yearly summary of data from the fish counter which gives a combined upstream count of both salmon and sea trout. This figure is then apportioned between salmon and sea trout to give a total count for each. The separation between the two species is done based on images which are collected by the cameras in the counters. The proportion of each species from these images is used to calculate the split between salmon and sea trout for 'unknown' fish i.e., where ID is not possible. This information is then used to provide a final count for each species. The most recent report is for 2022⁶.

C: Principal Sea trout River Status to include fishery performance for sea trout

A report is produced on the England sea trout fishery performance results by the England & Wales Sea Trout & Salmon Technical Working Group. This report details the status of England's sea trout stocks based on declared rod catches with the aim of informing management actions to protect and enhance sea trout populations. The current report is for 2020 and was used to calculate the baseline. There are 44 rivers designated as 'principal sea trout rivers' in England, designated based on the rod catch being >50 fish. There has been no updated report since 2020 in which to compare the status of principal sea trout river status.

The assessment of the principal sea trout rivers uses two criteria: trend in CPUE in the last 10 years and current CPUE relative to the last 10 years. Based on this assessment the river is categorised into one of four categories: 'At risk', 'Probably at risk', 'Probably not at risk' and 'Not at risk'. There is no forward prediction for sea trout status as there is with salmon. The assessment reflects rod performance and therefore is not always an indication of overall stock performance, the assessment is intended to give early warning about potential problems. For a full picture of the stock, the assessment

⁵ <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/68b818863f3e5483efdba927/SalmonReport-2024-summary.pdf>

⁶ Environment Agency, Hampshire Avon Fish Counter at Knapp Mill 2022 Q4 report, <http://avondiary.net/news/2022q4.pdf>

should be considered alongside Water Framework Directive Assessments for juvenile trout for the consistent water bodies in the catchment of a particular river (where such assessments exist).

An additional evidence source has been identified for Southampton Water for 2024 – “Salmon Counter Update, Test & Itchen, October 2024”. This report provides October 2024 count data for ‘trout’ against an average count for 2015-2023. Data in the reported is caveated with the fact that provisional monthly counts may be adjusted on basis of further review and the count includes stocked trout where these can’t be identified and removed from the data.

D: SSSI Condition Assessment for ‘Rivers and Streams’

Each SSSI has a number of units associated with it which cover a certain geographic area. For a SSSI Condition Assessment, the condition of ‘reportable features’ are assessed periodically within the geographical area of a particular site unit. As such, individual condition assessments are not undertaken specifically for Atlantic salmon or sea trout, but rather for the ‘Rivers and Streams’ reportable feature, of which salmon and sea trout are a faunal component (which species are included in dependent on the site designation). The assessment of the ‘Rivers and Streams’ feature considers both the condition of supporting habitat for salmonids and their populations status within the site. Therefore, the condition which is assigned to a particular unit relates to the ‘Rivers and Streams’ feature as a whole, rather than just the condition of the salmonid population in that area. Condition assessments for SSSIs are updated periodically based on a rolling program.

Annex 3: On-Site Monitoring Programme- Year 1 Outputs

Outputs of the On-site Monitoring Programme following the Year 1 review for the period of 1st December 2023 to 28th February 2025 can be seen in the table below.

| MONITORING | | | | | CONTROL | YEAR 1 OUTPUTS |
|--------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Component | Net Permit Area | Data Requirement | Responsibility | Analysis | | |
| A: Salmonid Reporting | All Net Permit Areas | <p>Salmonid mortality:</p> <p>Permit holders to report instantly upon haul (where safe to do so) by text or phone if any dead or mortality wounded salmonids are detected.</p> | Permit holder, as a requirement of the Net Permit Conditions | Instant action upon receipt of information | See Figure 1 | No reported salmonid mortality in the Year 1 permit period |
| | | <p>Salmonid interaction</p> <p>Permit holders to report to the Authority on the day of interaction of any salmonids/net interactions (which do not result in mortality)</p> | | Reporting forms collated & analysed within 5 working days by IFCA | | |
| B: Targeted Compliance | <p>Southampton Water: 4 patrols across two areas</p> <p>Christchurch Harbour: 3 patrols</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Patrols for 5% of total estimated net fishing trips during June to September (NB: period of peak migration as directed by best available evidence). Patrols will aim to provide data during different tidal states, times of day (night/day) and cover different spatial areas. | Southern IFCA to be tasked under TCG process | Instant action upon receipt of information | Mortality: see Figure 1 | Ability to undertake targeted patrols and observer trips were based on fishing activity levels within Permit Areas. Throughout Year 1 activity in Permit Areas was very low, engagement with fishers throughout the year confirmed continued low level of activity resulting in limited opportunities for targeted patrols and no opportunities for observer trips. |
| | | | | Patrol Reports to be analysed within 5 working days. | Interaction trigger reached: see Figure 2 | |
| C: Joint Agency Net Fishing Observer Trips | <p>Southampton Water: 3 ring net trips/2 bottom set net trips across two areas</p> <p>Christchurch Harbour: 3 trips</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Observer Trips for 5% of total estimated net fishing trips during June to September. Southern IFCA can commit to achieving 50% of annual target across all Net Permit Areas (4 observer patrols). Assistance from the Environment Agency will help to achieve 100% of the target. | IFCA and the EA (Observer Requirement Condition of NFB) | Instant action upon receipt of information | Mortality: see Figure 1 | No mortality or interactions were detected through either Monitoring Component. |
| | | | | IFCA Patrol Reports to be analysed within 5 working day/EA Patrol IR reports to be shared with IFCA and analysed upon receipt | Interaction trigger reached: see Figure 2 | |

| | | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| D: Non-targeted Compliance Patrols | All Net Permit Areas | Partner organisations to monitor compliance as tasked under the Southern IFCA TCG | Southern IFCA at TCG (via IR) | Instant action upon receipt of information | Mortality: see Figure 2 | No intelligence has been received relevant to net fishing in permit areas. No non-targeted compliance patrols have identified any issues relating to non-compliance with net fishing in permit areas. |
| | | | | Southern IFCA Patrol Reports to be analysed within 5 working day/EA Patrol IR reports to be shared with IFCA and analysed upon receipt | Interaction trigger reached: see Figure 2 | |
| E: MMO Catch Recording App | All Net Permit Areas | <i>Monitoring tool still in infancy at time of writing. It is hoped that in the future this tool can be used to complement the M&C Plan</i> | <i>Pending</i> | <i>Pending</i> | <i>Pending</i> | The MMO catch app has not yet reached a development stage where it can be integrated into the monitoring of the net permit fishery. |

Southern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority

Unit 3, Holes Bay Park, Sterte Avenue West, Poole,
Dorset. BH15 2AA
Tel. 01202 721373
Email enquiries@southern-ifca.gov.uk
www.southern-ifca.gov.uk



5th December 2025

Dear Permit Holder,

Year 2 Annual Review: flexible permit conditions, permit fees and limitations on the number of permits under Net Fishing Byelaw

Southern IFCA are writing to inform you that the Year 2 Annual Review under the Net Fishing Byelaw (NFB) is taking place ahead of the administration of Permits for Year 3. The current Year 2 Net Fishing Permits are valid until 31st March 2026.

The NFB outlines, under paragraph (36), that the Authority (or a sub-committee therefore authorised by the Authority to do so) will review the suitability of **flexible Permit conditions, Permit fees and limitations on the number of Permits** annually. The Year 2 Annual Review is limited to reviewing the above points and will not involve a review of the overarching Net Fishing Byelaw. In addition, the Year 2 Annual Review will review the Monitoring and Control Plan (M&CP) which accompanies the NFB and associated Net Fishing Permits.

As a Permit Holder, Southern IFCA would like to invite you to provide any initial feedback, comments or evidence which you wish to be considered as part of the Year 2 Annual Review of **flexible Permit conditions, Permit fees and limitations on the number of Permits**.

Any information or evidence submitted through this initial call for feedback, in combination with other available evidence, as listed in paragraph (37) of the NFB, will help inform the Authority's consideration of whether to add, vary or remove any flexible Permit conditions, Permit fees or limitations on the number of Permits, whilst having regard to the Authority's duties and obligations under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009, the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (SI 2017 No 2012) and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (c.69), in line with the review process in paragraph (36) of the NFB.

Following this initial round of engagement, you will receive a further opportunity to comment on any proposed changes to the flexible Permit conditions, Permit fees or the limitations on the number of permits. We will send correspondence in this regard in due course once the initial stage of the review has been undertaken.

How to Respond to the initial call for feedback

Permit Holders are invited to respond to the consultation in one of the following ways:

By email:

enquiries@southern-ifca.gov.uk

Please state the email subject as: **NFB Year 2 Review**

By post:

Responses can be posted or delivered to the Southern IFCA office:
Southern IFCA, Unit 3 Holes Bay Park, Poole, Dorset, BH15 2AA

All responses must be received by **Friday 2nd January 2026**. Any responses received after this date may not be considered.

Southern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority

Unit 3, Holes Bay Park, Sterte Avenue West, Poole,
Dorset. BH15 2AA
Tel. 01202 721373
Email enquiries@southern-ifca.gov.uk
www.southern-ifca.gov.uk



If you would like to discuss the consultation with an Officer or require assistance in providing a consultation response, please contact us by email (enquiries@southern-ifca.gov.uk) or phone on 01202 721373 and we can arrange for an Officer to speak with you.

Southern IFCA welcomes your participation in the consultation for the Year 2 Annual Review and your ongoing engagement with the Net Fishing Byelaw. Southern IFCA look forward to continuing to work with you in the sustainable management of net fisheries in the District's harbours and estuaries.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S. Birchenough". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Dr Sarah Birchenough

Deputy Chief Officer
Southern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority



12th January 2025

Dear Net Permit Holder,

Annual Review of Net Permits: flexible permit conditions, permit fees & limitations on the number of permits under the Net Fishing Byelaw: Year 2.

Southern IFCA are currently undertaking an annual review of Net Permits under the Net Fishing Byelaw (NFB) prior to the end of the Year 2 permit period ending on the 31st March 2026 and are therefore considering any available evidence received in accordance with due process to inform this review. This includes any information received from Permit Holders, as well as any information gathered through the Net Permit Area Monitoring & Control Plan.

Thank you for any initial feedback that you have already provided to Southern IFCA in response to the letter sent on the 5th December 2025 to help further inform this process. Based on the information that we have received and considered, **it is not anticipated that there will be any updates to the flexible permit conditions, permit fees and limitations on the number of permits for Year 3 (1st April 2026 to 31st March 2027).**

Introduction of a Minimum Salmonid Interactions Cap

Following discussions at an Authority Working Group on the 9th January 2025, Members discussed the reality that the general decline in salmonid health overtime is likely a result of multiple factors beyond that of the inshore fishing fleet, and as such are recommending that **a minimum cap of 4 interactions be set over time, relevant to all Net Permit Areas**. What this means is that as the salmonid run data is likely to continue to decline over time, the net fishery is able to remain active, working up to this minimum cap, without any unnecessary hiatus which could have a detrimental impact on the socioeconomics of the net fishing community.

What does this mean for Year 3: 1st April 2026 to 31st March 2027:

Based on the best available evidence on Atlantic salmon run data at the time of writing, and in accordance with the methodology outlined in the Monitoring & Control Plan, the following Threshold Trigger Levels (TTL) for salmonid interactions are set for year 3:

| | Year 1 | | Year 2 | | Year 3 | |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------|
| | Southampton Water (inc. River Hamble) | Christchurch Harbour | Southampton Water (inc. River Hamble) | Christchurch Harbour | Southampton Water (inc. River Hamble) | Christchurch Harbour |
| TTL: Interactions | 10 | 10 | 4 | 8 | 4 | 7 |
| Best available data | 2018-2020 | 2017-2020 | 2021-2023 | 2021-2023 | Minimum Cap reached | 2022-2024 |

What does this mean beyond 1st April 2027?

- TTLs will continue to be reviewed annually in accordance with the methodology outlined in the Monitoring & Control Plan. The next review will take place in November 2026.
- A minimum cap of 4 interactions will be introduced when and if the run data methodology for Christchurch Harbour reaches 4.
- The Authority reserve the right to review the minimum cap in accordance with its wider legislative duties.
- In the event that the 3-year average increases, the TTL would increase accordingly across the relevant permit area.

What Action do I need to take?

If you wish to provide any further feedback for the Authority to consider as part of this review, please contact us by post, email or telephone using the contact details at the head of this letter. **Any feedback must be received by Friday 23rd January 2026.**

Southern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority

Unit 3, Holes Bay Park, Sterte Avenue West, Poole,
Dorset. BH15 2AA
01202 721373
enquiries@southern-ifca.gov.uk
www.southern-ifca.gov.uk



What Happens Next?

- The Authority will be considering the outcomes of the annual review of Net Permits at the meeting of the Technical Advisory Sub-Committee (TAC) on Thursday 5th February 2026.
- Net Permit Holders are welcome to attend this meeting in the public gallery.
- Following a decision by the TAC, Permit Holders will be notified of the outcome of the review in writing.

How can I apply for a Year 3 Net Permit?

As an existing Permit Holder, you will receive information in due course about how to apply for a Year 3 Net Permit. It is anticipated that this will be during the week commencing **2nd March 2026**.

Southern IFCA welcomes your continued participation in the consultation for the Year 2 Annual Review of Net Permits and your ongoing engagement with the Net Fishing Byelaw. Southern IFCA look forward to continuing to work with you in the sustainable management of net fisheries in the District's harbours and estuaries.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Birchenough', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Dr Sarah Birchenough

Deputy Chief Officer
Southern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority

Solent Scallop Survey 2025 – Survey Report Paper For Information

Report by IFCO Churchouse

A. Purpose

To provide Members with a report from the Solent Scallop Survey Program 2025.

B. Annex

- Annex 1 - The Southern IFCA Solent Scallop Survey Report 2025

1.0 Introduction

- As part of Southern IFCA's management of bivalve species in the Solent, surveys are carried out across the King scallop fishing season to better understand the extent and nature of the Solent King scallop fishery.
- These surveys aim to provide an understanding of the distribution of the King Scallop (*Pecten maximus*) (hereafter referred to as 'scallop') and to collect information on the population structure of the scallops found within the Solent.
- Surveys were carried out in February (mid-season), April (post-season) and September (pre-season) 2025. This paper provides a report on the Southern IFCA Solent Scallop Survey, analysing the data collected in 2025.
- The Solent Scallop Survey was redesigned in 2025 to optimise the sampling process and bring sampling sites in line with areas of fishing activity. Key alterations include the addition of a modified Queenie dredge and the redefinition of survey beds.

2.0 Summary of Key Points

- 9 sampling sites were sampled during the pre- and post-season surveys, while 8 sites were sampled during the midseason survey. A total of 1,628 scallops were sampled in Winter 25, 1,428 in Spring 25, and 2,170 in Autumn 25.
- Individual scallops are measured to the nearest mm along the width (longest axis). The catch obtained from each tow (4, 4-minute tows in each sampling site) was split into over 110mm (the Minimum Conservation Reference Size in ICES VIId) and under 110mm, both groups of scallops are then weighed.

Analysis Methods:

- Weight data is transformed to provide a value for Catch Per Unit Effort (CPUE), defined as kg of scallops per metre of dredge per hour (kg/m/hr). CPUE is calculated for total weight, weight over MCRS and weight under MCRS¹.
- Analysis of CPUE was carried out to identify any changes in stock health over key periods including:
 - When the fishing season was active (Autumn 24 to Spring 25 survey)
 - When the fishery was closed (Spring 25 survey to Autumn 25 survey)
 - Time series comparisons between spring and autumn surveys to date (22-25)

Data analysis:

- A significant decrease in CPUE between Autumn 2024 and Spring 2025 was seen for the Total and Over MCRS portions of the sampled stock as is expected during the fishing season.
 - Data for scallop under MCRS also showed the same pattern, which, due to high levels of

¹ It should be noted that the dredging method is inherently size selective due to the need for commercial vessels to maximise retention of scallops over MCRS. As such the data for CPUE under MCRS will not be fully representative of this size class, however, comparisons can be made between sites and over time to look for changes, in the knowledge that the sampling method is consistent and there is no statistical difference in the catch between dredges used from different vessels.

compliance in the fishery with MCRS regulations during the 2024/25 season, is likely due to other influencing factors such as environmental conditions.

- CPUE data from the period when the fishery was closed in 2025 (Spring 25 to Autumn 25) saw small increases across all three portions of the sampled population but differences were only significant for Over MCRS.
 - These increases were smaller than seen in previous fisheries closed periods.
- Comparisons between CPUE from Autumn 2024 and Autumn 2025 saw statistically significant decreases in CPUE across all three sampled portions of the population.
 - Significant decreases were also seen in comparisons of CPUE from Autumn 2025 to Autumn 2022 and 2023.
- There is a mixed picture when looking at individual sites, not all sites have shown an increase in CPUE during the closed season.
 - Median CPUE for the majority of individual sampling sites increased during the 2025 Closed Season for Total, Over MCRS, and Under MCRS sampled populations (6 sites, 6 sites [2 significant]), & 5 sites respectively).
 - This is a decrease from the number that saw an increase in median CPUE during the 2024 Closed Season for Total, Over MCRS and Under MCRS sampled populations, particularly in the number of significant results which were largely absent in the 2025 closed season (8 sites [5 significant], 8 sites [4 significant], & 8 sites [5 significant] respectively).
- Analysis found a statistically significant effect of survey on width, with median width of the Autumn 2025 survey (110mm) higher than both the Winter 2025 (102mm) and Spring 2025 (104mm) surveys.
- For the Winter 2025 survey half the sampling sites had peaks in their size frequency distribution for a class above MCRS, while for Spring 2025 the majority of sampling sites (6/9) had peaks below MCRS and for Autumn the majority (6/9) had peaks above MCRS.
- Trends in CPUE and width from scallop sampled using the modified Queenie dredge were analysed for the first time within the Solent Scallop fishery in 2025.
 - When comparing the performance of the N-Viro and Queenie dredges as they run alongside each other, to detect for influence of dredge type, a statistically significant difference was found for the sampled population Over MCRS only, with the median CPUE lower in the Queenie dredge.
 - When comparing median CPUE values collected by the Queenie dredge, a statistically significant increase between Spring 2025 and Autumn 2025 was seen for the Over MCRS portion of the population.
- Decreases in CPUE for Autumn 25 and only small non-significant increases during the 2025 closed period for the fishery have been seen despite decreased catch levels during the 2024/25 season.
- The data analysed in this Report formed a source of best available evidence that was used by the Authority to conduct a review of permit conditions under the SDPB to consider the need for additional management intervention in the Solent SCE fishery to support sustainable harvesting. The outcome of this review was that the daily fishing hours for the 2025/26 season for SCE fishery under a Category A Permit were reduced from 08:00-16:00 to 08:00-14:00.

3.0 Next Steps

- The survey program will be implemented through 2026, to enhance understandings of the health of the fishery, providing an opportunity to assess the stock of King scallop during the 25/26 fishing season. The suitability of an observer programme for the midseason point will also be explored.
- During 2026, it is the intention to incorporate additional metrics into the surveys including quantification of dead shell present within dredge tows and condition of SCE.
- The intention is to increase the robustness of the data collected and thus the timeseries dataset for this species in the Solent to ensure that management of the fishery continues to be based on best available evidence. The data collected under the new methodology also has the potential to be fed into national evidence gathering, for example as part of the implementation of the King Scallop Fisheries Management Plan (FMP).

Southern IFCA Survey Report

Solent Scallop Survey 2025

1. Introduction

As part of Southern IFCA's management of bivalve species in the Solent, surveys are carried out across the King scallop fishing season to better understand the extent and nature of the Solent King scallop fishery. In 2025, mid-season (Feb), pre-season (Sept) and post-season (Apr) surveys were run.

These surveys aim to provide an understanding of the distribution of the King Scallop (*Pecten maximus*) (hereafter referred to as 'scallop') and to collect information on the population structure of the scallops found within the Solent.

The outcomes of the 2025 surveys enable Southern IFCA to monitor population trends before, during, and after the fishing season (1st November to 31st March), and contribute to the timeseries dataset that began in 2021. This data contributes to the evidence base used to inform management of the fishery through the Solent Dredge Permit Byelaw and enables Southern IFCA to ensure that the Solent bivalve fisheries are managed sustainably.

2. Methodology

- Sites for the Solent Scallop survey were redesigned for the 2025 surveys to bring surveyed areas closer in line with industry fishing activity. Redesigned beds covered areas of the fishery surveyed under the previous bed footprint, as well as emergent areas of the fishery. The survey occurred over 2 days in February (Winter, Mid-the 24/25 season), April (Spring, Post the 24/25 season), and September (Autumn, Pre the 25/26 season).
- Southern IFCA chartered the same local, commercial fishing vessel for each survey period to carry out the sampling, using a N-Viro style dredge (Figure 1) and a Queenie dredge towed from the stern of the vessel.
- Within each bed four approx. 4-minute tows were performed, with the skipper identifying the appropriate site and speed of the tows based on fishing activity and conditions. Environmental/vessel data was collected on tow location, time, speed and other relevant factors.
- The contents of the dredges were individually brought inboard, emptied, and sorted, with any scallops put aside for measuring.



Figure 1: An N-Viro Dredge

Solent Scallop Survey 2025

- Officers then measured each scallop to the nearest mm in one dimension, the width (longest axis), maintaining separation between those scallops brought up in the two different dredges.
- The catch for each tow was split into over 110mm (the Minimum Conservation Reference Size in ICES VIId) and under 110mm. Both groups of scallops were then weighed.
- On completion of the measurements the scallops were returned to the same area from which they were sampled.
- A map displaying the location of each sampling area within the Solent and the position of tows undertaken during the 2025 surveys is shown in Figure 2. Tows that fall outside of beds are often prospective in nature and are not included within the analyses.

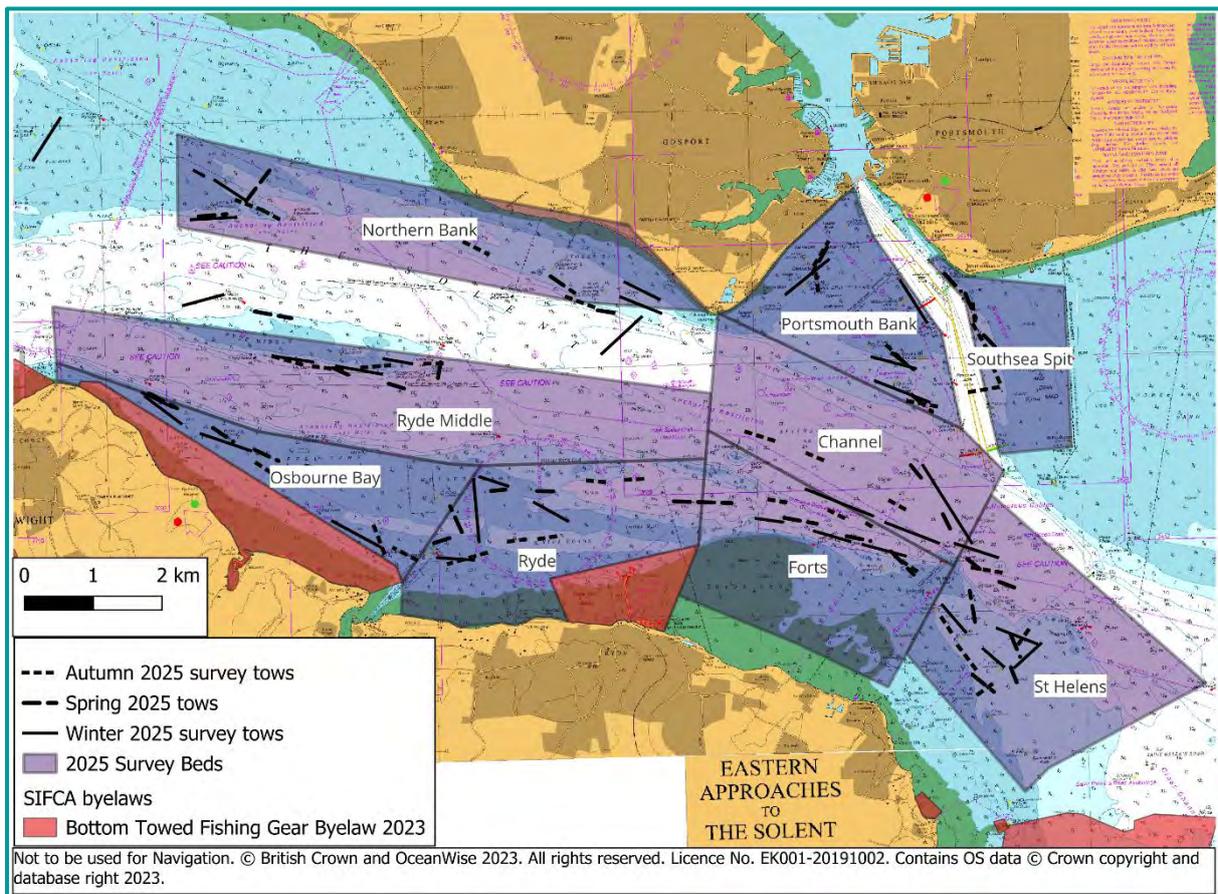


Figure 2: Location of the 9 revised sampling sites for the Solent scallop fishery, and the position of tows within these sites during 2025. Please note Southsea Spit was first sampled in Spring 2025 reacting to high levels of fishing activity over that ground in the second half of the 24/25 season.

3. Results

Across the 9 sites (NB: Southsea Spit was only sampled from Spring 2025), 1,628 scallops were sampled in Winter 2025, 1,428 were sampled in Spring 2025, and 2,170 were sampled in Autumn 2025 across all dredges operated.

3.1 Catch Per Unit Effort (CPUE) – N-Viro Dredge

The weight data collected from the industry standard N-Viro dredge was transformed to provide a value for Catch Per Unit Effort (CPUE), defined as kg of scallops per metre of dredge per hour (kg/m/hr). CPUE was calculated for total weight of scallops, weight of scallops over the Minimum Conservation Reference Size (MCRS), and weight of scallops under the MCRS.

It should be noted that the dredging method is inherently size selective due to the need for commercial vessels to maximise retention of scallops over MCRS and minimise catches (and secondary sorting requirements) of scallops under MCRS. As such the data for CPUE under MCRS will not be representative of this size class as it cannot be guaranteed that all scallops under MCRS have been sampled. However, comparisons can be made between sites and over time to look for changes, in the knowledge that the sampling method is consistent and there is no statistical difference in the catch between dredges used from different vessels.

3.1.1 CPUE between Sites for the 2025 Surveys

In this section, CPUE data for the total sampled population, the sampled population over MCRS, and the sampled population under MCRS is compared between sites for the 2025 surveys. This analysis provides an indication of the varying density of scallop across the different beds of the fishery.

Winter 2025

- A Kruskal-Wallis test found statistically significant differences between sites for Total CPUE ($p < 0.05$) and CPUE Under MCRS ($p < 0.01$), but not for CPUE Over MCRS.
- For Total population sampled, the site with the greatest average CPUE was St Helens (165.57 kg/m/hr), while the site with the lowest average CPUE was Northern Bank (4.97 kg/m/hr) (Figure 3). A Dunns' post-hoc analyses found no statistically significant differences between the sites for the Total population sampled, indicating that the variance in the data within sites is greater than the variance between sites.
- For Over MCRS population sampled, the site with the greatest average CPUE was St Helens (42.55 g/m/hr), while the site with the lowest average CPUE was Northern Bank (4.97 kg/m/hr) (Figure 4).
- For Under MCRS population sampled, the site with the greatest average CPUE was St Helens (127.02 kg/m/hr), while the site with the lowest average CPUE was Northern Bank (0 kg/m/hr) (Figure 5). A post-hoc Dunns test found a statistically significant difference between the average CPUE at these two sites ($p < 0.05$).

Solent Scallop Survey 2025

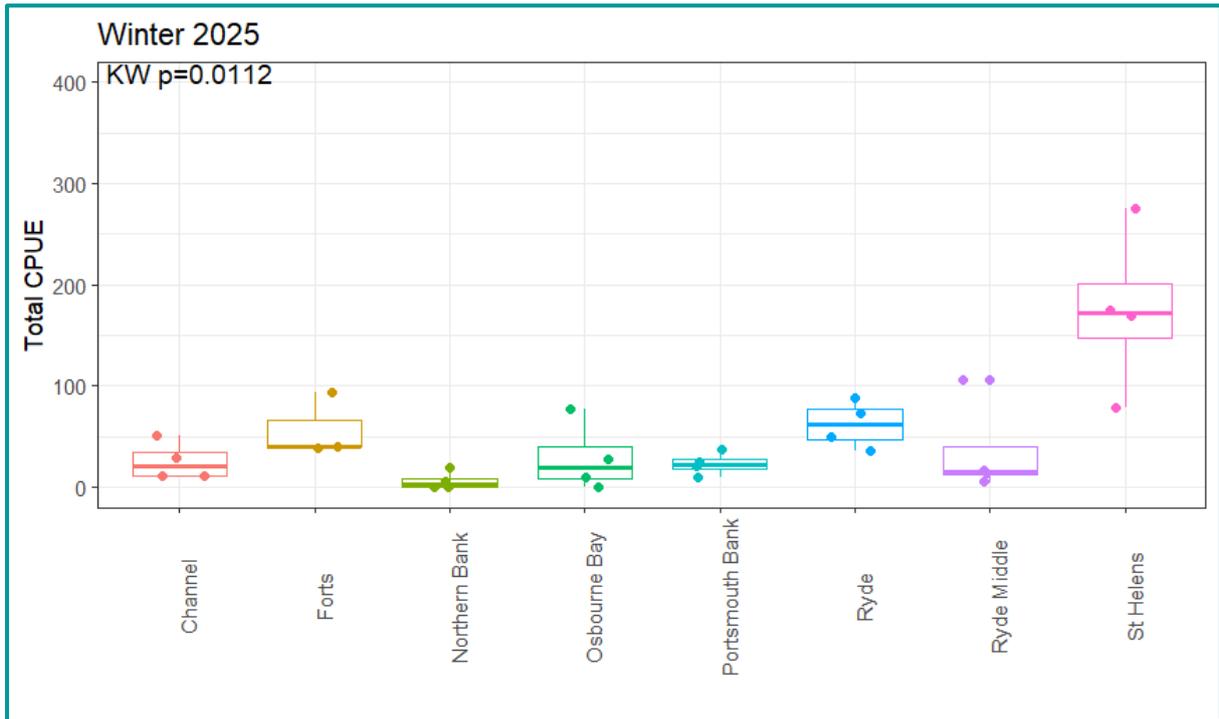


Figure 3: Catch per Unit Effort (kg/m/hr) of the Total population of sampled scallops for each site surveyed in Winter 2025.

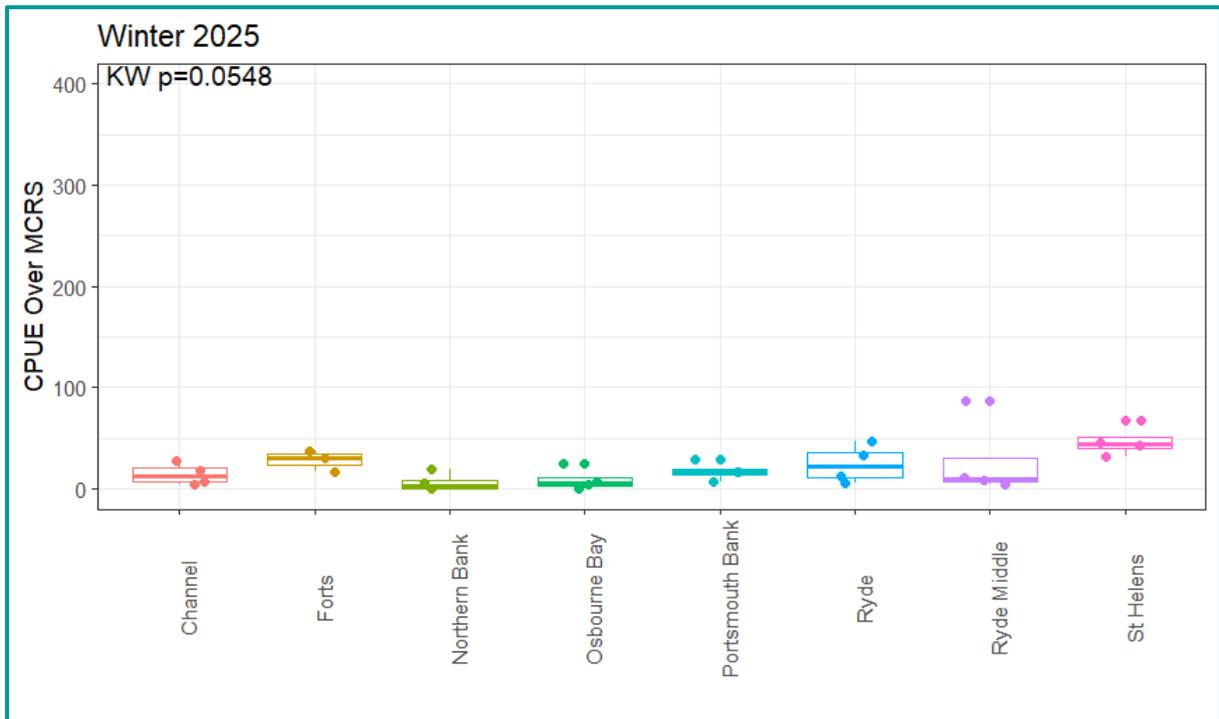


Figure 4: Catch per Unit Effort (kg/m/hr) for the sampled population of scallops Over the Minimum Conservation Reference Size for each site surveyed in Winter 2025.

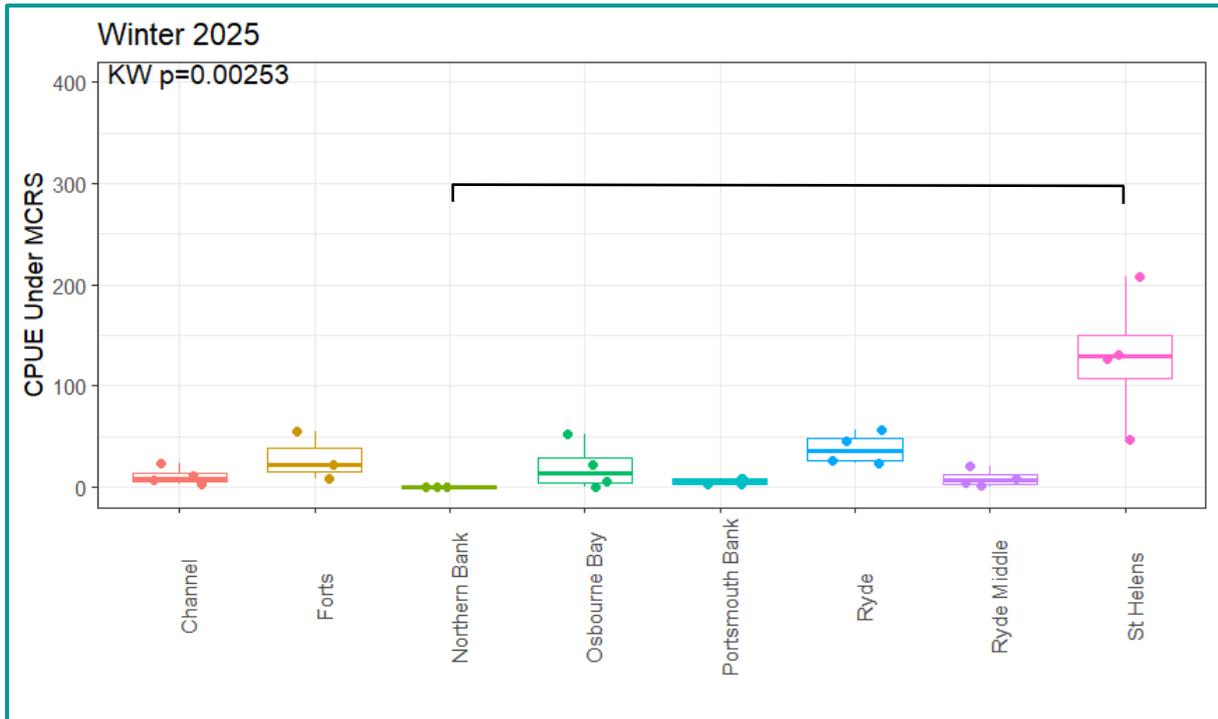


Figure 5: Catch per Unit Effort (kg/m/hr) for the sampled population of scallops Under the Minimum Conservation Reference Size for each site surveyed in Winter 2025. The bracket indicates the presence of a statistically significant difference between sites as determined by Dunn's post-hoc analysis ($p < 0.05$).

Spring 2025

- A Kruskal-Wallis test found statistically significant differences between sites for Total CPUE ($p < 0.05$), and CPUE Under MCRS ($p < 0.01$), however Dunns' post-hoc analyses found no statistically significant differences between the sites indicating that the variance in the data within sites is greater than the variance between sites. No significant difference was found between sites for CPUE Over MCRS.
- For Total population sampled, the site with the greatest average CPUE was Forts (94.19 kg/m/hr), while the site with the lowest average CPUE was Ryde Middle (2.20 kg/m/hr) (Figure 6).
- For Over MCRS population sampled, the site with the greatest average CPUE was Forts (26.31 kg/m/hr), while the site with the lowest average CPUE was Ryde Middle (2.20 kg/m/hr) (Figure 7).
- For Under MCRS population sampled, the site with the greatest average CPUE was Forts (67.88 kg/m/hr), while the site with the lowest average CPUE was Ryde Middle (0 kg/m/hr) (Figure 8).

Solent Scallop Survey 2025

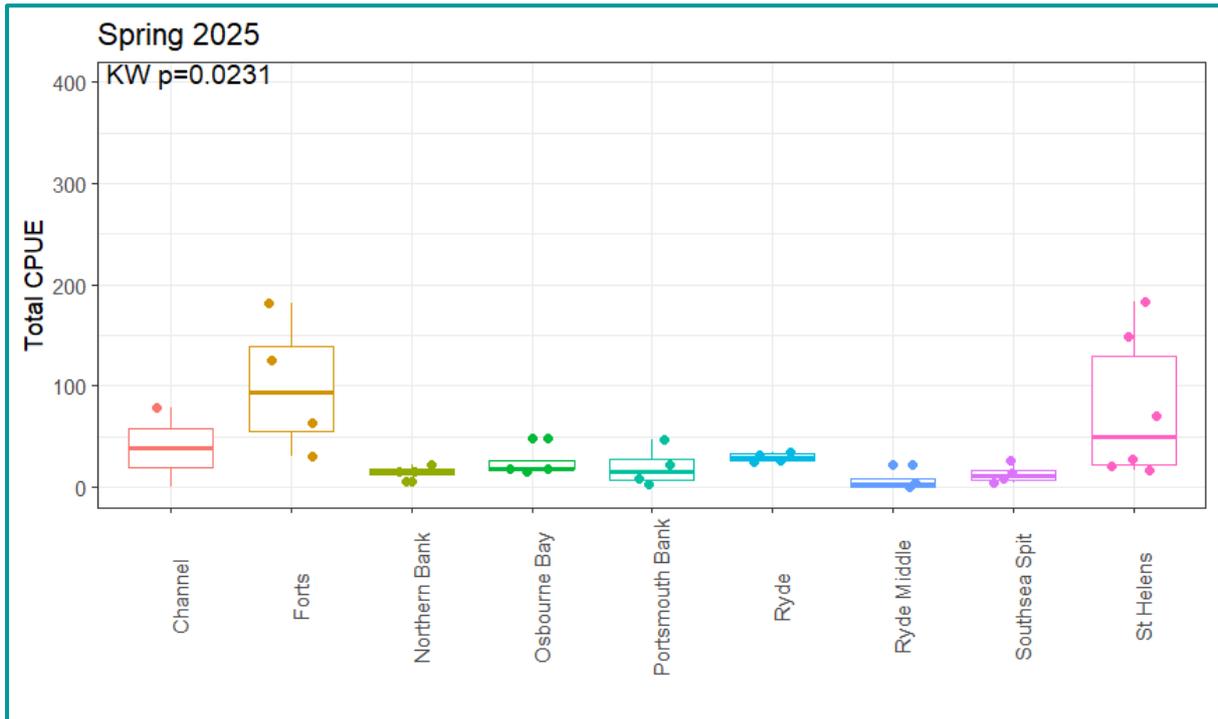


Figure 6: Catch per Unit Effort (kg/m/hr) of the Total population of sampled scallops for each site surveyed in Spring 2025.

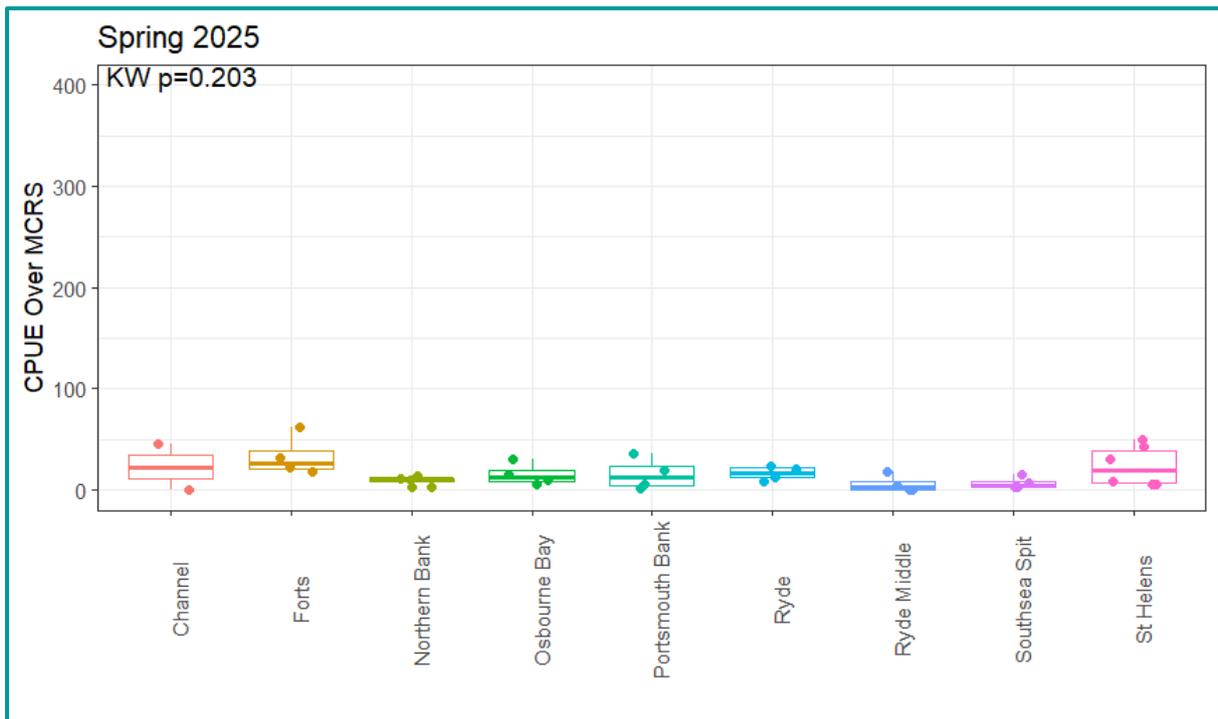


Figure 7: Catch per Unit Effort (kg/m/hr) for the sampled population of scallops Over the Minimum Conservation Reference Size for each site surveyed in Spring 2025.

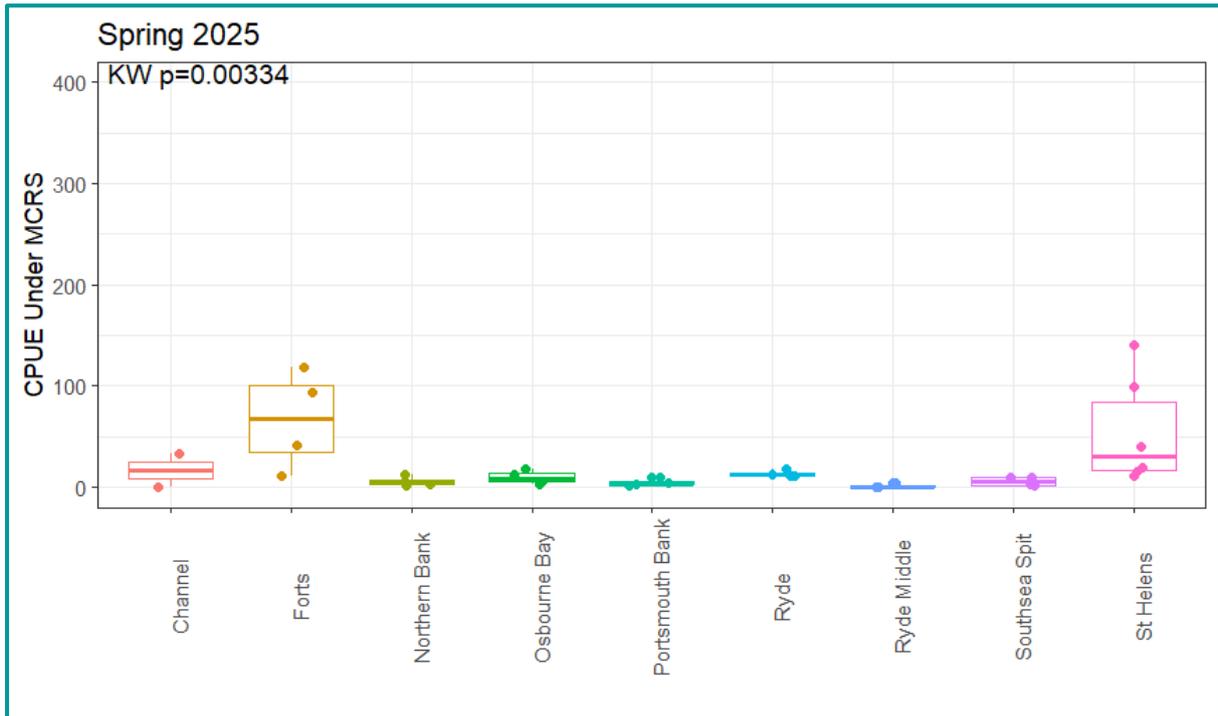


Figure 8: Catch per Unit Effort (kg/m/hr) for the sampled population of scallops Under the Minimum Conservation Reference Size for each site surveyed in Spring 2025.

Autumn 2025

- A Kruskal-Wallis test found statistically significant differences between sites for Total CPUE ($p < 0.01$), CPUE Over MCRS ($p < 0.05$), and CPUE Under MCRS ($p < 0.001$). A post-hoc Dunns test found a statistically significant difference ($p < 0.05$) between the average CPUE at Northern Bank and St Helens for each sampled section of the population.
- For Total population sampled, the site with the greatest average CPUE was St Helens (133.03 kg/m/hr), while the site with the lowest average CPUE was Northern Bank (0 kg/m/hr) (Figure 9).
- For Over MCRS population sampled, the site with the greatest average CPUE was St Helens (93.94 kg/m/hr), while the site with the lowest average CPUE was Northern Bank (0 kg/m/hr) (Figure 10).
- For Under MCRS population sampled, the site with the greatest average CPUE was St Helens (40.94 kg/m/hr), while the site with the lowest average CPUE was Northern Bank (0 kg/m/hr) (Figure 11).

Solent Scallop Survey 2025

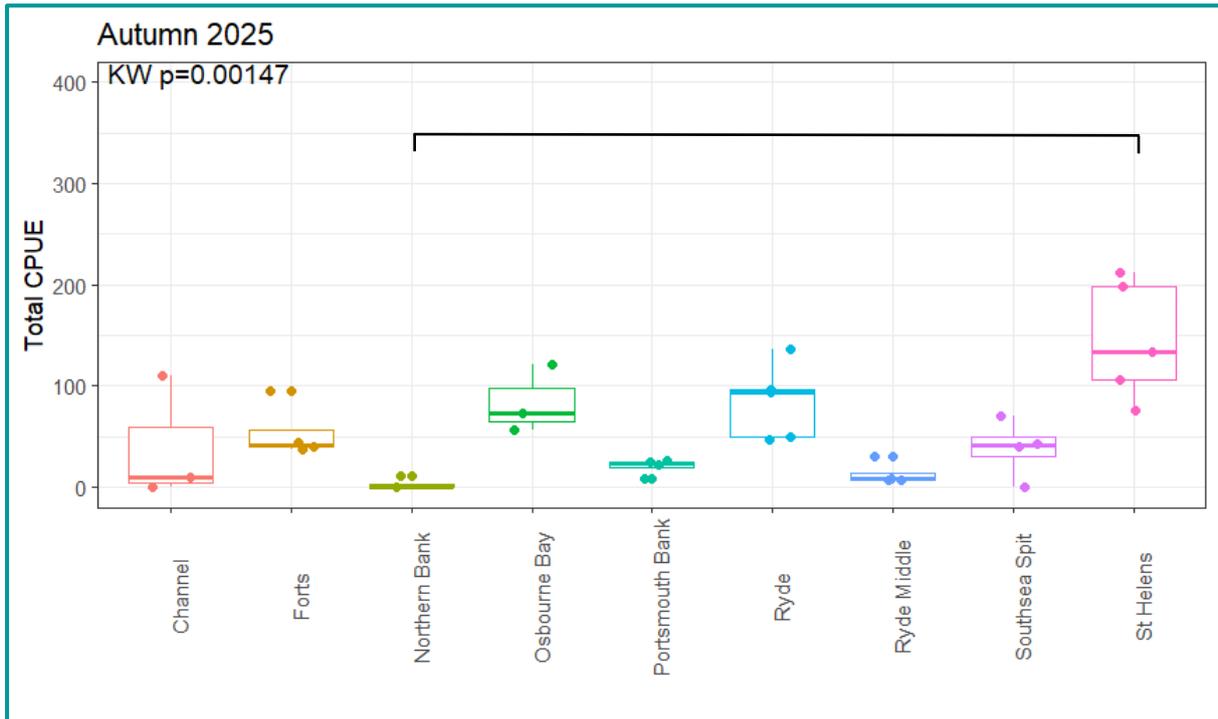


Figure 9: Catch per Unit Effort (kg/m/hr) of the Total population of sampled scallops for each site surveyed in Autumn 2025. The bracket indicates the presence of a statistically significant difference between sites as determined by Dunn's post-hoc analysis ($p < 0.05$).

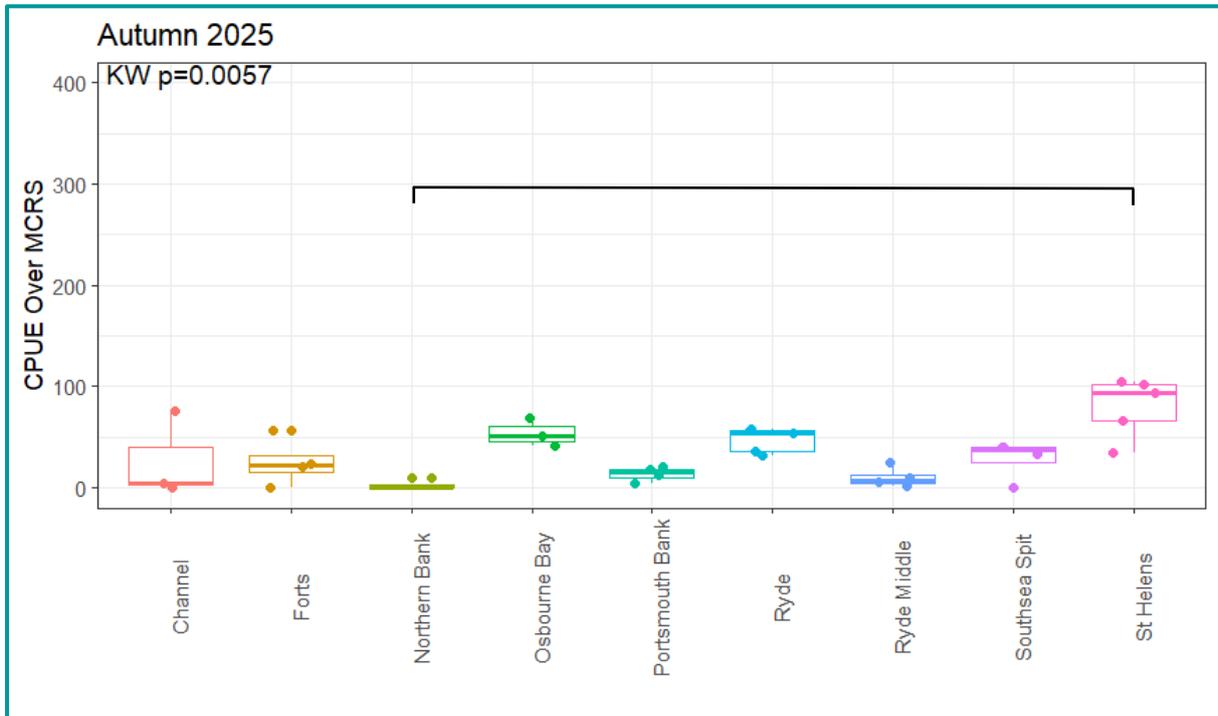


Figure 10: Catch per Unit Effort (kg/m/hr) for the sampled population of scallops Over the Minimum Conservation Reference Size for each site surveyed in Autumn 2025. The bracket indicates the presence of a statistically significant difference between sites as determined by Dunn's post-hoc analysis ($p < 0.05$).

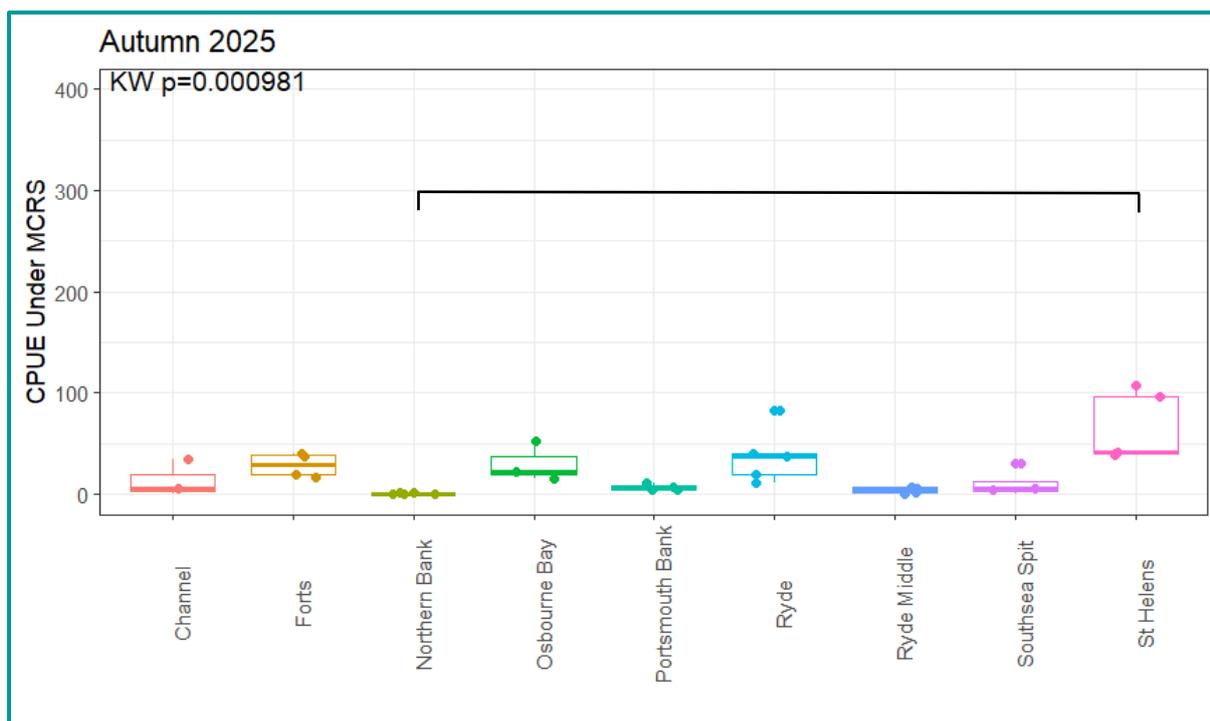


Figure 11: Catch per Unit Effort (kg/m/hr) for the sampled population of scallops Under the Minimum Conservation Reference Size for each site surveyed in Autumn 2025. The bracket indicates the presence of a statistically significant difference between sites as determined by Dunn's post-hoc analysis ($p < 0.05$).

3.1.2 Comparing CPUE Between Surveys

Combining data for all the sites in each of the surveys, comparisons were made between surveys for Total CPUE, CPUE Over MCRS, and CPUE Under MCRS using Kruskal-Wallis and post-hoc Dunn's test. Trends in CPUE are highlighted for key timeframes, the figures detail comparisons over the full time series dataset which are reported in full in relevant years survey reports¹:

- When the fishing season was active (Autumn 24 to Spring 25 surveys),
- When the fishery was closed (Spring 25 to Autumn 25 surveys),
- Comparisons between the spring and autumn surveys between years.

Total CPUE (Figure 12)

- A statistically significant decrease in average CPUE was seen during the 24/25 fishing season (Autumn 2024 to Spring 2025 surveys) from 112.95 kg/m/hr to 22.25 kg/m/hr ($p < 0.0001$).
- The average CPUE increased from Spring 2025 (22.2 kg/m/hr) to Autumn 2025 (41.8 kg/m/hr) but was not significant.
- The average CPUE decreased from Spring 2024 (22.88 kg/m/hr) to Spring 2025 (22.25 kg/m/hr) but was not significant.
- A statistically significant decrease in average CPUE was seen from the Autumn 2024 survey (112.95 kg/m/hr) to the Autumn 2025 survey (41.79 kg/m/hr) ($p < 0.001$).

¹ Survey reports from previous years are available on the Southern IFCA website - [Solent Dredge Permit : Southern IFCA](#)

CPUE Over MCRS (Figure 13)

- A statistically significant decrease in average CPUE was seen during the 24/25 fishing season (Autumn 2024 to Spring 2025 surveys) from 64.45 kg/m/hr to 11.89 kg/m/hr ($p < 0.0001$).
- A statistically significant increase in average CPUE was seen from the Spring 2025 survey (11.89 kg/m/hr) to the Autumn 2025 survey (27.67 kg/m/hr) ($p < 0.05$).
- The average CPUE decreased from Spring 2024 (13.63 kg/m/hr) to Spring 2025 (11.89 kg/m/hr) but was not significant.
- A statistically significant decrease in average CPUE was seen from the Autumn 2024 survey (64.45 kg/m/hr) to the Autumn 2025 survey (27.67 kg/m/hr) ($p < 0.01$).

CPUE Under MCRS (Figure 14)

- A statistically significant decrease in average CPUE was seen during the 24/25 fishing season (Autumn 2024 to Spring 2025 surveys) from 39.41 kg/m/hr to 10.39 kg/m/hr ($p < 0.0001$).
- The average CPUE increased from Spring 2025 (10.4 kg/m/hr) to Autumn 2025 (13.6 kg/m/hr) but was not significant.
- The average CPUE increase from Spring 2024 (6.76 kg/m/hr) to Spring 2025 (10.39 kg/m/hr) but was not significant.
- A statistically significant decrease in average CPUE was seen from the Autumn 2024 survey (39.41 kg/m/hr) to the Autumn 2025 survey (13.57 kg/m/hr) ($p < 0.001$).

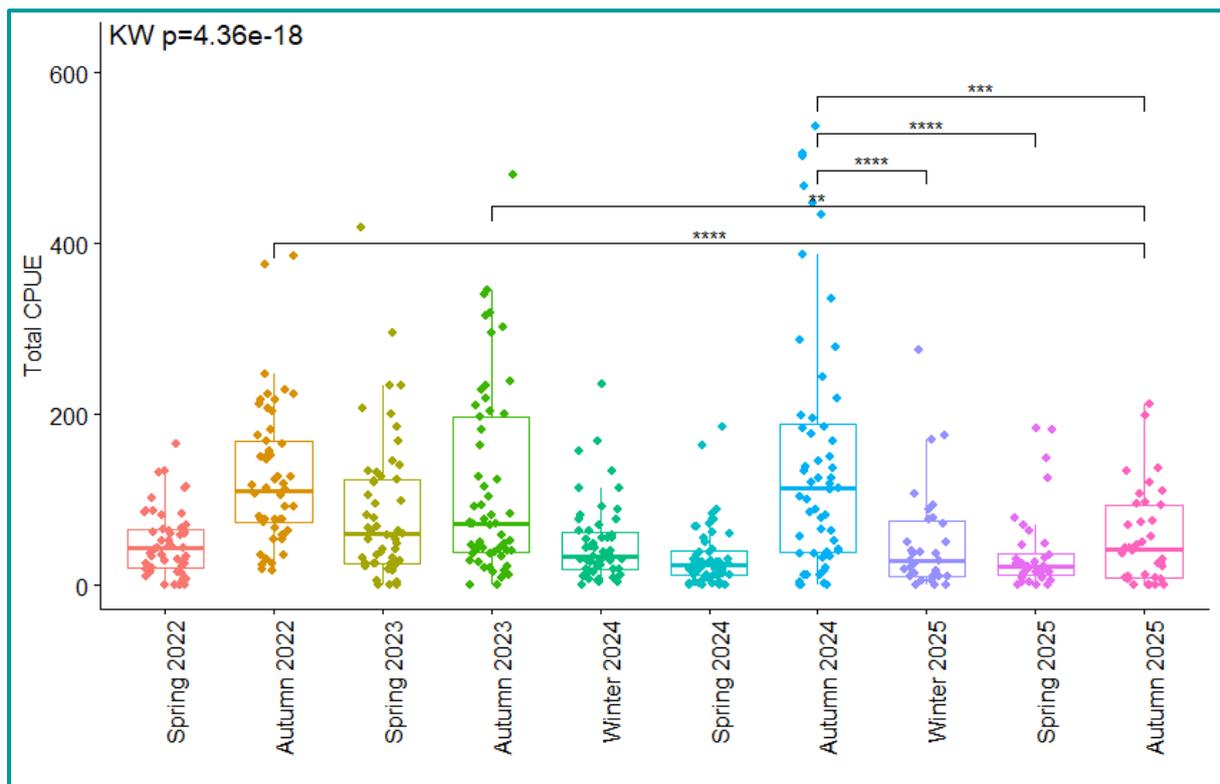


Figure 12: Catch per Unit Effort (kg/m/hr) for the total population of sampled scallops in all surveys undertaken since 2022. Brackets indicate the presence of statistically significant differences between surveys as determined by Dunn’s post-hoc analysis (** = $p < 0.01$, *** = $p < 0.001$, **** = $p < 0.0001$).

Solent Scallop Survey 2025

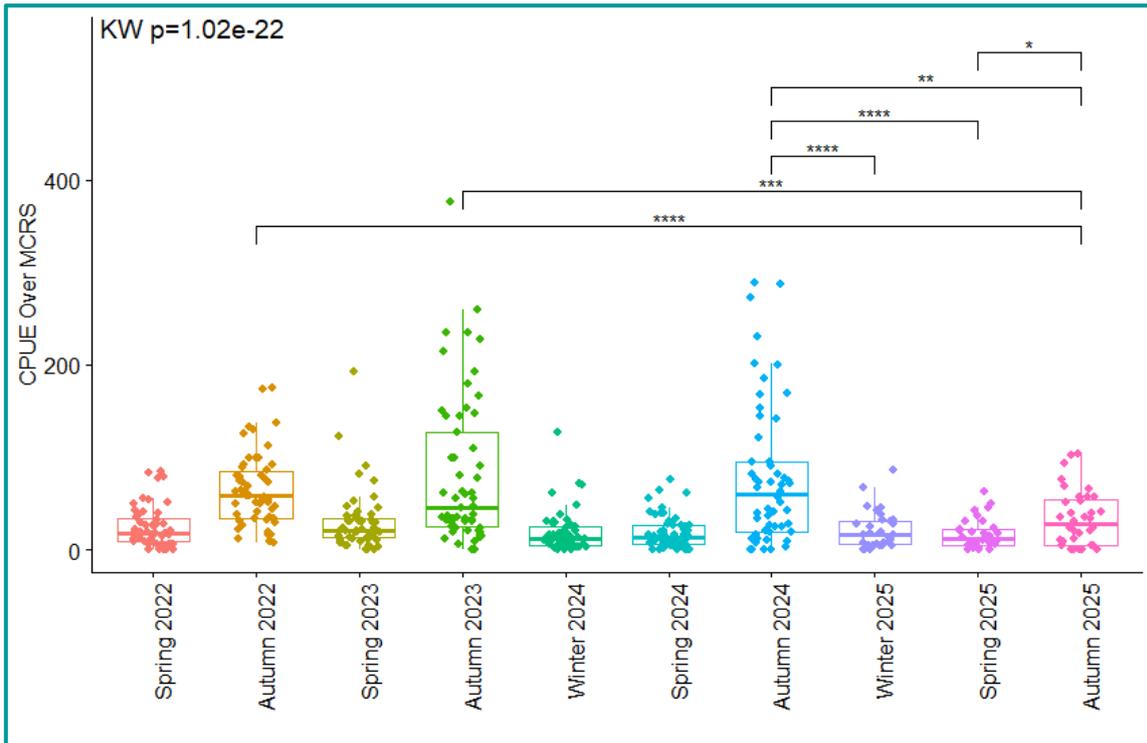


Figure 13: Catch per Unit Effort (kg/m/hr) for sampled scallops Over the Minimum Conservation Reference Size from all surveys undertaken since 2022. Brackets indicate the presence of statistically significant differences between surveys as determined by Dunn's post-hoc test (* = $p < 0.05$, ** = $p < 0.01$, * = $p < 0.001$, **** = $p < 0.0001$).**

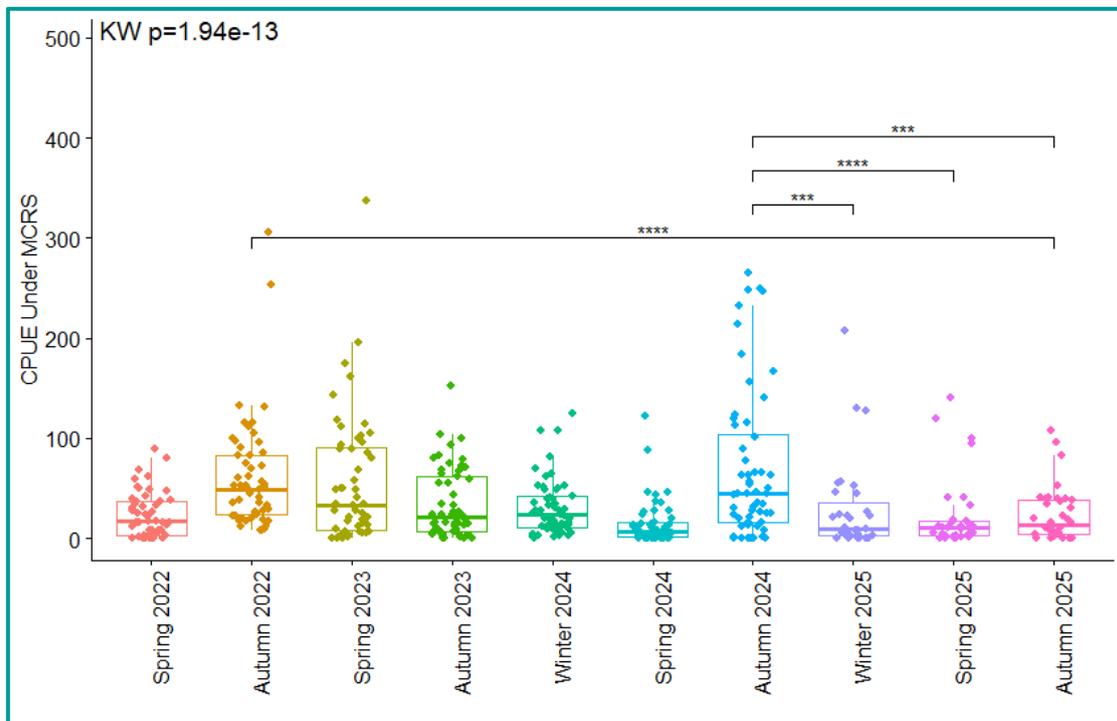


Figure 14: Catch per Unit Effort (kg/m/hr) for sampled scallops Under the Minimum Conservation Reference Size in all surveys undertaken since 2022. Brackets indicate the presence of statistically significant differences between surveys as determined by Dunn's post-hoc test (* = $p < 0.001$, **** = $p < 0.0001$).**

3.1.3 Comparing CPUE for Each Site Between Surveys

For the same key timeframes, comparisons were also made between the individual sampling sites for Total CPUE, CPUE Over MCRS and CPUE Under MCRS. A summary of the change to CPUE at sites between surveys undertaken in 2024 and 2025 for these key periods is provided in Table 1.

Table 1: A summary of the trends in CPUE change for individual sites between surveys for key timeframes; during the fishery closed period (2024 and 2025) during the fishing season (24/25) and between spring and autumn surveys for 24-25. Where significant results were found a score of at least $p < 0.05$ was obtained.

| | | Total Sample | Over MCRS | Under MCRS |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| No. of sites where CPUE increased during the closed season (Spr – Aut of same year) | 2024 | 8 sites 5 significant | 8 sites 4 significant | 8 sites 5 significant |
| | 2025 | 6 sites | 6 sites 2 significant | 5 sites |
| No. of sites where CPUE decreased during the closed season (Spr – Aut of the same year) | 2024 | 0 sites | 0 sites | 0 sites |
| | 2025 | 3 sites | 3 sites | 4 sites |
| | | Total Sample | Over MCRS | Under MCRS |
| No. of sites where CPUE increased during the 24/25 fishing season (Aut 24 – Spr 25) | | 0 site | 0 site | 0 site |
| No. of sites where CPUE decreased during the 24/25 fishing season (Aut 24 – Spr 25) | | 8 sites 4 significant | 8 sites 4 significant | 8 sites 3 significant |
| | | Total Sample | Over MCRS | Under MCRS |
| Spring 2024 – Spring 2025 | Increase | 4 sites | 3 sites | 7 sites |
| | Decrease | 4 sites | 5 sites | 1 site |
| Autumn 2024 – Autumn 2025 | Increase | 1 site | 1 site | 1 site |
| | Decrease | 7 sites 3 significant | 7 sites 2 significant | 7 sites 3 significant |

3.2 Catch Data

As the Solent Dredge Permit renews in November of each year, catch is recorded in a season from November to October of the following year. The only year where October was open to fishing following a closed season was in 2022.

3.2.1 Landings Trends

The total kg of King scallop caught across all vessels during the 24/25 season was 400.3 tonne, a decrease from the 23/24 season at 560.9 tonne but an increase from both the 22/23 and 21/22 seasons (153.3 and 297.8 tonne respectively) (Figure 15).

During the 24/25 fishing season, the average weight of scallop caught each month was 7.9 tonnes, a decrease from the 2023/24 season (11.2 tonne) but an increase from both the 2021/22 and 2022/23 seasons (4.9 tonne and 3.1 tonne respectively).

During the 24/25 fishing season, the most vessels fished during November (23) and the most catch was taken during the first month (November, 7.5 tonne per vessel, 43% of total seasons catch) (Figure15). During each of the previous seasons, the highest weight of catch has also been landed in the first month following the closed period (11.7 tonne per vessel 23/24, 8.5 tonne per vessel 22/23, 4.3 tonne per vessel 21/22) (Figure 15).

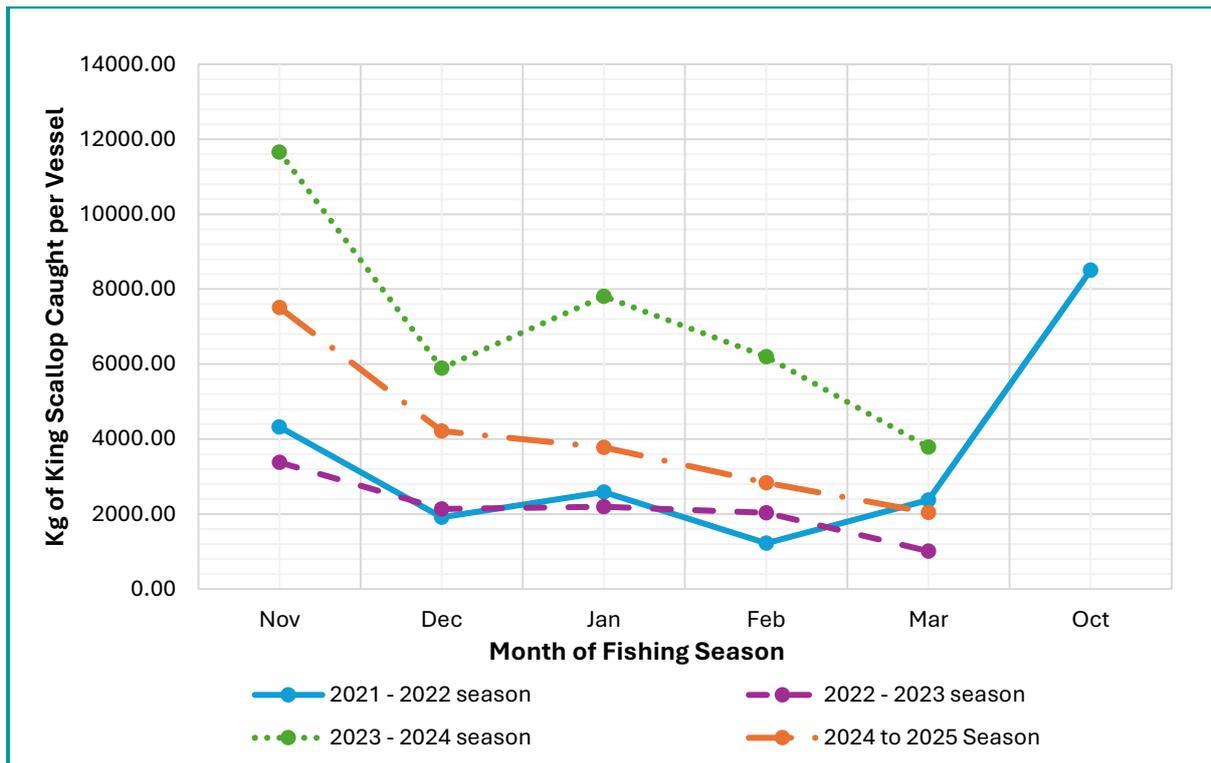


Figure 15: The average Kg of King Scallop caught per vessel during each month of the previous 4 years fishing seasons. Please note that catch levels were not recorded during October 2021 as the SPDB was not yet in place, and were not reported in October 2023, 2024, or 2025 due to a closure of the fishery for that month.

3.2.2 Comparison between surveys and reporting zones

LPUE values from data submitted by fishers on SDPB catch returns (required to be submitted monthly through the season) in the 2024/25 fishing season for catch caught in areas that overlap with the Solent Scallop survey beds, is compared to LPUE values for the Over MCRS population sampled during the Autumn 2024, Spring 2025 and Autumn 2025 surveys (Figure 16). Catch levels appear to be consistent across each BMA3 subarea, with quantity of removals appearing to make no difference to recovery level within each subarea. Figure 16 also displays that the average largest landings were removed from the BMA3 subareas with the highest catch levels in the Autumn 2024 survey.

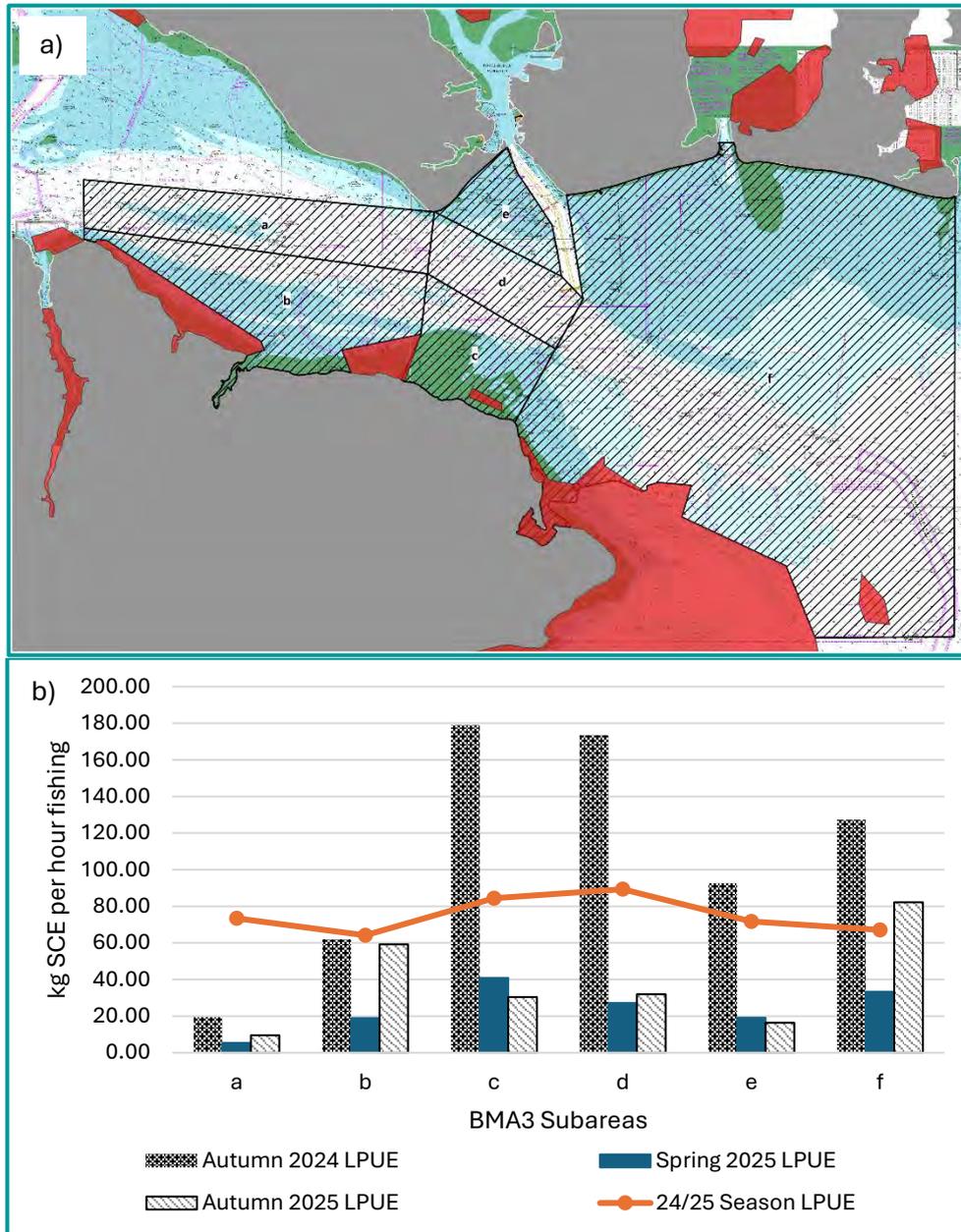


Figure 16: a) map displaying the reporting subzones within Bivalve Management Area 3 (BMA3) that fishers are required to detail within their SDPB catch returns; b) Mean Landings Per Unit Effort (LPUE) (kg/hr) values from the Autumn 2024, Spring 2025, and Autumn 2025 surveys compared to the mean LPUE values obtained from SDPB catch records in the Solent scallop fishery during the 2024/25 season, by Bivalve Management Area 3 (BMA3) reporting subzones.

3.3 Size Frequency

An analysis of width data from scallops sampled with the N-Viro dredge for the three surveys undertaken in 2025 gave the following results (Figure 17):

- A visual analysis of the size frequency for scallops sampled in the 2025 surveys shows that Spring 2025 had a wider range of width measurements than either the Winter or Autumn survey.
- Comparing the median width of scallops (mm) between all the 2025 surveys using a Kruskal-Wallis test showed that there was a significant effect of survey on width ($p < 0.01$), with a statistically significant increase found for the Autumn 2025 survey (110mm) in comparison to the Spring 2025 survey (104mm) ($p < 0.01$).
- A non-significant decrease in median width of the population sampled with the N-Viro dredge can be seen between the Autumn 2024 (107mm) and Spring 2025 (104mm) surveys.
- The results show that the greatest width of an individual scallop sampled in 2025 using the N-Viro dredge was 146mm in the Autumn survey, and the smallest was 26mm in the Spring survey.

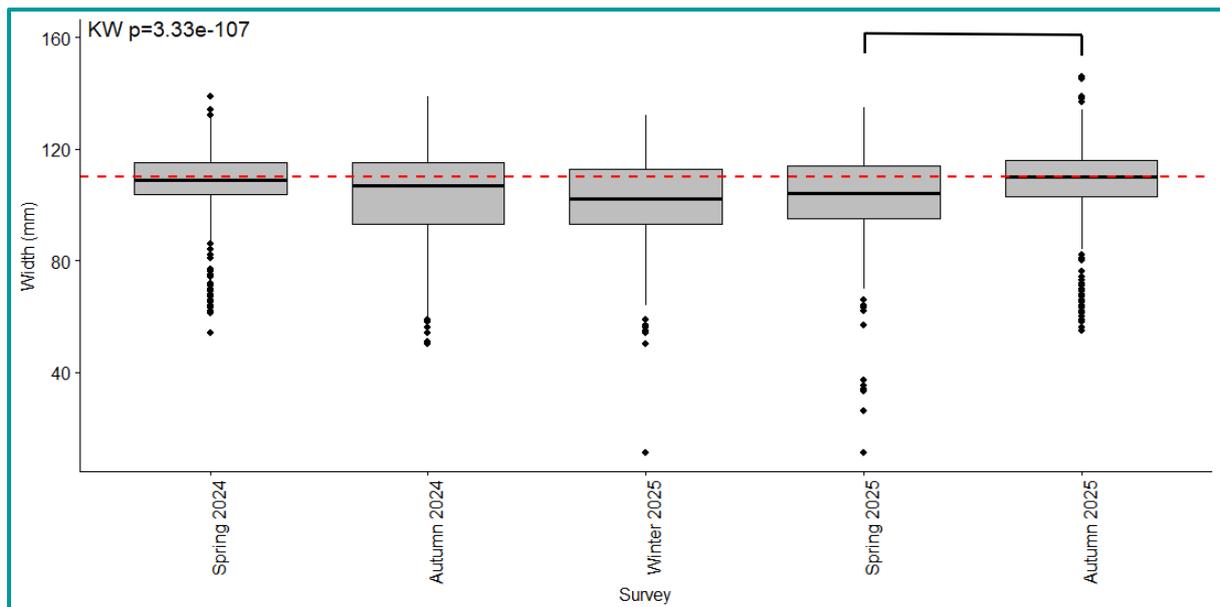


Figure 17: Comparisons of the widths of scallops (mm) measured during surveys undertaken between April 2024 and September 2025. The thick black line shows the median width (mm), the red dotted line represents the Minimum Conservation Reference Size of King scallops in ICEA area VIId (110mm). The bracket indicates the presence of a statistically significant increase between surveys as determined by Dunn's post-hoc test ($p < 0.01$).

3.3.1 Descriptive Analysis of Size Frequency

Winter 2025 (Figure 18)

Four of the eight sites sampled for the Winter 2025 survey have peaks in their size frequency distribution for a class above the MCRS (>110mm). Of the remaining sites, 3 have distribution peaks in the 90 – 95mm size class.

Solent Scallop Survey 2025

Looking at specific site differences within Winter 2025, median width was statistically significantly lower at:

- Northern Bank (110mm) in comparison to Portsmouth Bank (111mm) and Ryde Middle (112.5mm),
- Osbourne Bay (99mm) in comparison to Portsmouth Bank (111mm), Ryde Middle (112.5mm), and Northern Bank (110mm),
- St Helens (97.5mm) in comparison to Northern Bank (110mm), Portsmouth Bank (111mm), and Ryde Middle (112.5mm),
- Forts (102mm) in comparison to Northern Bank (110mm),
- Ryde (96.5mm) in comparison to Portsmouth Bank (111mm), Ryde Middle (112.5mm), and Northern Bank (110mm).

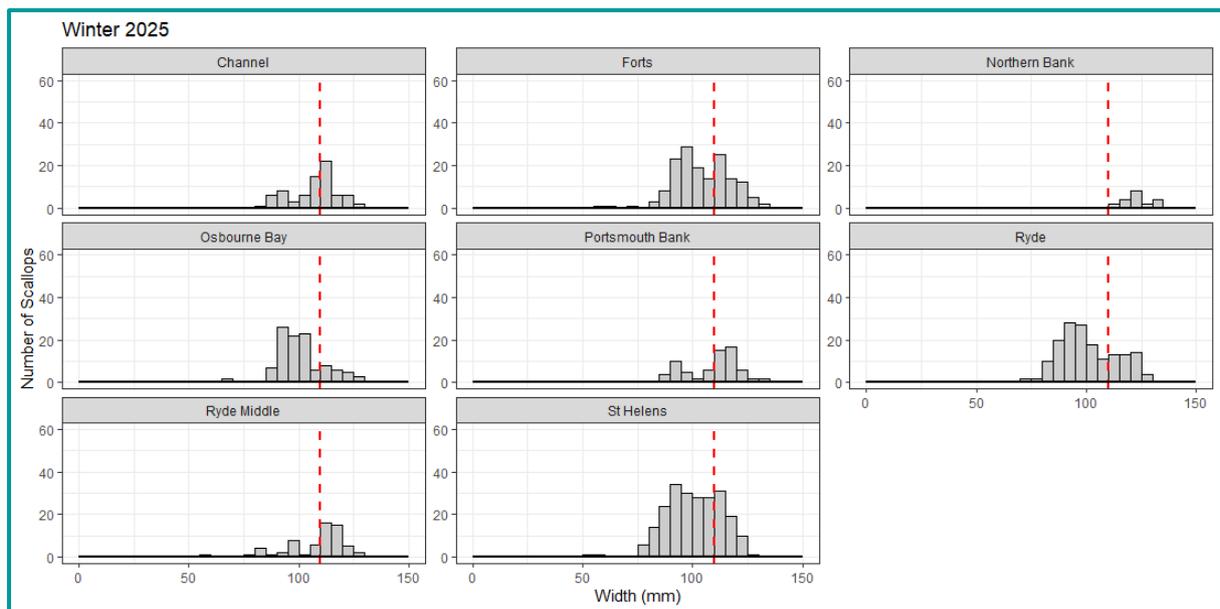


Figure 18: Width of scallops (mm) across all beds sampled in the Winter 2025 survey. The red dashed line represents the Minimum Conservation Reference Size of King Scallops in ICES area VIId (110mm).

Spring 2025 (Figure 19)

Three of the nine sights sampled for the Spring 2025 survey have peaks in their size frequency distribution for a class above the MCRS (>110mm). All of the remaining sites have a distribution peak in a 5mm size class between 85 and 100mm.

Looking at specific site differences within Spring 2025, a Dunns post-hoc test found that median width was statistically significantly lower at (at least $p < 0.05$):

- Forts (97.5mm) in comparison to Ryde Middle (114mm), Osbourne Bay (113mm), and Portsmouth Bank (114mm),
- St Helens (101mm) in comparison to Osbourne Bay (113mm) and Portsmouth Bank (114mm).

Solent Scallop Survey 2025

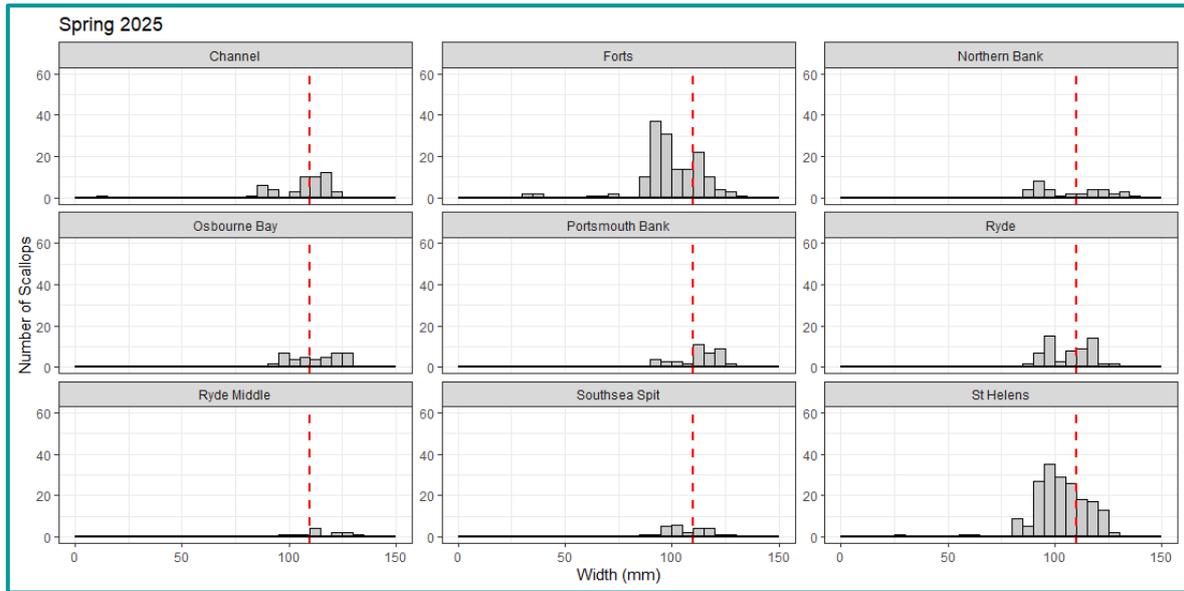


Figure 19: Width of scallops (mm) across all beds sampled in the Spring 2025 survey. The red dashed line represents the Minimum Conservation Reference Size of King Scallops in ICES area VIId (110mm).

Autumn 2025 (Figure 20)

Six out of the nine sites sampled for the Autumn 2025 survey have peaks in their size frequency distribution for a class above the MCRS (>110mm). All of the remaining sites have distribution peaks in the size class below the MCRS (105 to 110mm).

Looking at specific site differences within Spring 2025, median width was statistically significantly lower at (at least $p < 0.05$):

- Forts (106mm) in comparison to Portsmouth Bank (113mm), Ryde Middle (118mm), and Southsea Spit (116mm),
- St Helens (108mm) and Ryde (109mm) in comparison to Southsea Spit (116mm).

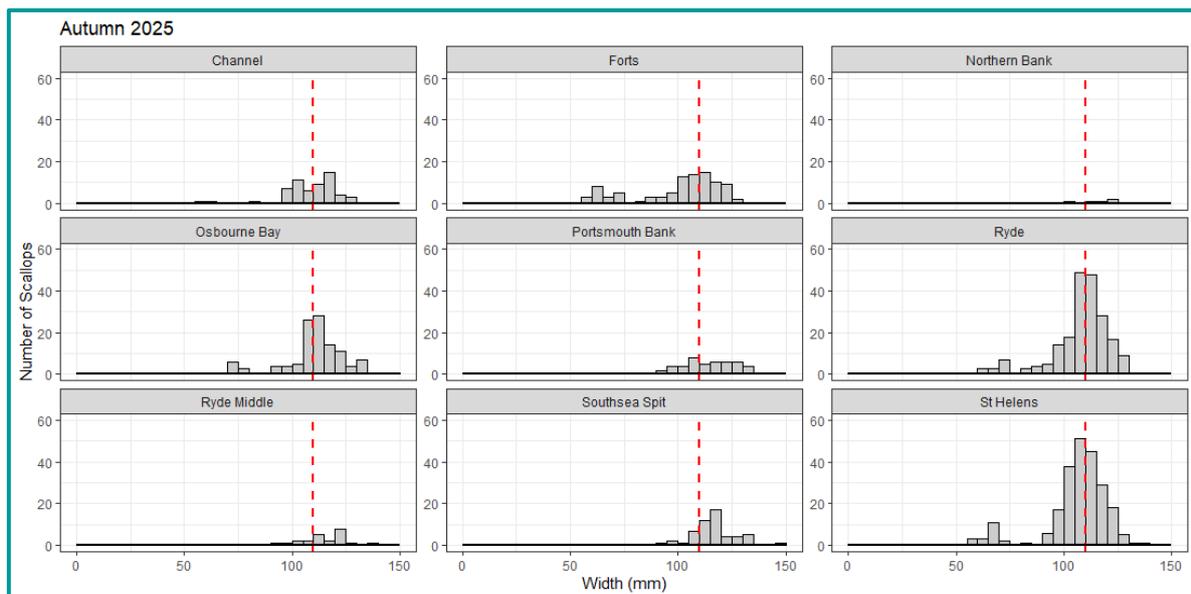


Figure 20: Width of scallops (mm) across all beds sampled in the Autumn 2025 survey. The red dashed line represents the Minimum Conservation Reference Size of King Scallops in ICES area VIId (110mm).

3.4 Catch Per Unit Effort (CPUE) – Queenie Dredge

Spring 2025 was the first time Southern IFCA deployed a modified Queenie dredge, with 70mm belly rings, in its survey, with the intention of sampling a higher proportion of the undersized scallop population (which industry standard N-Viro dredges are set up to minimise the retention of) and gaining a greater understanding of recruitment within the fishery. Here, results from analyses of the impact of dredge type and survey are analysed. At this time the Queenie dredge dataset has not been running long enough to be able to draw trends in either CPUE or width, but it is intended to continue to deploy this methodology to build up a dataset that allows increased understanding of population trends within the Solent Scallop fishery.

3.4.1 Influence of Dredge Type on Catch

Kruskal-Wallis tests were run on the CPUE values obtained when the N-Viro dredge and the Queenie dredge were run alongside each other, for both surveys in 2025 when this methodology was undertaken. These tests found no statistically significant difference in median for the total sampled population or the under MCRS sampled population across all sites combined but did find a statistically significant difference between the median over MCRS CPUE value of the two dredges when deployed in Spring 2025 ($p < 0.01$) (Figure 21).

At a site level, Kruskal-Wallis tests found the median CPUE value of catch sampled in the Queenie dredge to be statistically significantly lower than that in the N-Viro dredge for:

- Ryde, in Spring 2025 and Autumn 2025, for both the Total population sampled and the population Over MCRS sampled ($p < 0.05$),
- Osbourne Bay, in Spring 2025 and Autumn 2025, for both the Total population sampled and the population Over MCRS sampled ($p < 0.05$),
- Forts, in Spring 2025, for the population Over MCRS sampled ($p < 0.05$).

A Kruskal-Wallis test run on the width values of all scallop sampled when the N-Viro dredge and the Queenie dredge were run alongside each other, found a statistically significant difference between median values for both the Spring 2025 ($p < 0.001$) and Autumn 2025 ($p < 0.001$) surveys (Figure 22). At a site level, Kruskal-Wallis tests found median width value of catch sampled in the Queenie dredge to be statistically significantly lower than that in the N-Viro dredge for:

- Channel, in Spring 2025 ($p < 0.05$) and Autumn 2025 ($p < 0.001$),
- Forts, in Spring 2025 ($p < 0.001$),
- Osbourne Bay, in Autumn 2025 ($p < 0.001$),
- Portsmouth Bank, in Spring 2025 and Autumn 2025 ($p < 0.001$),
- Ryde, in Spring 2025 ($p < 0.05$) and Autumn 2025 ($p < 0.001$),
- Ryde Middle, in Spring 2025 ($p < 0.05$),
- St Helens, in Spring 2025 and Autumn 2025 ($p < 0.001$), and
- Southsea Spit, in Autumn 2025 ($p < 0.001$).

Solent Scallop Survey 2025

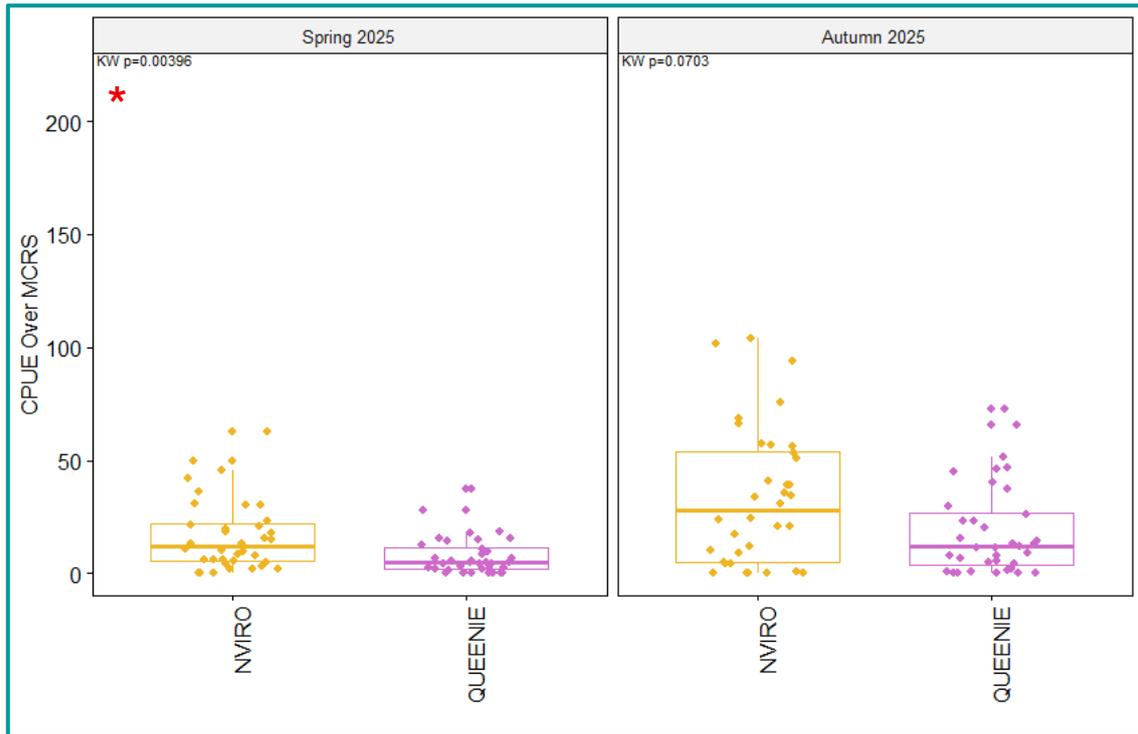


Figure 21: Catch per Unit Effort (kg/m/hr) of all sampled scallops over the Minimum Conservation Reference Size caught in each of the two dredges used during the 2025 survey programme. The red asterisk indicates a statistically significant difference between the median CPUE values of the dredges.

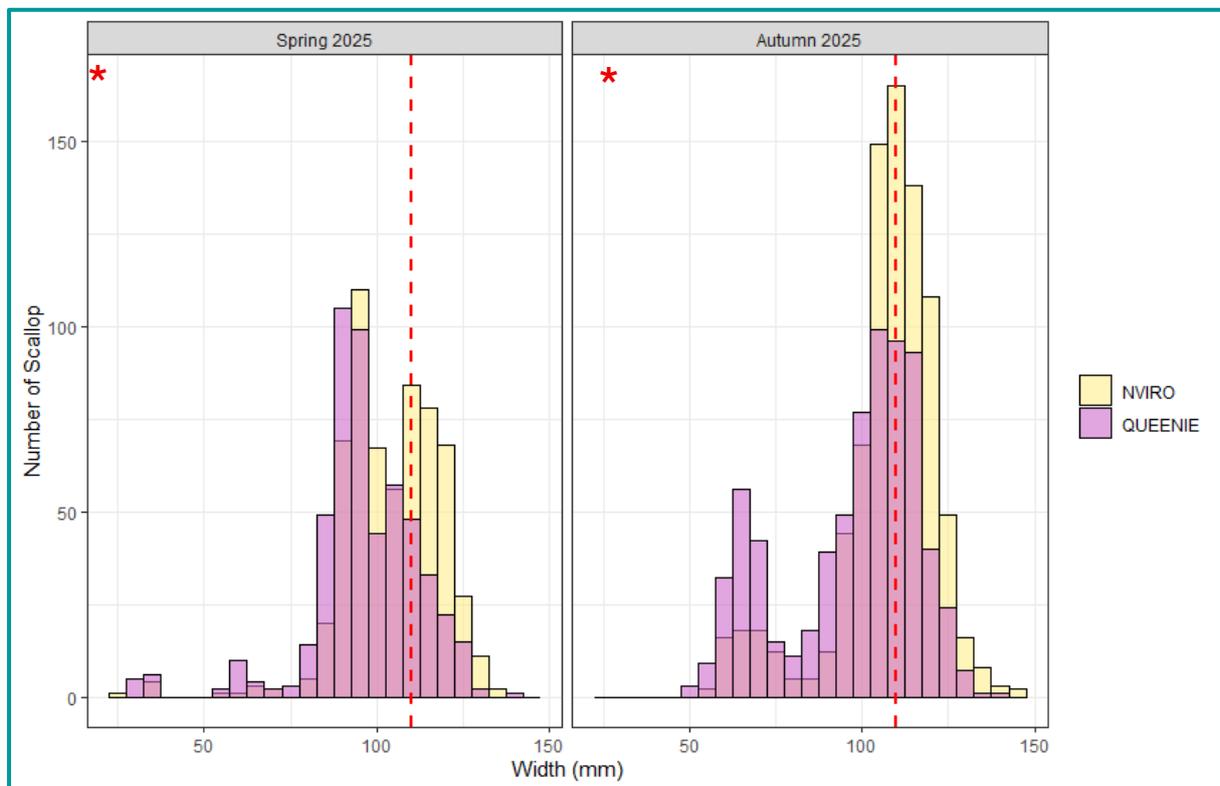


Figure 22: Histograms displaying the width (mm) of all scallops sampled by both dredges used in the 2025 survey programme. The red asterisk indicates a statistically significant difference between the median CPUE values of the dredges.

3.4.2 CPUE trends between Surveys for Queenie Dredge

A Kruskal-Wallis test run on CPUE values obtained from just the Queenie dredge during its deployment in the Spring and Autumn 2025 surveys found a statistically significant increase in median CPUE to Autumn 2025 for the portion of the population Over MCRS ($p < 0.05$) (Figure 23), but not for either the Total sampled population or the population Under MCRS.

A post-hoc Dunns test run on the sampled population Over MCRS found a statistically significant increase between the median CPUE values in Spring 2025 and Autumn 2025 for the sites Forts ($p < 0.05$) and St Helens ($p < 0.01$) (Figure 25).

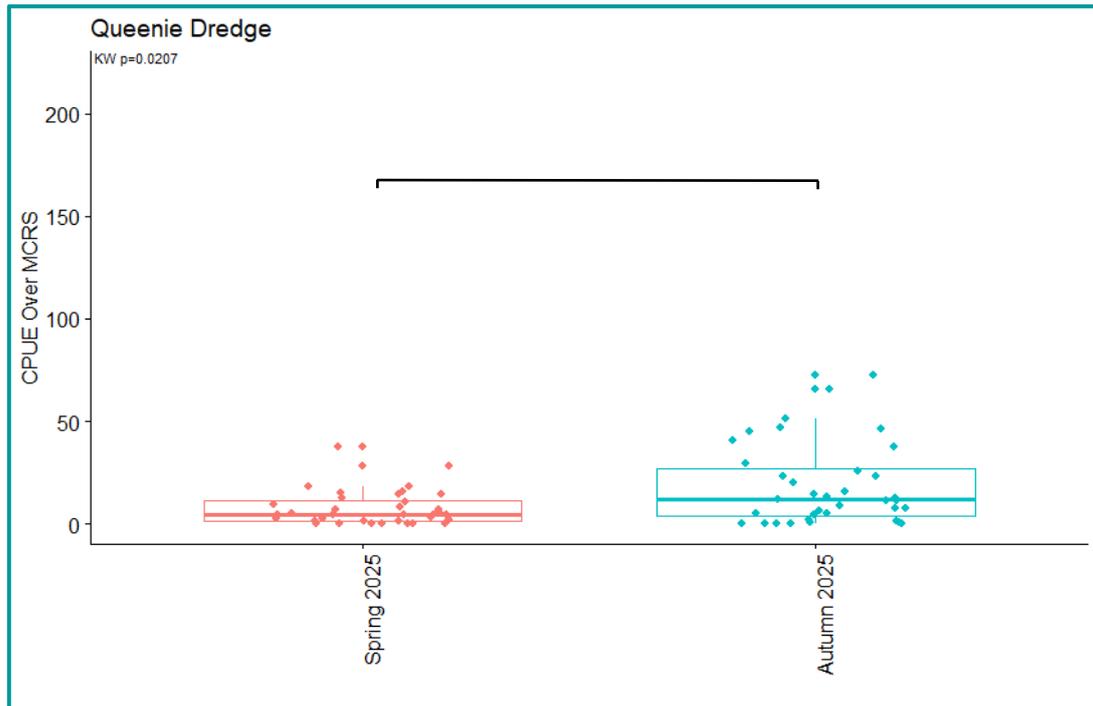


Figure 23: Catch per Unit Effort (kg/m/hr) of scallop over the Minimum Conservation Reference size sampled in the Queenie dredge for the surveys during which it was deployed in 2025. The bracket indicates a statistically significant increase in median CPUE seen from Spring 2025 to Autumn 2025 ($p < 0.05$).

Solent Scallop Survey 2025

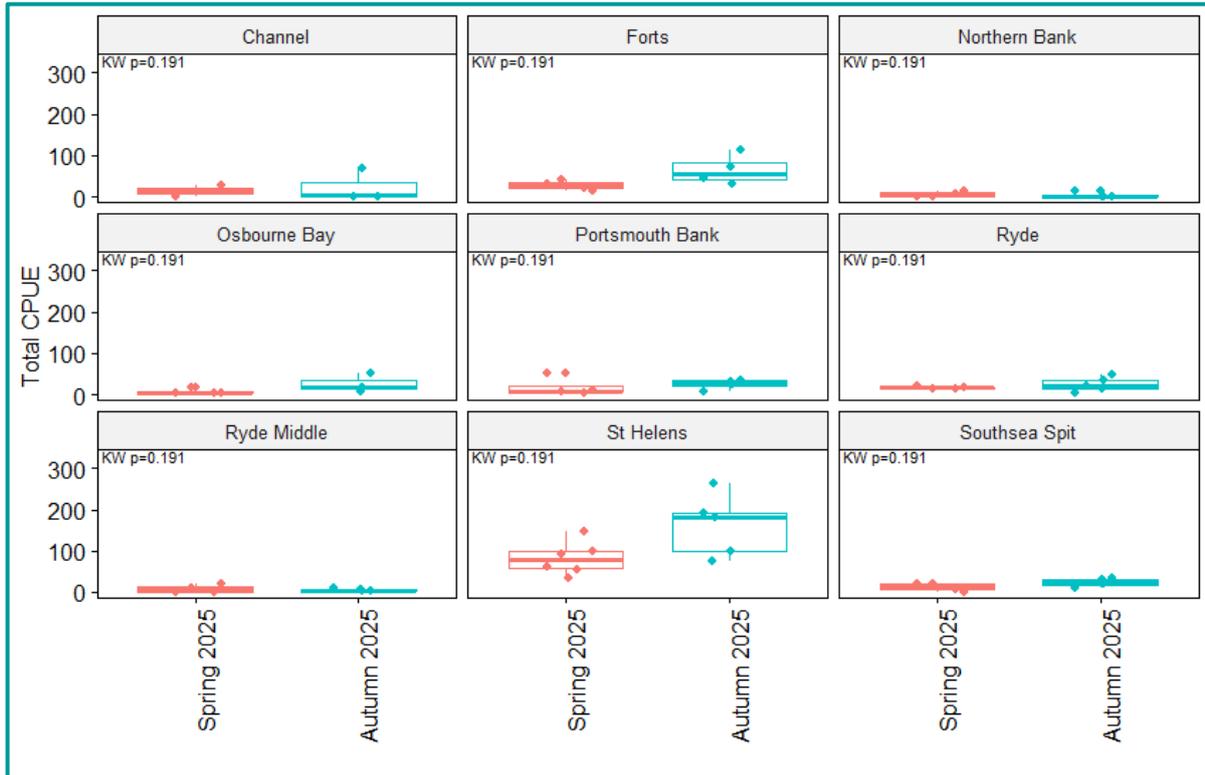


Figure 24: Catch per Unit Effort (kg/m/hr) of the Total population scallops sampled in the Queenie dredge for the surveys during which it was deployed in 2025.

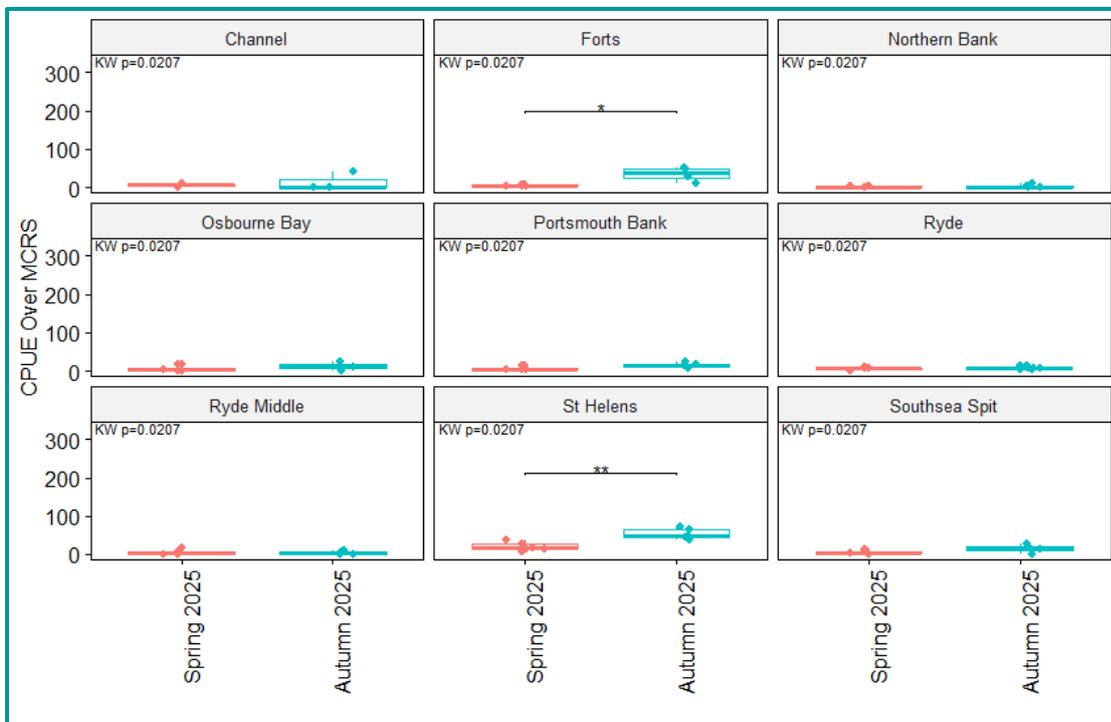


Figure 25: Catch per Unit Effort (kg/m/hr) of the over Minimum Conservation Reference Size (MCRS) scallops sampled in the Queenie dredge for the surveys during which it was deployed in 2025. The brackets indicate a statistically significant increase in median CPUE seen from Spring 2025 to Autumn 2025 (* = $p < 0.05$, ** = $p < 0.01$).

Solent Scallop Survey 2025

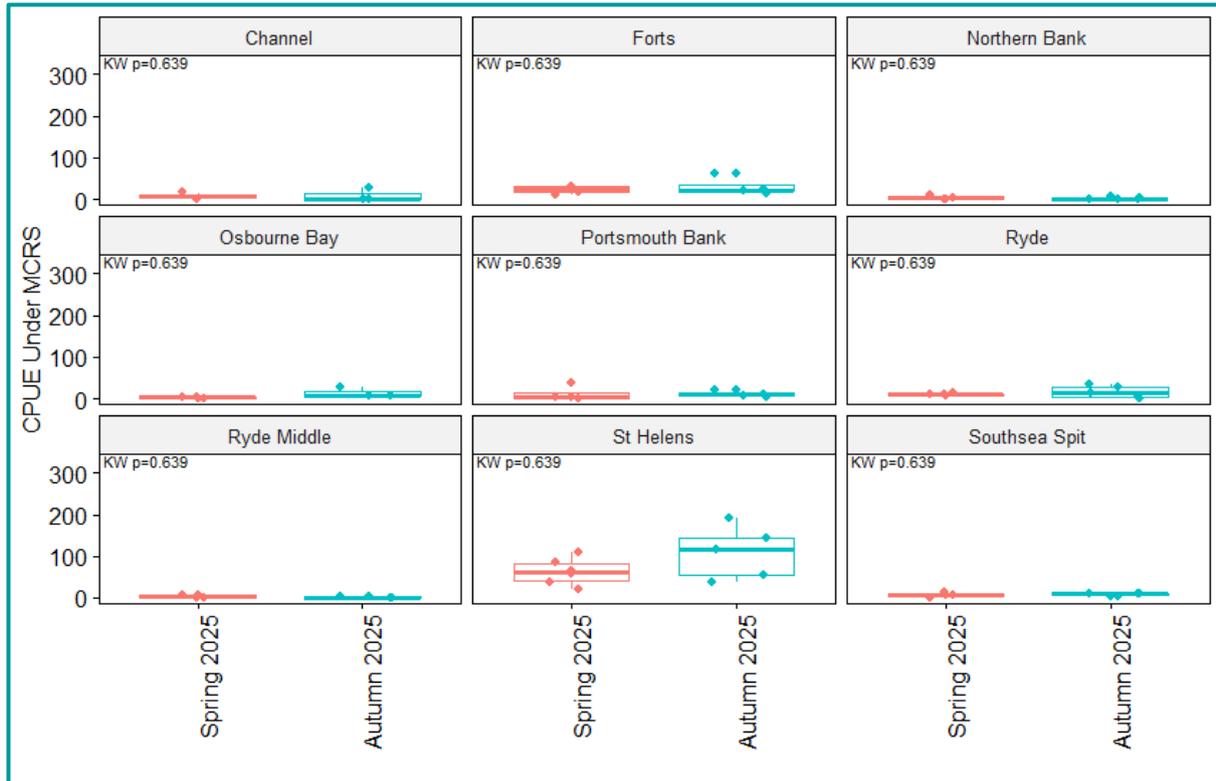


Figure 26: Catch per Unit Effort (kg/m/hr) of the under Minimum Conservation Reference Size (MCRS) scallops sampled in the Queenie dredge for the surveys during which it was deployed in 2025.

A Kruskal-Wallis test run on width values obtained from the Queenie dredge during the same two surveys found a statistically significant increase in the median width value for Autumn 2025 (103mm) in comparison to Spring 2025 (95mm) ($p < 0.001$) (Figure 27).

Looking at specific sites, a Dunns post-hoc test found that the median width of sampled scallops using the Queenie dredge was statistically significantly different for Spring 2025 between (at least $p < 0.05$):

- Forts (92mm) and Southsea spit (102mm),
- Osbourne Bay (112mm) and Northern Bank (93.5mm), Portsmouth Bank (95mm), St Helens (95mm), and Forts (92mm).

The Dunns po-hoc also found that the median width of sampled scallops using the Queenie dredge was statistically significantly different between Portsmouth Bank (107mm) and Ryde (98mm) ($p < 0.01$) for Autumn 2025.

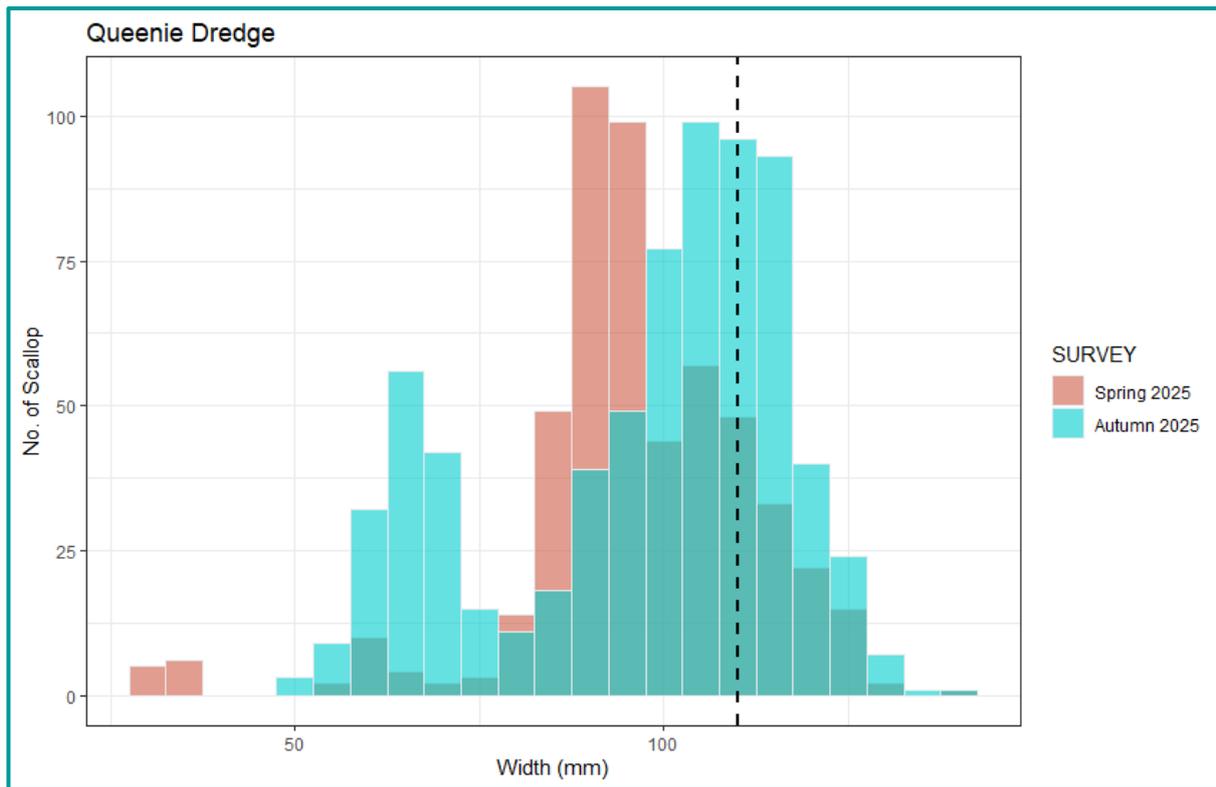


Figure 27: Width frequency measurements for scallop sampled in the Queenie dredge for the surveys during which it was deployed in 2025.

4. Summary

- When comparing **median CPUE** values collected by the **N-Viro dredge**:
 - Statistically significant **decreases** between **Autumn 2024** and **Spring 2025** were found across **all three** sections of the sampled population (Figures 12, 13 & 14).
 - A statistically significant **increase** was found for the **Over MCRS** portion of the sampled population between **Spring 2025** and **Autumn 2025** (Figure 13).
 - Statistically significant **decreases** between **Autumn 2024** and **Autumn 2025** were found across **all three** sections of the sampled population (Figures 12, 13, & 14).
 - At a **site** level:
 - a **decline** was seen for **all three** sections of the sampled population at **all sampled sites** between **Autumn 2024** and **Spring 2025** (Table 1).
 - For **all three** sections of the sampled population, the **majority** of sampled sites saw an **increase** between **Spring 2025** and **Autumn 2025** (Table 1).
 - For **all three** sections of the sampled populations the **majority** of sampled sites saw a **decrease** between **Autumn 2024** and **Autumn 2025** (Table 1).
- The **total quantity** of King scallop removed from the Solent fishery during the 2024/25 season was **400.3 tonnes**, which was lower than the 2023/24 season but higher than either the 2021/22 or 2022/23 seasons (Figure 15).

- During the 2024/25 season, the **highest proportion of catch** was removed during **November**, the **first month** the fishery was open. Highest removal during the first month is a consistent trend through the Solent Scallop Fishery timeseries (Figure 15).
- An analysis of data submitted by SDBP fishers on quantity of scallop landed throughout the season revealed no strong trends, though a correlation between reporting subzones that saw the highest landings of catch and the subzones that had the highest catch values in the Autumn 2024 surveys can be seen.
- Looking at comparisons of **width** values collected by the **N-Viro dredge**, a statistically significant **increase** in median width of sampled scallops was seen between **Spring 2025 and Autumn 2025** (Figure 17).
- When comparing the performance of the N-Viro and Queenie dredges as they **run alongside each other**, to detect for **influence of dredge type**, a statistically significant **difference** was found for the sampled population **Over MCRS** only, with the median CPUE **lower** in the **Queenie** dredge (Figure 21).
- When comparing **median CPUE** values collected by the **Queenie dredge**, a statistically significant **increase** between **Spring 2025 and Autumn 2025** was seen for the **Over MCRS** portion of the population (Figure 23).

5. Survey Outputs – Management of the Solent SCE Fishery

Data collected through the Solent Scallop Survey helps inform management of the Solent SCE Fishery under the Solent Dredge Permit Byelaw (SDPB) to ensure that fishing activity remains sustainable. The Management Intentions Document which supports the SDPB states that “unsustainable will be determined by the Authority based on a number of considerations which may include the Catch Per Unit Effort (CPUE)...and any other evidence the Authority deems to be relevant”.

CPUE is a recognised measure for the long-term monitoring of a fishery, providing a measure of target species abundance. A decreasing CPUE would suggest that the target species are unable to support the current level of harvesting.

From the 2025 survey data, key points were noted:

- That the Autumn 2025 survey data is statistically significantly lower than the Autumn surveys in 2022, 2023 and 2024 for Total CPUE and CPUE over MCRS and for 2 out of 3 previous surveys for under CPUE under MCRS.
- The number of sites which saw a decline between successive Autumn surveys was highest in 2024/25 compared to 2023/24 and 2022/23.
- While numerical increases were seen between Spring 2025 to Autumn 2025 (fishery closed period), they were smaller than changes over the previous two closed seasons, and only one was significant (over MCRS).
- Landings of SCE were lower in 2024/25 than 2023/24, though this is caveated with knowledge that lower prices for SCE reduced effort within the fishery during the 2024/25 season.

Solent Scallop Survey 2025

It is important to note that the evidence base used to inform decisions on management in the Solent dredge fisheries, considers, in addition to other variables, a time series of data. Whilst it is recognised that the data set is limited in duration (due to the emergence of the fishery in recent years) it does provide an evidence base which can be used concurrently, alongside proportionate precaution when considering possible management intervention.

On the basis of best available evidence, the Authority resolved to conduct a review of permit conditions under the SDPB to consider the need for additional management intervention in the Solent SCE fishery to support sustainable harvesting. The outcome of this review was that the daily fishing hours for the 2025/26 season for SCE fishery under a Category A Permit were reduced from 08:00-16:00 to 08:00-14:00.

More information on the review can be found on the Southern IFCA website under the agenda for the Extraordinary Meeting of the Technical Advisory Sub-Committee on 20th October 2025 and the associated meeting minutes, available via this page: [The Authority : Southern IFCA](#).

Whelk Landings Per Unit Effort Pilot Project: Project Outputs Paper For Information

Report by IFCO Mullen and PO Wright

A. Purpose

For Members to receive a report on the outputs of the Whelk Landings Per Unit Effort (LPUE) Pilot Project, following implementation of the project between December 2024-2025.

B. Annex

Annex 1: Whelk LPUE Pilot Project: Project Background, Development & Methodology

1.0 Background

- Under the Southern IFCA Whelk Monitoring Programme, the Whelk Landings Per Unit Effort (LPUE) Pilot Project was introduced in 2025 to support the development of understandings of common whelk (*Buccinum undatum*) stocks and fishing practices in the Southern IFCA District.
- Fisher-dependent data was sought through voluntary monthly catch return submissions from active whelk fishers during the period of March to December 2025 across 5 Whelk Catch Zones (WCZ). Fishing positional data was standardised using a 4 km² grid referencing system to protect commercially sensitive information.
- The project aims to provide an evidence base for District whelk fisheries which could be used, as part of the Whelk Monitoring Programme, to support local, regional and national understandings of whelk fisheries and sustainable management, including under the proposed Southern IFCA Pot Fishing Byelaw¹ and through contributing to the Whelk FMP, relevant goals including the improvement of data collection, the strengthening of evidence surrounding whelk stocks, boundaries, and fishing effort, and to support evidence-based fisheries management that is responsive to changes in fishing activity and stock status.
- Annex 1 provides further information surrounding the background, development and methodology used for the project.

2.0 Summary of Pilot Year Outputs

- Prior to the commencement of the project, 14 fishers expressed an interest in participating in the Pilot Project.
- Data collection through the Pilot Project (March 2025 to December 2025) is summarised in Table 1.

Table 1. The outputs of the pilot year of the Southern IFCA Whelk LPUE project over the period of March – December 2025.

| Whelk Catch Zone (WCZ) | Catch Returns Received | Fishing Trips Recorded | Number of 4km ² grid squares covered |
|--------------------------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| Zone 1 (Devon/Dorset border-Kimmeridge) | 1 | 5 | 2 |
| Zone 2 (Kimmeridge-Mudford) | 9 | 103 | 7 |
| Zone 3 (Mudford-Warsash) | 0 | - | - |
| Zone 4 (Warsash- Hampshire/Sussex border) | 0 | - | - |
| Zone 5 (Isle of Wight) | 0 | - | - |

Data Outputs:

- Pilot-year outputs demonstrate the potential for fishing effort (Figure 1A) and LPUE (kg/pot/day) (Figure 1B) to be calculated and analysed at the level of individual WCZs and seasonally. An example of this analysis is provided for WCZ 2 (Kimmeridge to Mudford), the WCZ with the highest data input from the pilot year.
- LPUE calculations include the weight (kg) of landed whelk per pot per day, noting that within the pilot year, up to 30 pots could be used on one string over a soak period of up to 16 days. The time period over which LPUE is calculated currently aligns to that used within the Whelk Population Survey.
- Through the Whelk Monitoring Programme, timeseries data will provide an opportunity to review LPUE and determine the most appropriate time period for analysing catch and effort data, including potential to align to national research efforts and data collection programmes through the Whelk FMP.
- Data collected also allowed for the spatial extent and distribution of whelk fishing areas both within the District and within each WCZ to be determined, including analysis of spatial variations in LPUE (Figure 2). Spatial analysis of data could also be carried out for fishing activity (number of trips) and number of pots worked, providing a range of parameters that could cumulatively, over time, provide a picture of whelk fishing effort and start to identify potential stock boundaries.

¹ currently subject to quality assurance by the Marine Management Organisation [MMO]

Zone 2 (Kimmeridge to Mudeford)

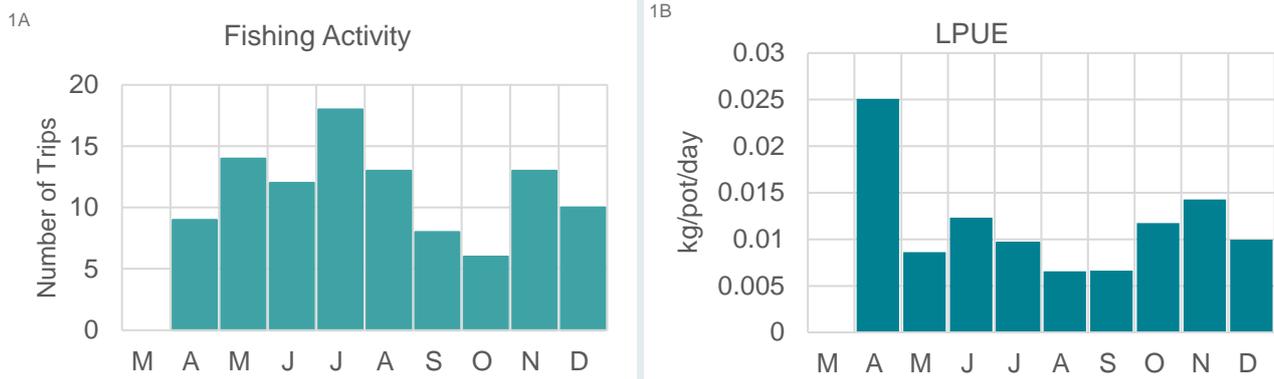


Figure 1: the fishing effort (1A) and LPUE (1B), expressed as kg/pot/day, for the pilot year of the of the Whelk LPUE Project WCZ2- Kimmeridge to Mudeford. Note no catch return was supplied for March 2025.

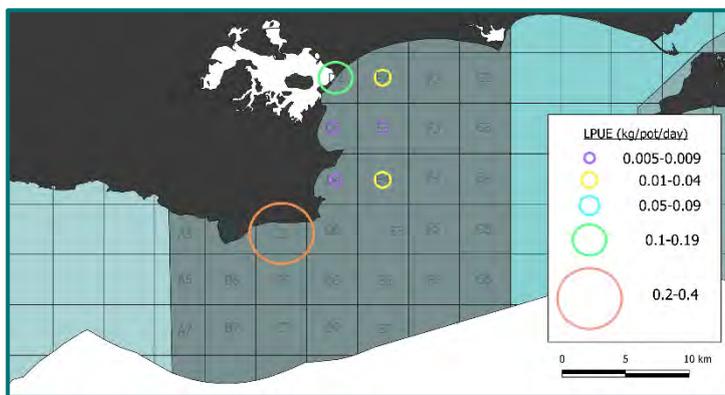


Figure 2. A map showing the distribution of whelk fishing activity within WCZ 2: Kimmeridge to Mudeford, and the average LPUE (kg/pot/day) across the defined 4km² grid over the period of April to December 2025. C5 displayed the largest average LPUE compared to other grid squares over the course of the year.

Benefits & Challenges

- It is recognised that, during the pilot year, the amount of data received was limited, with coverage for two WCZs and seasonal data available for only one WCZ. However, the pilot year has enabled an analysis of the benefits and challenges of delivering such a project and an identification of how the data provided can be used to support the project aims.
- Initiating fisher-dependent data collection through a Pilot Project offers the opportunity to review and refine the data collection process where necessary ahead of further data collection in subsequent years.

| Benefits | Challenges |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The development and trailing of a methodology for the collection of fisher-dependent data from the pot fishing industry in the District. • Facilitating constructive dialogue between Southern IFCA and local pot fishers during the initial project development and continued interaction through the catch return process, providing additional verbal insight into stock status, markets, and fishing activity. • A demonstration of the range of data outputs achievable through the data collection approach. The catch return forms proved effective and proportionate, and allowed participants to complete the required data alongside their fishing practices, in order to facilitate analysis to provide the intended information surrounding LPUE monitoring and identification of key fishing areas. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouraging participation over a wider area of the District. • Maximising participation from initial expressions of interest, recognising that the number of fishers who were sent a project pack was not reflected in the number submitting catch returns. |

3.0 Next Steps

- Ahead of Year 2, Southern IFCA aims to increase data input through re-engagement with pot fishers in the District seeking input on the project including, any barriers to data submission and any improvements that could be made to the data collection programme. Fishers will also be shown the example data outputs from the pilot, illustrating how data has been used and the value it provides in supporting understandings of whelk fisheries within the District.
- Year 2 data collection will aim to commence in the spring through to the end of 2026 following which data received will be analysed and reported. The development of the dataset over time will assist in building a robust timeseries dataset that will enhance understandings of whelk stocks and allow analysis of parameters between and within WCZs, to support the identification of seasonal trends, annual changes in fishing activity and potential stock areas for whelk within the District.

Whelk Landings Per Unit Effort (LPUE) Pilot Project

Project Background, Development & Methodology

Project Background and Development

This document outlines the development of the 2025 Southern IFCA Whelk LPUE Pilot Project under the Southern IFCA Monitoring Programme, which aims to generate a timeseries dataset of common whelk (*Buccinum undatum*) fishing activity, understand potential whelk stocks across the Southern IFCA District (the District) and inform future evidence-based management at both a local and wider scale, for example through the Southern IFCA Pot Fishing Byelaw (currently undergoing quality assurance with the Marine Management Organisation [MMO]) and by feeding into data collection to inform evidence gaps identified by the Whelk Fisheries Management Plan (FMP). The pilot year ran between March 2025 and December 2025, utilising local volunteer whelk fishers to collect data in the form of a catch return submission each month.

The project's pilot year has provided the opportunity to understand the feasibility and scope of information that could be gathered alongside the Southern IFCA Whelk Population Survey to form the Southern IFCA Whelk Monitoring Programme. It has enabled initial engagement to establish key links with whelk fishers across the District and the development of a data collection programme which can provide data to enabled increased understandings of whelk fishing effort, distribution and whelk populations for the District.

The Whelk Fishery

The whelk fishery operates year-round, peaking in the Southern IFCA District from March-July annually, though some fishing occurs as early as December. Low start-up costs and near-year-round availability have made whelks an attractive alternative fishing option in substitute of other fisheries and whelk fishing has been seen to complement or replace other fisheries such as crab and lobster during the off season. In 2024, the UK whelk fishery landed 16,122.75 tonnes, valued at £20.778 million. 15% of UK landings were into Southern IFCA ports, with Weymouth, Portsmouth and Lyme Regis representing the areas with the highest whelk landings in the Southern IFCA District in 2024 (MMO landings data).

Data surrounding the whelk fishery is limited on both a regional and national scale, as highlighted in the Whelk FMP and high levels of regional variability emphasise the importance and requirement for regional data collection programmes.

UK Whelk Management

Common whelk are classified as a non-quota species and are therefore not subject to total allowable catch limits (TAC). Within the Southern IFCA District, current management practices include the national Minimum Conservation Reference Size (MCRS) of 45 mm in shell length, which is applied across the supply chain and to both commercial and recreational fishers under the Southern IFCA MCRS Byelaw. The Whelk FMP was published in 2023 and aims to address

current data gaps to better inform whelk management nationally. The Southern IFCA Whelk LPUE Pilot Project aims to assist other research initiatives generated through the FMP implementation phase to build a better understanding of whelk fisheries at a national scale.

Project Development

The Whelk LPUE Pilot Project was developed to aim to better understand how stocks and fishing practice vary across the District and throughout the year, and where stock boundaries potentially exist. The Whelk LPUE Pilot Project was designed to be able to capture fisheries data, while requiring limit resources and effort from volunteers, so as not to disrupt fishing practice, with the aim of providing a seasonal picture and geographical scale of the fishery.

During the project's development stage, Southern IFCA consulted with representatives from Bangor University, which at that time was in the development stage of a Whelk CPUE project covering Welsh waters, as a direct output of Whelk FMP. This provided insight into how the two projects could be aligned in methodology and outputs to ensure that data could be subject to future considerations of collation at a national scale.

1. Methodology and Data Collection

Following the initial development stages of the project, the Southern IFCA permit database was utilised to establish a contact list of fishers who have indicated that they fish with pots within the Southern IFCA District with the aim of establishing interest in participating in data collection. From the initial fishers contacted, 19 confirmed current whelk potting activity. Participation in the project was sought through engagement by direct contact via phone calls, information provided via email and on the website, and engagement with fishers during patrols. From this engagement phase 14 fishers expressed an interest in participating in the pilot project and receive further information.

Participants were asked to complete a voluntary monthly catch return form to be submitted by the 14th of the following month, submitted either electronically via email or physically to the Southern IFCA office. The catch return was developed to obtain data on fishing effort, landed quantities of whelk, and fishing activity in reference to 1 of 5 Whelk Catch Zones covering the Southern IFCA District. The Whelk Catch Zones were aligned to the compliance and enforcement zones established for the District. (Figure 1). The Zone classifications are as follows:

- **Zone 1: Devon/ Dorset border- Kimmeridge.**
- **Zone 2: Kimmeridge – Mundeford**
- **Zone 3: Mundeford- Warsash**
- **Zone 4: Warsash- Hampshire/ Sussex border**
- **Zone 5: Isle of Wight.**

Fishing coordinate data was standardised using a 4 km² grid referencing system to protect commercially sensitive information, while capturing geographical data at an appropriate spatial scale in which the fishery operates.

Each of the volunteers was supplied with a Volunteer Information Pack which included an Induction Document, outlining the project and how the data would be used and processed, a

Data Collection Document, providing an overview of the voluntary catch return submission and data protection of commercially sensitive information, example catch return forms and map highlighting the Whelk Catch Zones and the grid referencing system for establishing fishing activity locations.

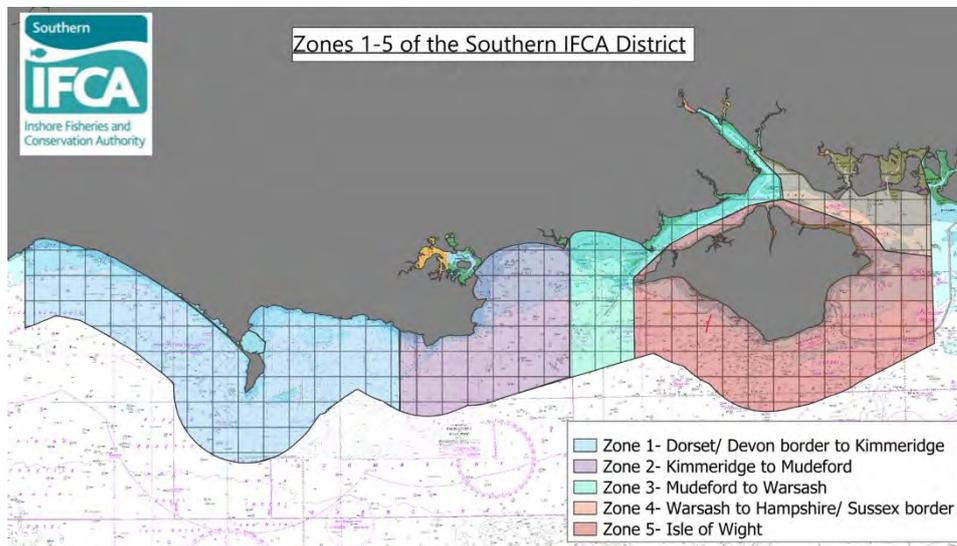


Figure 1. A map of the Southern IFCA District, highlighting the boundaries of each Whelk Catch Zone: Zone 1: Dorset/ Devon boarder to Kimmeridge, Zone 2: Kimmeridge to Mudeford, Zone 3: Mudeford to Warsash, Zone 4: Warsash to Hampshire/ Sussex border. Zone 5: Isle of Wight. A 4 km² grid reference system has been applied to each Whelk Catch Zone to anonymise fishing activity and protect commercial sensitivities.

Figure 2 displays an example catch return supplied to fishers which outlines the following variables requested:

- Fishing vessel information
- Date and time of each fishing trip
- Location of fishing trip (as Whelk Catch Zone and grid reference number or coordinate data)
- Pot and bait type
- Pot soak time
- Number of pots and strings
- Weight of landed whelk as kg

Catch return data was inputted electronically onto a summary database and anonymised in the aim to analysed various data outputs such as Landings Per Unit Effort data, seasonal trends, geographical hotspot locations, active fishing areas across each zone and provide any comparison between fishing zones across the District. As the project develops this will enable the establishment of a timeseries dataset for the analysis of these variables.

| | | | |
|---------------|--------------|------|--------------|
| Fishers Name: | Vessel Name: | PLN: | Month: APRIL |
|---------------|--------------|------|--------------|

| Date | Approx start time of fishing trip | Approx end time of fishing trip | Fishing Location <i>Please provide location of fishing trip or individual strings using the Grid Location or Coordinates</i> | | No. of Pots | No. of Strings | Pot Type | Bait Type | Soak Time | Weight of landed whelk |
|------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|-------------|----------------|----------------------|----------------|-----------|------------------------|
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| 10 th | 0500 | 1700 | ZONE 1 | K7 | 60 | 3 | Recycled plastic pot | dogfish | 48hrs | 150kg |
| 14 th | 0800 | 1400 | ZONE 1 | D4 | 20 | 2 | Recycled plastic pot | dogfish | 16hrs | 42kg |
| 21 st | 0730 | 1800 | ZONE 1 | E4 | 10 | 1 | Recycled plastic pot | dogfish | 12hrs | 10kg |
| — | — | — | " " | E5 | 30 | 2 | " " | " " | 48hrs | 15kg |
| 24 th | 0600 | 1300 | 50°38.560 | 001°53.110 | 15 | 1 | Recycled plastic pot | Crab + dogfish | 16hrs | 30kg |
| | | | 50°38.720 | 001°53.140 | 15 | 1 | " " | " " | " " | 32kg |
| | | | 50°38.800 | 001°53.143 | 15 | 1 | " " | " " | " " | 28kg. |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | |

Figure 2. A Catch return example, providing an illustration of the different ways the CRF could be filled out, allowing for locational data to be submitted as either coordinate location data or utilising the Whelk Catch Zone and grid referencing system. Note this is example data only and does not represent an active vessel.

Solent Bivalve Survey 2025 – Survey Report Paper For Information

Report by IFCO Churchouse

A. Purpose

To provide members with a report from the Solent Bivalve Survey Program 2025.

B. Annex

- Annex 1 - The Southern IFCA Solent Bivalve Survey Report 2025
-

1.0 Introduction

- As part of Southern IFCA's management of bivalve species in the Solent, surveys are carried out across the Manila clam fishing season to better understand the extent and nature of the Solent Manila clam fishery, as well as populations of other commercially important species.
- These surveys aim to provide an understanding of the distribution of the Manila clam (*Ruditapes philippinarum*) and common cockle (*Cerastoderma edule*) populations and to collect information on the structure of those populations found within the Solent.
- Surveys were carried out in March 2025 (post the 2024/25 fishing season) and October 2025 (pre the 2025/26 fishing season). This paper provides a report on the Southern IFCA Solent Bivalve Survey, analysing the data collected in 2025.

2.0 Summary of Key Points

- The survey is carried out across 3 Bivalve Management Areas (BMAs) in the Solent, Southampton Water, Portsmouth Harbour, and Langstone Harbour.
- Individual bivalves are measured to the nearest mm along their length (longest axis). The catch obtained from each tow (3, 2-minute tows in each sampling site) was split, by species, into over Minimum Conservation Reference Size (MCRS) and under MCRS, with both groups then weighed.
- Sampling was not able to be completed in Langstone Harbour in Autumn 2025 due to unforeseen complications including prolonged adverse weather and changes in fisher availability. On this basis, comparisons to autumn 2025 data were not possible for Langstone Harbour. However, it is noted that Langstone Harbour is not a preferred fishing area within the Solent Dredge Permit Fishery, with catch levels having been nil within Langstone Harbour for Manila clam and common cockle for the 2024/25, 2023/24, and 2021/22 fishing seasons. Langstone Harbour will continue to be sampled across both surveys in future years.

Analysis Methods:

- Weight data is transformed to provide a value for Catch Per Unit Effort (CPUE), defined as kg of shellfish per metre of dredge per hour (kg/m/hr). CPUE is calculated for weight over MCRS and weight under MCRS¹.
- Analysis of CPUE was carried out to identify any changes in stock health over key periods including:
 - When the fishing season was active (Autumn 24 to Spring 25 survey)
 - When the fishery was closed (Spring 25 survey to Autumn 25 survey)

¹ It should be noted that the dredging method is inherently size selective due to the need for commercial vessels to maximise retention of bivalves over MCRS. As such the data for CPUE under MCRS will not be fully representative of this size class, however, comparisons can be made between sites and over time to look for changes, in the knowledge that the sampling method is consistent and there is no statistical difference in the catch between dredges used from different vessels.

- Time series comparisons between spring and autumn surveys to date (22-25)

Analysis Outputs:

- There was no significant change in CPUE for either the Manila clam or common cockle populations in any of the BMAs sampled between Autumn 2024 and Spring 2025 (fishery open season), or between Spring 2025 and Autumn 2025 (fishery closed season).
- The only significant change in Manila clam CPUE between either successive Spring or Autumn surveys occurred between Autumn 2025 and the Autumn 2019 and 2022 surveys, however it should be noted that a different dredge was used during the Autumn 2025 survey in Portsmouth Harbour due to unforeseen circumstances, which was found to have a significant impact on CPUE values.
- Significant decreases in common cockle CPUE between successive Spring surveys were seen for Portsmouth and Langstone Harbours for both portions of the sampled population, and between successive Autumn surveys in Southampton Water for both portions of the sampled population.
- Median length of Manila clam sampled in the Spring 2025 survey was above the MCRS in all three BMAs. In Autumn 2025, median length was above MCRS in Portsmouth Harbour but below it in Southampton Water.
- Median length of common cockle sampled in the Spring 2025 survey was above the MCRS in Southampton Water and Portsmouth Harbour, but below it in Langstone Harbour. In Autumn 2025, median length was above MCRS in both Southampton Water and Portsmouth Harbour.
- The total kg of Manila clam caught during the 2024/25 season was higher than for the previous two seasons, but due to a higher number of vessels working the ground than in previous seasons the kg of Manila clam caught per hour per vessel is lower than the 2023/24 season.
- For the first time since landings data was collected under the Solent Dredge Permit Byelaw, landings were recorded for common cockle. All reported cockle catch (885.0 kg) was caught in a period of two days in January, out of BMA 4 – Southampton Water.

- A lack of significant difference in CPUE values during either the fishery open or closed season suggests that, at present, fishing pressure is not having a significant impact on this fishery.
- For common cockle, there is a trend in decreasing stock levels between years for spring and autumn surveys, however, recorded landings for this species under the Solent Dredge Permit Byelaw have been zero or very low to date, suggesting that there may be other influencing factors on stock trend. Continued monitoring through stock surveys is recommended.
- The results presented in this report add to the timeseries data Southern IFCA are collecting on the Solent Manila clam and common cockle populations, which will provide a greater understanding of the trends. The timeseries is still in its early stages (5 years of consecutive data collection to date), the data presented provides an overview of the population condition, and further data will be able to further identify any patterns within the stock and the contribution of different potential influencing factors to any patterns seen. It is likely that there are multiple factors influencing the stock pattern, the management of the fishery being one of these.

3.0 Next Steps

- The survey program will continue to be implemented through 2026. On going consultation with industry will continue to ensure that survey areas and methodology are aligned with standard practice within the Solent.
- The intention is to increase the robustness of the data collected and thus the timeseries dataset for these species in the Solent to ensure that management of the fishery continues to be based on best available evidence.

Southern IFCA Survey Report

Solent Bivalve Survey 2025

1. Introduction

The Solent Bivalve Survey runs twice a year to assess the distribution and abundance of key bivalve species in three Bivalve Management Areas (BMA) defined under the Solent Dredge Permit Byelaw, namely Area 4 (Southampton Water), Area 5 (Portsmouth Harbour), and Area 6 (Langstone Harbour). The spring survey provides information on the stock following the closure of the fishing season and the autumn survey on the stock prior to the opening of the fishing season in November.

The survey focuses on the two main bivalve species harvested commercially in these BMAs, the Manila clam (*Ruditapes philippinarum*) and the Common cockle (*Cerastoderma edule*). The results from the survey provide data which can be used as a baseline against which to monitor trends in the stock levels of these species in the Solent, which informs management under the Solent Dredge Permit Fishery.

2. Methodology

In 2025, the Spring survey took place on the 12th, 14th, and 31st of March and the Autumn survey took place from the 8th October to the 10th October, using three local fishing vessels familiar with the BMA within which they were sampling. On each vessel, the same box clam dredge was deployed, which is of the same class as that used in normal fishing practice (Figure 1), with the exception of the sampling undertaken in Portsmouth Harbour in the Autumn survey, as the box dredge was unavailable.

Each management area has defined survey beds which represent areas of different fishing intensity and habitat type. The areas surveyed also span a range of classifications for the shellfish beds as defined by the Food Standards Agency. The identification of survey beds provides a general area in which to sample, with the identification of suitable tow locations for each area made by the skipper during the survey due to the dependence on factors including weather, tide, obstructions to dredging etc. As such, if unforeseen circumstances dictate, tows may sometimes not fully overlap with the survey beds. The tow locations for each surveyed shellfish bed are shown in Figures 2 to 4.

Shellfish sampled were obtained using the following methodology:

- Three dredge tows, timed at two minutes, were conducted within each survey bed of the wider BMA.
- After two minutes the dredge was brought inboard and any bivalves within it were retained.
- The presence of different sediment types and other habitat identifiers including weed and Slipper limpet (*Crepidula fornicata*) were recorded, with abundance scored on a scale of 1 – 5, 5 being most abundant.
- Bivalves were identified to species level and the first 50 individuals of each species were measured along the widest axis (length) to the nearest millimetre.

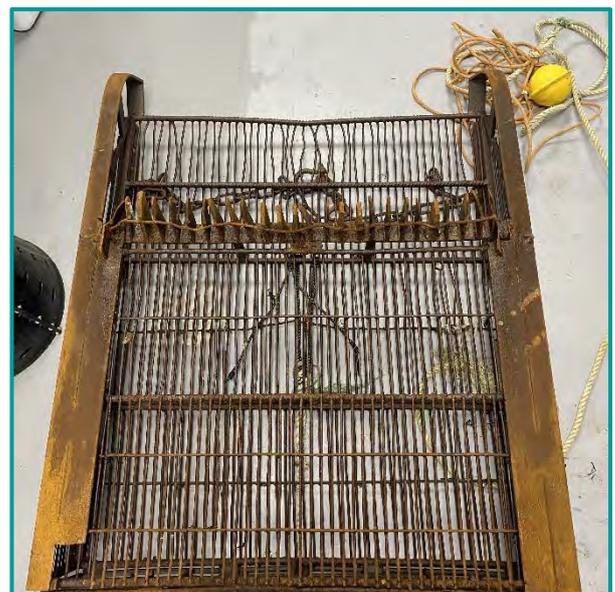


Figure 1: Box dredge used during the Solent Bivalve survey.

- Manila clams and Common cockles were separated into equal to/above or below their Minimum Conservation Reference Size (MCRS), 35mm and 23.8mm respectively, and then weighed.
- All samples were returned to the sea in the same BMA, in areas with the same shellfish classification as that from which they had been taken.

2.1. Statistical Analysis

- The sets of collected weight and length data were analysed first with a Kruskal-Wallis test to determine whether a difference in the averages of groups (e.g., the weight of Manila clam in each BMA) was present.
- If such a difference was found, the data set was then analysed using a Dunn’s post-hoc test, which determines whether the difference in average was greater between the groups than the difference found within the groups.
 - E.g., whether there was a greater difference between the average weight of Manila clam between surveys than there was difference within the average weight of Manila clam sampled at sites within one specific year.
- Statistically significant results from the Dunn’s post-hoc tests indicate changes in weight or length that may be beyond the population’s natural size/growth variation and could be linked to a range of external factors, such as environmental conditions, recruitment success, or population exploitation.
- Significant results are expressed as either $p < 0.05$ or $p < 0.01$, an indication as to the strength of the significant change, with $p < 0.01$ indicating a stronger change.

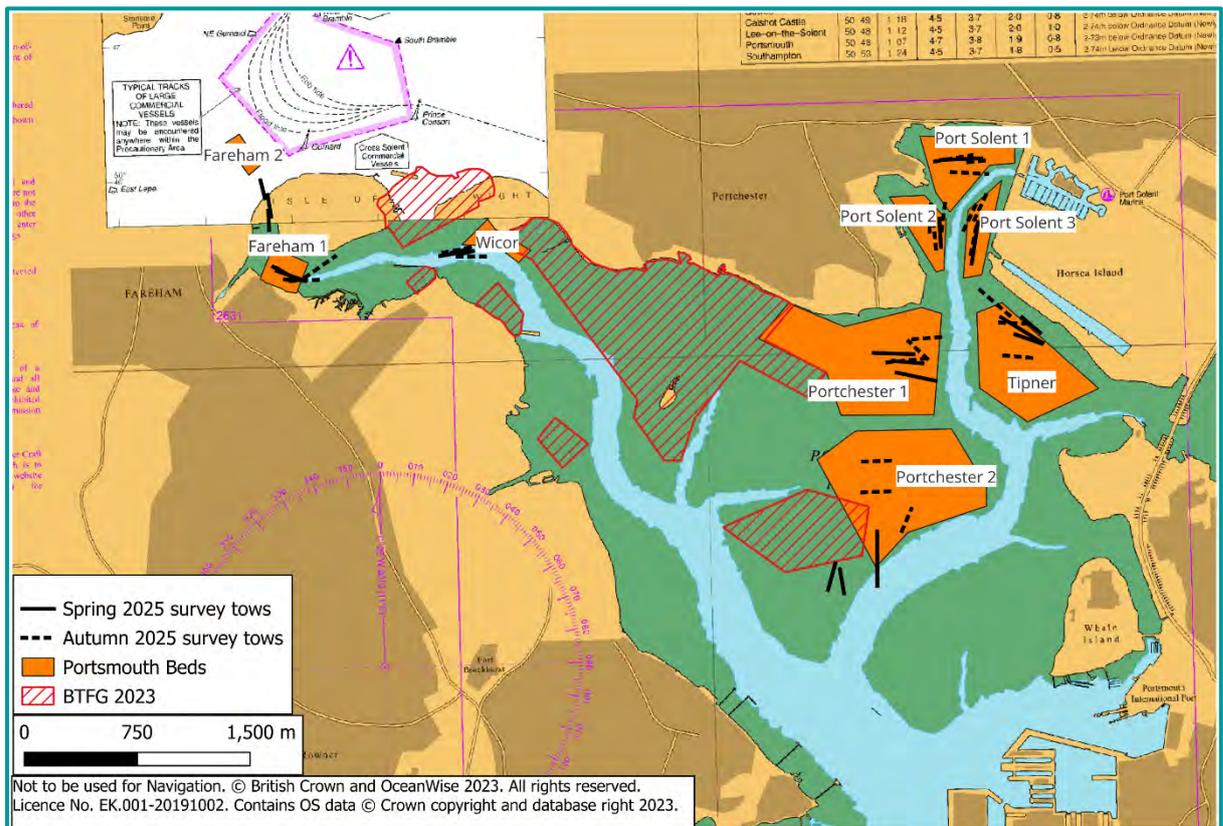


Figure 2: The tow paths undertaken during both the Spring and Autumn 2025 surveys within Portsmouth Harbour.

Solent Bivalve Survey 2025

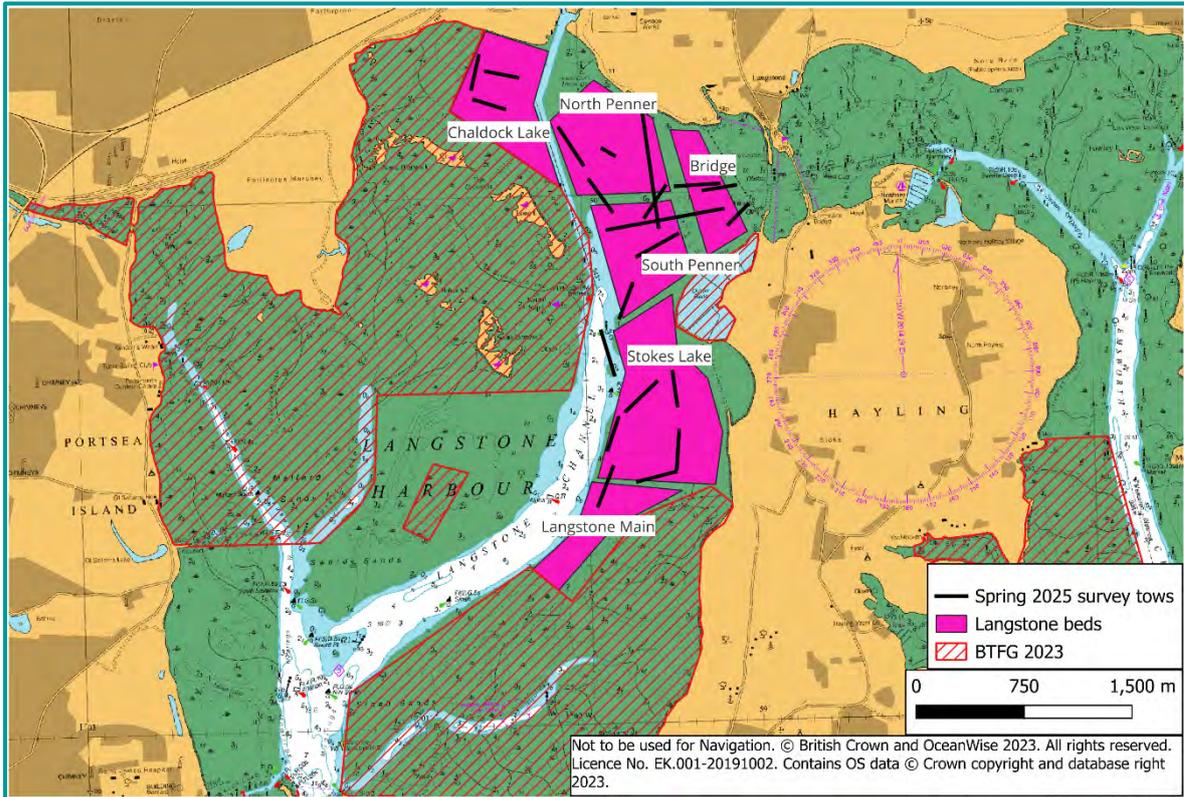


Figure 3: The tow paths undertaken during the Spring 2025 survey within Langstone Harbour.

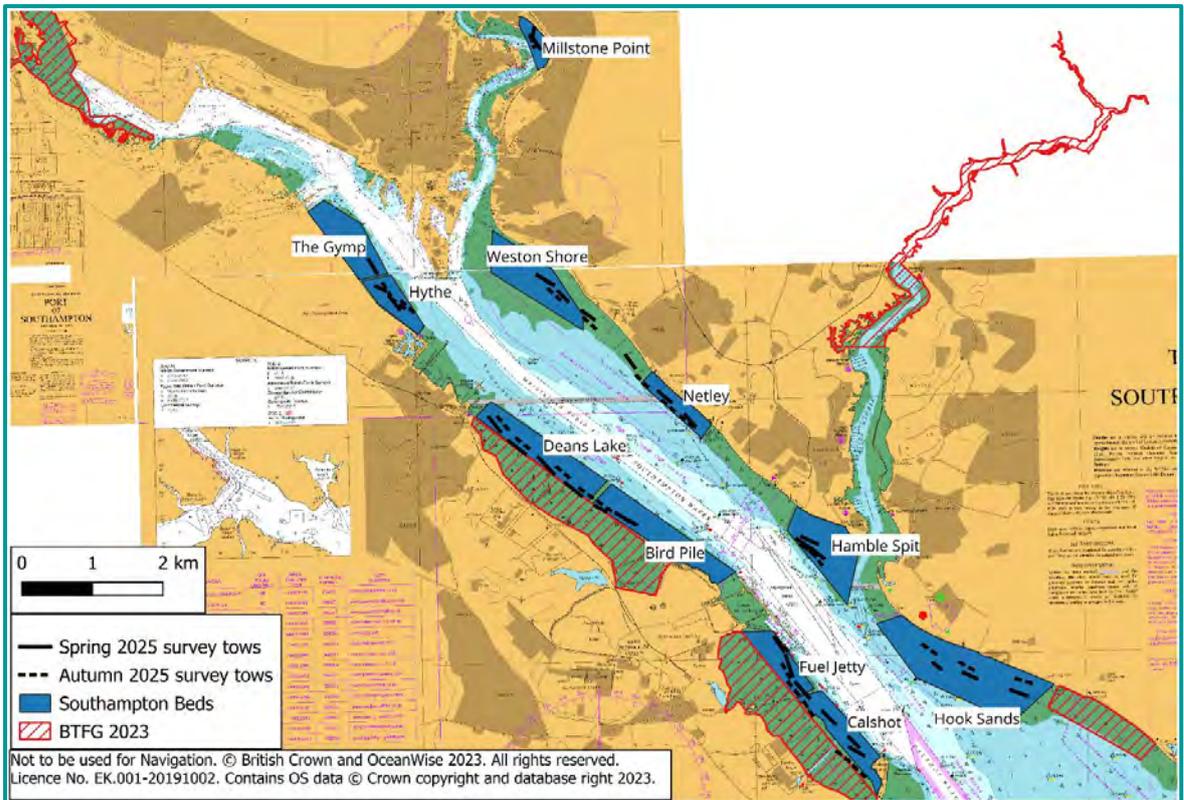


Figure 4: The tow paths undertaken during both the Spring and Autumn 2025 surveys within Southampton Water.

3. Results

The results of the survey focus on the two main commercial species, Manila clam (*Ruditapes philippinarum*) and Common cockle (*Cerastoderma edule*).

Other species found during the survey in smaller quantities included Pacific oyster (*Magallana gigas*), American Hard-Shell clam (*Mercenaria mercenaria*), Spiny cockle (*Acanthocardia aculeata*), and Native oyster (*Ostrea edulis*). The King Scallop (*Pecten maximus*) fishery within the Solent is monitored through its own survey.

Data collected on Catch Per Unit Effort (CPUE) and width is compared across key periods, focusing on results from Autumn 2024, Spring 2025 and Autumn 2025. Sampling was not able to be completed in Langstone Harbour in Autumn 2025 due to unforeseen complications including prolonged adverse weather and changes in fisher availability. On this basis comparisons to autumn 2025 data were not possible for Langstone Harbour. However, it is noted that Langstone Harbour is not a preferred fishing area within the Solent Dredge Permit Fishery, with catch levels having been nil within Langstone Harbour for Manila clam and common cockle for the 2024/25, 2023/24, and 2021/22 fishing seasons. Langstone Harbour will continue to be sampled across both surveys in future years.

3.1. Catch Per Unit Effort

Data on the abundance and distribution of Manila clam and Common cockle is presented as Catch Per Unit Effort (CPUE), defined as kg of shellfish per metre of dredge per hour. CPUE is provided for the species both equal to/above and below MCRS. The use of CPUE consistently between surveys allows for statistical comparisons to identify if there are any significant changes to the stock. CPUE results are provided for four key time periods through the year:

- Pre- and post- the fishing season (Autumn to Spring),
- Pre- and post- the closed season (Spring to Autumn),
- Between the Spring (post-season) surveys in the timeseries, and
- Between the Autumn (pre-season) surveys in the timeseries.

It should be noted that, given that the sampling method is size selective due to the spacing of bars on the box dredge, data for stock below MCRS will not be representative of the full composition of stock in these size classes, however consistency in survey methodology between years allows for comparisons.

Additionally, following unforeseen complications with the SIFCA owned box dredge in October 2025, a fisher owned dredge with differing bar spacing was used to undertake sampling within Portsmouth Harbour in the Autumn 2025 survey. A Kruskal-Wallis test run between data collected in Portsmouth Harbour using the Southern IFCA owned box dredge through the time series and the fisher owned box dredge used within Portsmouth Harbour in Autumn 2025 revealed the presence of a statically significant difference for both the equal to/above and below portions of the population ($p < 0.001$). Comparisons for bivalve species caught within Portsmouth Harbour between Autumn 2025 and other surveys should therefore be treated with caution.

The average CPUE values presented are the median value (the middle value in a range of sequential values), as this is the metric compared within Kruskal-Wallis tests (used when data is non-normally distributed).

3.1.1. Pre- and Post- the 24/25 Fishing Season Comparisons

CPUE data from Autumn 2024 and Spring 2025 surveys has been compared to analyse changes to population levels during the fishery **open season or 'fishing period'**.

Manila Clam (From Autumn 2024 to Spring 2025)

- There was **no significant change** in CPUE for the population equal to/above or below MCRS in **Southampton Water, Portsmouth or Langstone Harbours**.
- In **Southampton Water**, the median CPUE for the population equal to/above MCRS **increased** (9.9 kg/m/hr to 15.2 kg/m/hr) but **decreased** for the population below MCRS (14.9 kg/m/hr to 13.7 kg/m/hr).
- In **Portsmouth Harbour**, the median CPUE **decreased** for the population equal to/above MCRS (9.3 kg/m/hr to 6.4 kg/m/hr) and the population below MCRS (1 kg/m/hr to 0.9 kg/m/hr).
- In **Langstone Harbour** the median CPUE:
 - **decreased** for the population equal to/above MCRS (2.8 kg/m/hr to 2.1 kg/m/hr),
 - and **remained** the same at 0.0 kg/m/hr for the population below MCRS (CPUE values ranged from 0.0 kg/m/hr to 20.6 kg/m/hr in Autumn 2024, while CPUE values ranged from 0.0 kg/m/hr to 30.2 kg/m/hr in Spring 2025).

Common Cockle (From Autumn 2024 to Spring 2025)

- There was **no significant change** in CPUE for the population equal to/above or below MCRS in **Southampton Water, Portsmouth or Langstone Harbours**.
- In **Southampton Water** the median CPUE:
 - for the population equal to/above MCRS **increased** (0.7 kg/m/hr to 0.8 kg/m/hr)
 - and **remained** the same at 0.0 kg/m/hr for the population below MCRS (CPUE values ranged from 0.0 kg/m/hr to 12.0 kg/m/hr in Autumn 2024, while CPUE values ranged from 0.0 kg/m/hr to 3.1 kg/m/hr in Spring 2025).
- In **Portsmouth Harbour** the median CPUE:
 - **decreased** for the population equal to/above MCRS (1.6 kg/m/hr to 0.01 kg/m/hr)
 - and **decreased** for the population below MCRS from 0.3 kg/m/hr to 0.0 kg/m/hr (ranging from 0.0 kg/m/hr to 2.3 kg/m/hr in Spring 2025).
- In **Langstone Harbour** the median CPUE:
 - **remained** the same at 0.0 kg/m/hr for the population equal to/above MCRS (ranging from 0.0 kg/m/hr to 0.3 kg/m/hr in Autumn 2024, while CPUE values ranged from 0.0 kg/m/hr to 0.2 kg/m/hr in Spring 2025),
 - and **remained** the same at 0.0 kg/m/hr for the population below MCRS (no undersized cockles were caught in Langstone Harbour in Autumn 2024, while CPUE values ranged from 0.0 kg/m/hr to 0.6kg/m/hr in Spring 2025).

3.1.2.Pre- and Post- the 2025 Closed Season Comparisons

CPUE data from Spring 2025 and Autumn 2025 was compared to analyse changes to population levels during the fishery **closed season**. A comparison over this period was not possible for Langstone Harbour, as sampling was not completed in Autumn 2025 due to weather complications.

Manila Clam (From Spring 2025 to Autumn 2025)

- There was **no significant change** in CPUE for the population equal to/above or below MCRS in **Southampton Water, or Portsmouth Harbour**.
- In **Southampton Water**, the median CPUE for the population equal to/above MCRS **increased** (15.2 kg/m/hr to 17.5 kg/m/hr) but **decreased** for the population below MCRS (13.7 kg/m/hr to 9.2 kg/m/hr).
- In **Portsmouth Harbour**, the median CPUE **decreased** for the population equal to/above MCRS (6.4 kg/m/hr to 0.9 kg/m/hr) and the population below MCRS (0.9 kg/m/hr to 0.05 kg/m/hr).

Common Cockle (From Spring 2020 to Autumn 2025)

- There was **no significant change** in CPUE for the population equal to/above or below MCRS in **Southampton Water, or Portsmouth Harbour.**
- In **Southampton Water** the median CPUE:
 - **decreased** for the population equal to/above MCRS from 0.8 kg/m/hr to 0.0 kg/m/hr (ranging from 0.0 kg/m/hr to 14.6 kg/m/hr in Autumn 2025),
 - and **remained** the same for the population below MCRS at 0.0 kg/m/hr (ranging from 0.0 kg/m/hr to 3.1 kg/m/hr in Spring 2025, and from 0.0 kg/m/hr to 1.5 kg/m/hr in Autumn 2025).
- In **Portsmouth Harbour** the median CPUE:
 - **decreased** for the population equal to/above MCRS from 0.01 kg/m/hr to 0.0 kg/m/hr (ranging from 0.0 kg/m/hr to 4.6 kg/m/hr in Autumn 2025),
 - and **remained** the same for the population below MCRS at 0.0 kg/m/hr (ranging from 0.0 kg/m/hr to 2.3 kg/m/hr in Spring 2025 and from 0.0 kg/m/hr to 0.2 kg/m/hr in Autumn 2025).

3.1.3. Spring Survey (post-season) Comparisons

CPUE data for surveys carried out in the Spring, representing post-season conditions, has been compared between the survey years in order to monitor and compare the state of the population at the end of each fishing season.

For Manila clam CPUE data is available from 2018 to 2020 and 2022 to 2025, however data from Spring 2018 has been removed as no weight measurements were taken that year. For Common cockle CPUE data is available from 2020 and 2022 to 2025, as weight data was not collected for Common cockle prior to 2020. Please note that there is no survey data available from Spring 2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Manila Clam (Between Spring Surveys)

- There was **no significant change** in CPUE for the population equal to/above or below MCRS in **Southampton Water, Portsmouth or Langstone Harbours.**

Common Cockle (Between Spring Surveys)

- In **Southampton Water**, there was **no significant change** in CPUE for the population equal to/above or below MCRS.
- In **Portsmouth Harbour**, there were significant ($p < 0.01$) decreases in CPUE:
 - For the population equal to/above MCRS between Spring 2020 (15.6 kg/m/hr) and Spring 2025 (0.01 kg/m/hr), and between Spring 2022 (41.1 kg/m/hr) and Spring 2025 (0.01 kg/m/hr) (Figure 5),
 - For the population below MCRS between Spring 2020 (4.1 kg/m/hr) and Spring 2025 (0.0 kg/m/hr), between Spring 2022 (1.8 kg/m/hr) and Spring 2025 (0.0 kg/m/hr), and between Spring 2023 (4.5 kg/m/hr) and Spring 2025 (0.0 kg/m/hr) (Figure 6).
 - The CPUE for Spring 2025 ranged from 0.0 kg/m/hr to 2.3 kg/m/hr.
- In **Langstone Harbour**, there were significant ($p < 0.01$) decreases in median CPUE between:
 - Spring 2020 (7.7 kg/m/hr) and Spring 2025 (0.0 kg/m/hr) for the population equal to/at MCRS, with CPUE ranging from 0.0 kg/m/hr to 0.2 kg/m/hr in Spring 2025 (Figure 7),
 - and between Spring 2022 (9.0 kg/m/hr) and Spring 2025 (0.0 kg/m/hr) for the population below MCRS, with CPUE ranging from 0.0 kg/m/hr to 0.6 kg/m/hr in Spring 2025 (Figure 8).

Solent Bivalve Survey 2025

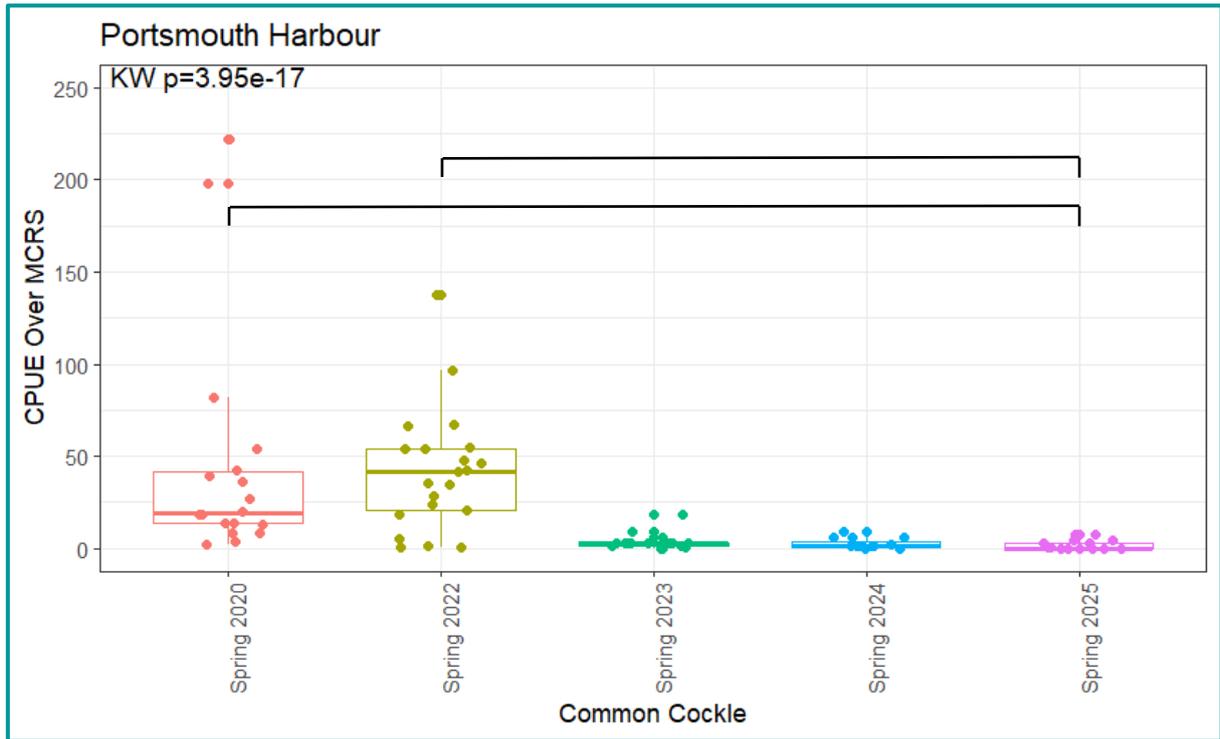


Figure 5: CPUE of the Common Cockle population equal to/above MCRS in Portsmouth Harbour for the spring surveys with available weight data from 2020 to 2025, where a statistically significant decrease was found between 2020 and 2022 to 2025 ($p < 0.01$).

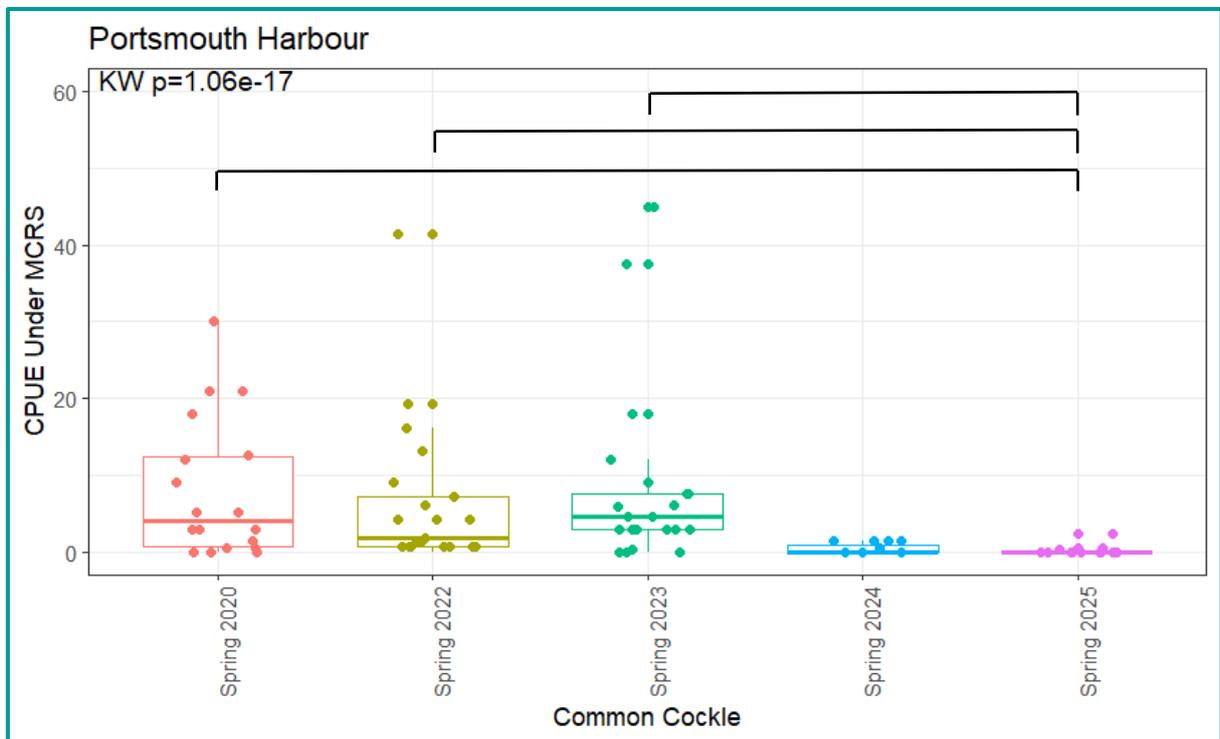


Figure 6: CPUE of the Common Cockle population below MCRS in Portsmouth Harbour for the spring surveys with available weight data from 2020 to 2025, where a statistically significant decrease was found between 2020 and 2022 to 2025 ($p < 0.01$).

Solent Bivalve Survey 2025

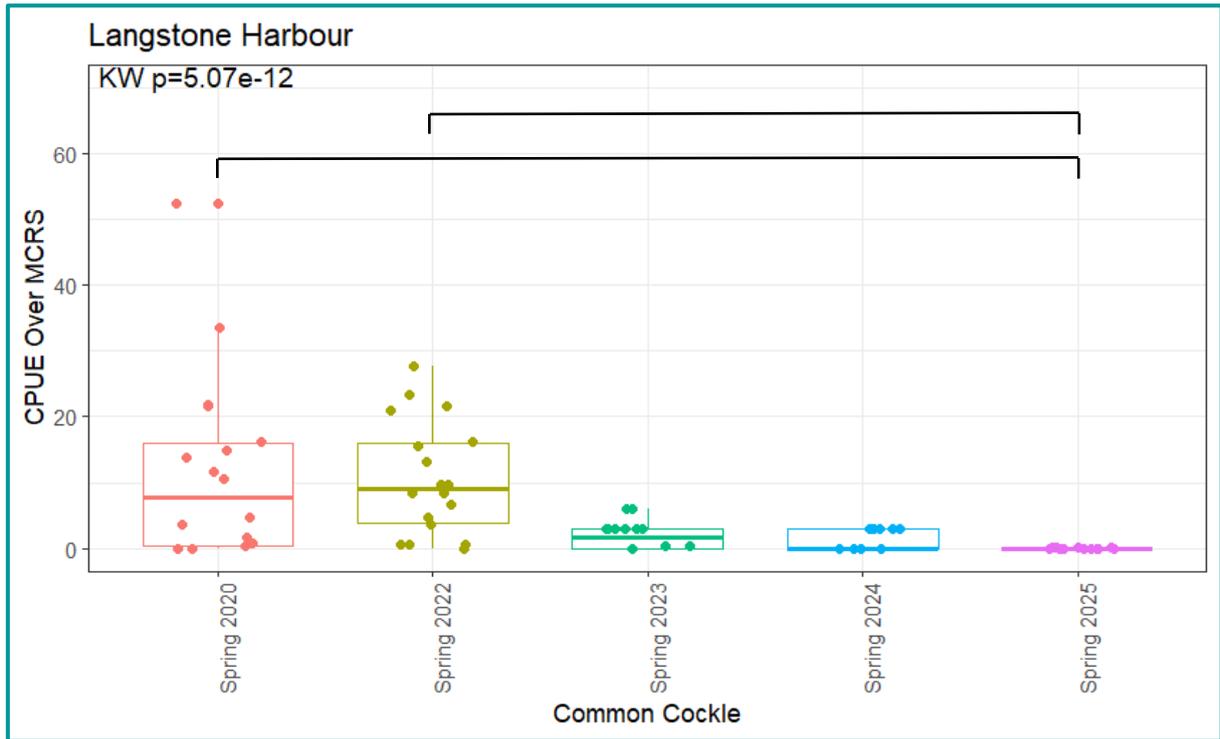


Figure 7: CPUE of the Common Cockle population equal to/above MCRS in Langstone Harbour for the spring surveys with available weight data from 2020 to 2025, where a statistically significant decrease was found from 2020 and 2022 to 2025 ($p < 0.01$).

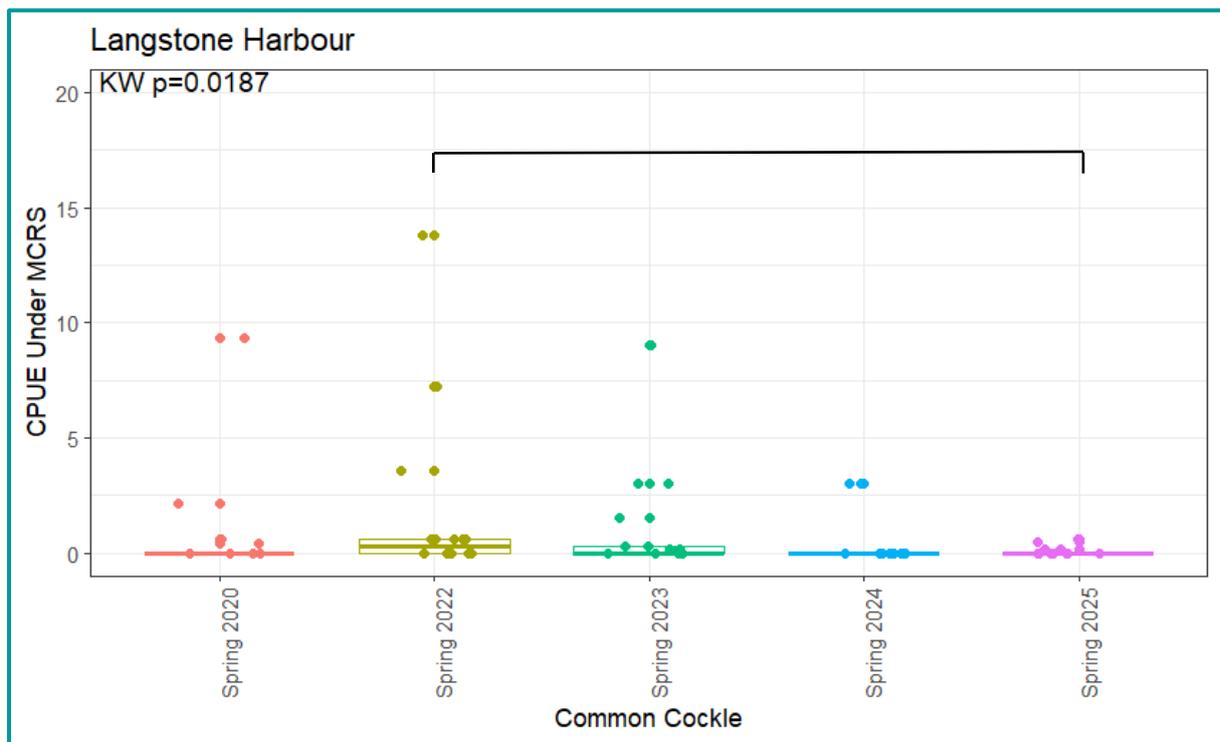


Figure 8: CPUE of the Common Cockle population below MCRS in Langstone Harbour for the spring surveys with available weight data from 2020 to 2025, where a statistically significant decrease was found from 2022 to 2025 ($p < 0.01$).

3.1.4. Autumn Survey (pre-season) Comparisons

CPUE for surveys carried out in the Autumn, representing pre-season conditions, has been compared between the survey years. A comparison over this period was not possible for Langstone Harbour, as sampling was not completed in Autumn 2025 due to weather complications.

For Manila clam CPUE data is available from 2018 to 2019 and 2021 to 2025. For Common cockles CPUE data is available for 2021 to 2025, as weight data was not collected for Common cockle prior to 2020. Please note that there is no survey data available from Autumn 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Manila Clam (Between Autumn Surveys)

- There was **no significant change** in CPUE for the population equal to/above or below MCRS between any Autumn surveys and the Autumn 2025 survey in **Southampton Water**.
- In **Portsmouth Harbour**, there were significant decreases in median CPUE between the Autumn 2019 and Autumn 2021 surveys and Autumn 2025 for both the population equal to/above (15.0 kg/m/hr and 31.2 kg/m/hr compared to 0.9 kg/m/hr) and below MCRS (13.3 kg/m/hr and 11.1 kg/m/hr compared to 0.1 kg/m/hr), however it should be noted that a significant difference ($p < 0.001$) was found when comparing CPUE values from Portsmouth Harbour obtained with the SIFCA owned box dredge and the Fisher owned dredge operated in Autumn 2025 (Figure 9 & 10).

Common Cockle (Between Autumn Surveys)

- In **Southampton Water**, there was a significant ($p < 0.01$) decrease in median CPUE for:
 - The population equal to/above MCRS between Autumn 2021 (10.2 kg/m/hr) and Autumn 2025 (0.0 kg/m/hr) (Figure 11), with CPUE ranging from 0.0 kg/m/hr to 14.6 kg/m/hr in Autumn 2025.
 - The population below MCRS between Autumn 2022 (0.3 kg/m/hr) and Autumn 2025 (0.0 kg/m/hr) (Figure 12), with CPUE ranging from 0.0 kg/m/hr to 1.5 kg/m/hr in Autumn 2025.
- In **Portsmouth Harbour**, there was a significant ($p < 0.01$) decrease in median CPUE for the population equal to/above MCRS from Autumn 2021 (22.8 kg/m/hr) to Autumn 2025 (0.0 kg/m/hr) (Figure 13), with CPUE ranging from 0.0 kg/m/hr to 4.6 kg/m/hr in Autumn 2025, however again it should be noted that a significant difference ($p < 0.001$) was found when comparing CPUE values from Portsmouth Harbour obtained with the SIFCA owned box dredge and the Fisher owned dredge operated in Autumn 2025.

Solent Bivalve Survey 2025

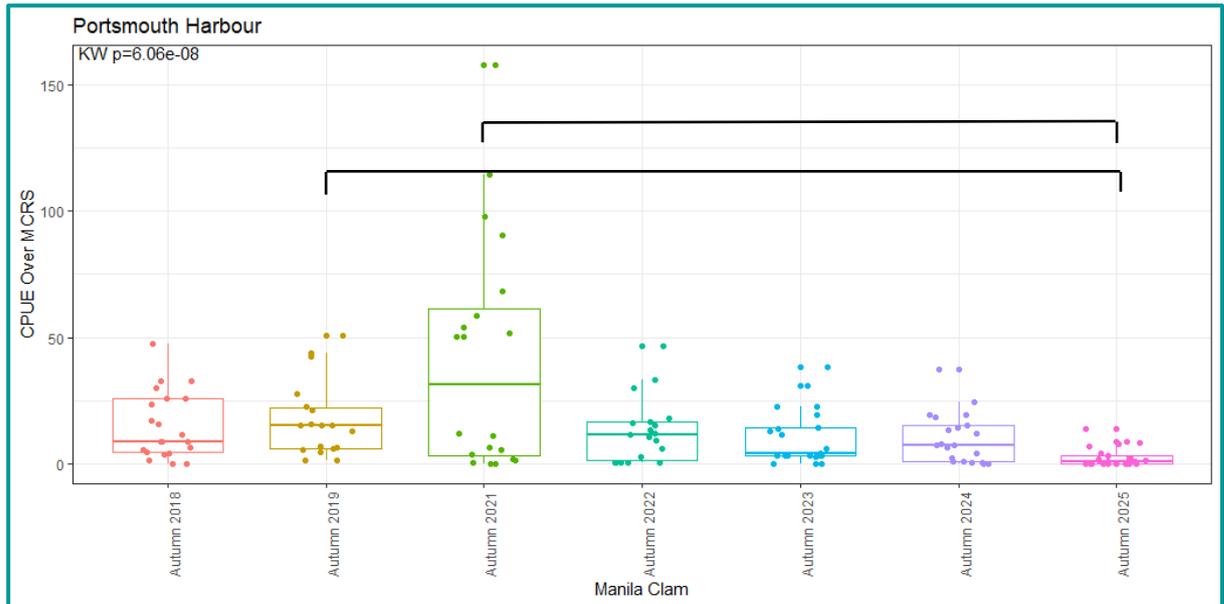


Figure 9: CPUE of the Manila clam population equal to/above MCRS in Portsmouth Harbour for the autumn surveys with available weight data from 2020 to 2025, where a statistically significant decrease was found from 2019 ($p < 0.05$) and 2021 ($p < 0.01$) to 2025.

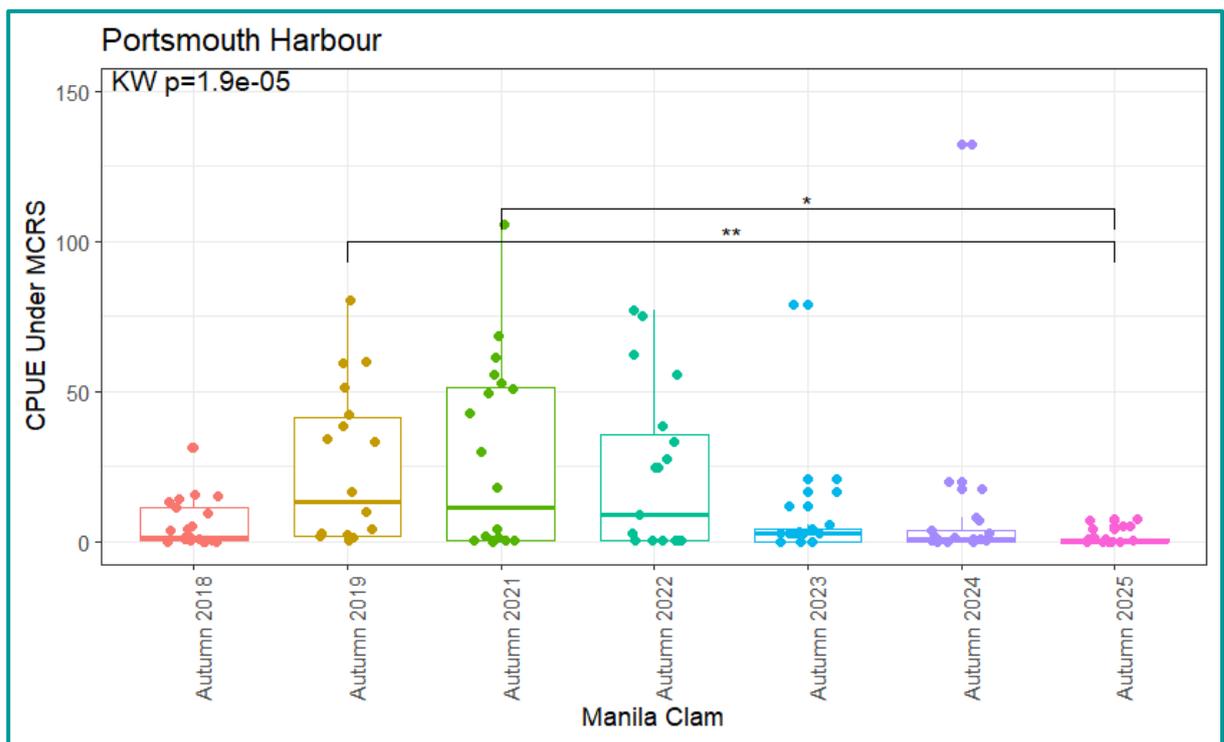


Figure 10: CPUE of the Manila clam population below MCRS in Portsmouth Harbour for the autumn surveys with available weight data from 2020 to 2025, where a statistically significant decrease was found from 2019 ($p < 0.01$) and 2021 ($p < 0.05$) to 2025.

Solent Bivalve Survey 2025

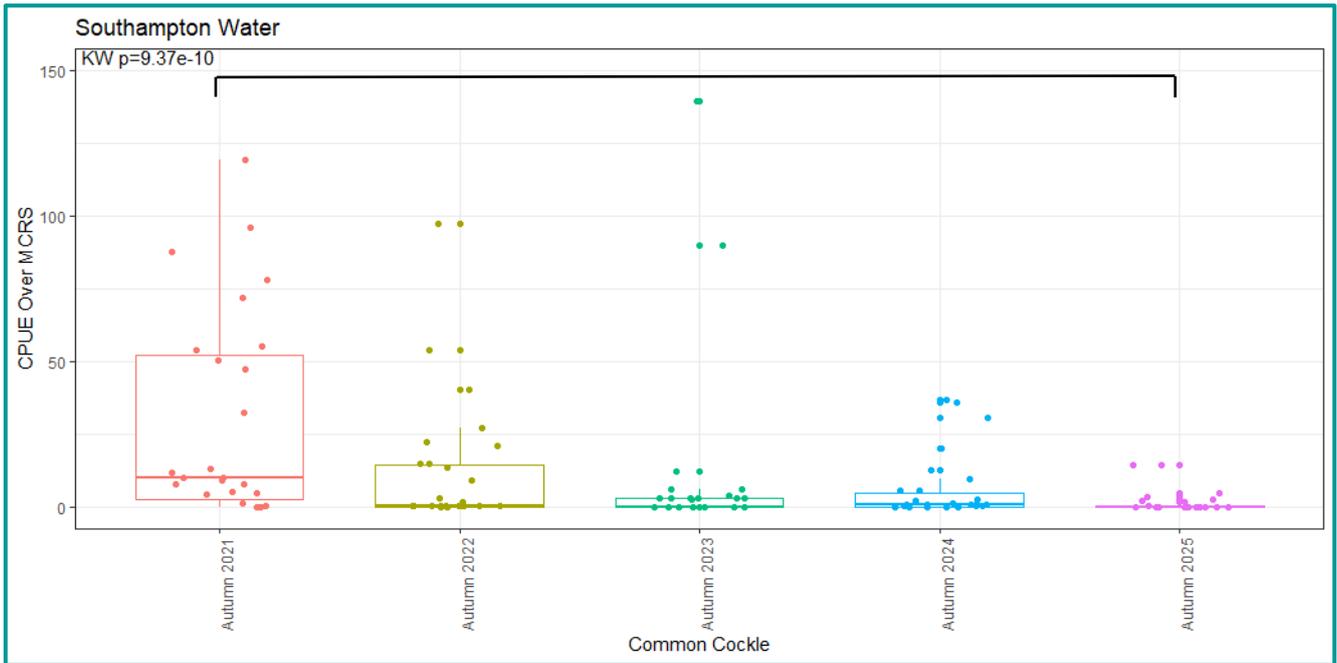


Figure 11: CPUE of the Common cockle population equal to/above MCRS in Southampton Water for the autumn surveys with available weight data from 2021 to 2025, where a statistically significant decrease was found from 2021 to 2025 ($p < 0.01$).

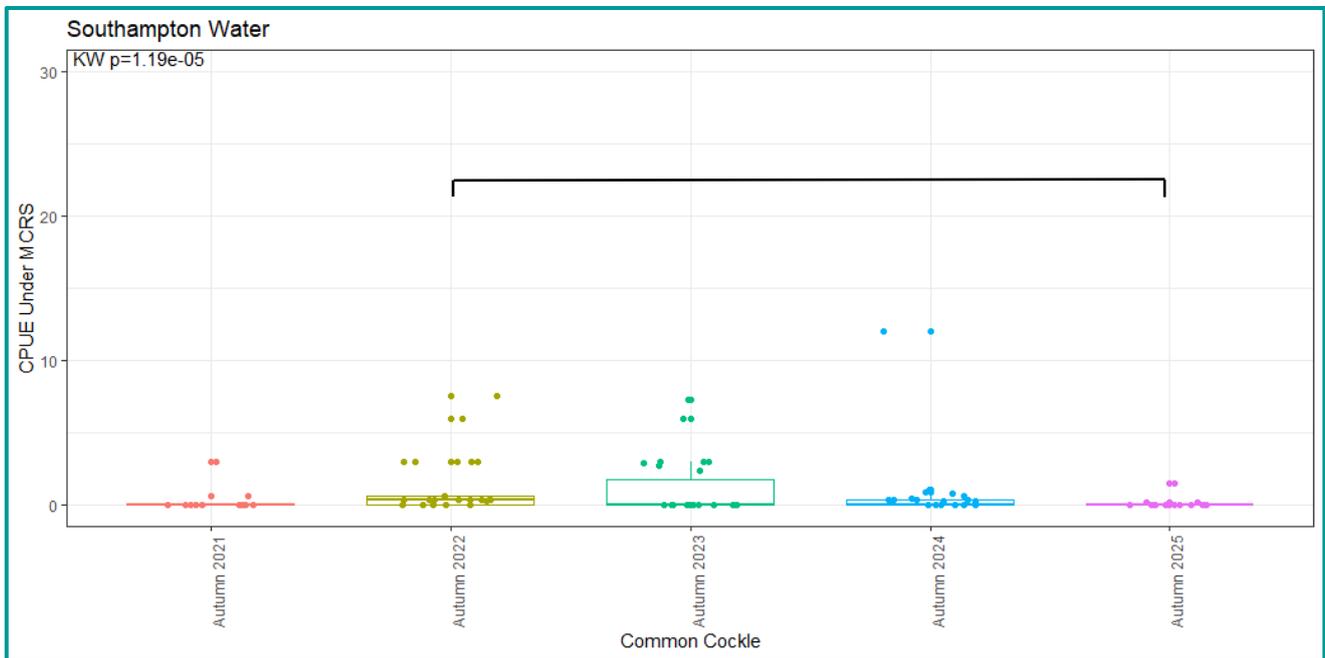


Figure 12: CPUE of the Common cockle population below MCRS in Southampton Water for the autumn surveys with available weight data from 2021 to 2025, where a statistically significant decrease was found from 2022 to 2025 ($p < 0.01$).

Solent Bivalve Survey 2025

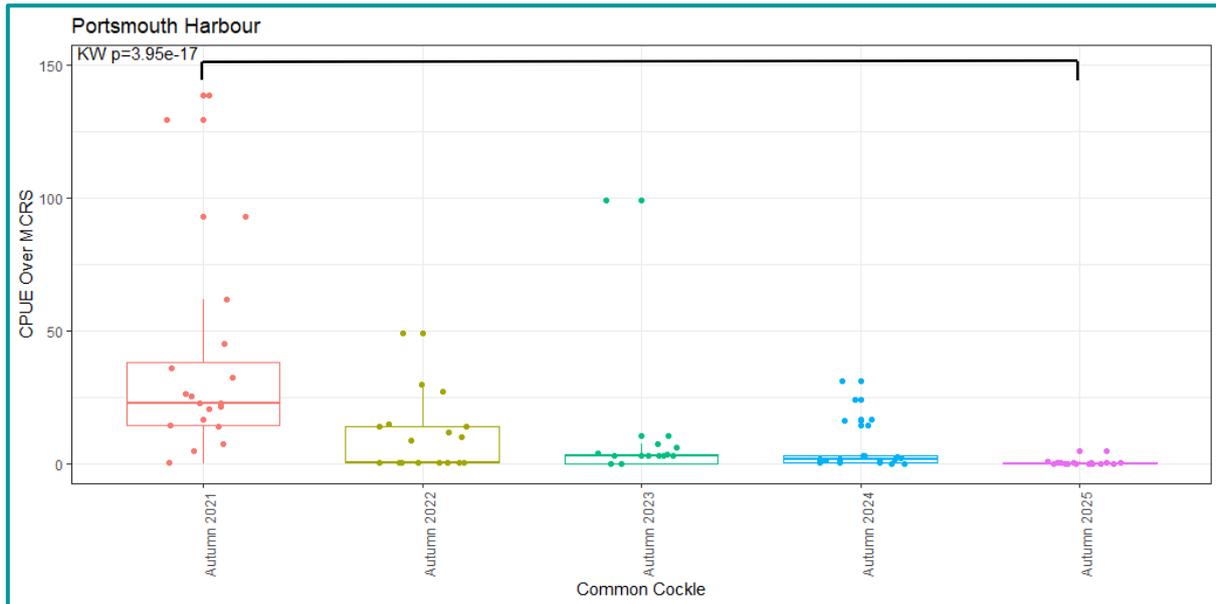


Figure 13: CPUE of the Common cockle population equal to/above MCRS in Portsmouth Harbour for the autumn surveys with available weight data from 2020 to 2025, where a statistically significant decrease was found from 2021 to 2025 ($p < 0.01$).

3.2. Average Length

An analysis of the length trends within the data collected in 2025 and the data collected within the survey timeseries was undertaken. Given the lack of general trend observed within the results of this analysis, the following section presents the occurrence of average length equal to/above or below MCRS within each BMA. The full comparative results for analysis of length data between key time periods within the year are available within Annex 1.

The average length values presented are the median value (the middle value in a range of sequential values), as this is the metric compared within Kruskal-Wallis tests (used when data is non-normally distributed).

Following complications with the SIFCA owned box dredge in October 2025, a fisher owned dredge with differing bar spacing was used to undertake sampling within Portsmouth Harbour in the Autumn 2025 survey. This dredge was found to produce statistically significant differences in median length ($p < 0.05$) when compared to values obtained with the SIFCA owned box dredge sampled in previous Portsmouth Harbour surveys. Additionally, sampling was not undertaken in Langstone Harbour in Autumn 2025 due to unforeseen weather conditions.

Overall, the average lengths of the key bivalve species are as such:

- For Manila clam and common cockle in Southampton Water the average length increased or remained the same over each time period, apart from for Manila clam between Spring 2025 and Autumn 2025 when a decrease was seen.
- For Manila clam in Portsmouth Harbour there is no consistent trend with increases, decreases and no changes seen over differing time periods, while for common cockle decreases in average length were seen for three out of the four of the time periods analysed.
- For Manila clam in Langstone Harbour there is no change seen in average lengths for the analysed time periods, while for common cockle decreases are seen over both time periods due to the low average length value seen for Spring 2025.

3.2.1. Pre- and Post- the 24/25 Fishing Season

Table 1: Average length of all Manila clam and Common cockle sampled the Autumn 2024 and Spring 2025 surveys, representing the period when the fishery was open, as an indication of population structure in relation to the MCRS of each species. Red shading indicates an average length that falls below the species' MCRS, green shading that the average length is above the species' MCRS. An * indicates a significant change in average length between the two surveys ($p < 0.01$).

| | BMA | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| Manila Clam (MCRS = 35mm) | Southampton Water | Portsmouth Harbour | Langstone Harbour |
| Autumn 2024 | 34mm | 35mm | 37mm |
| Spring 2025 | 35mm* | 36mm | 37mm |
| Common Cockle (MCRS = 23.8mm) | | | |
| Autumn 2024 | 27mm | 27mm | 27mm |
| Spring 2025 | 29mm* | 27mm | 21.5mm |

3.2.2. Pre- and Post- the 2025 Closed Season Comparisons

Table 2: Average length of all Manila clam and Common cockle sampled during the Spring 2025 and Autumn 2025 surveys, representing the period when the fishery was closed, as an indication of population structure in relation to the MCRS of each species. Red shading indicates an average length that falls below the species' MCRS, green shading that the average length is above the species' MCRS.

| | BMA | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Manila Clam (MCRS = 35mm) | Southampton Water | Portsmouth Harbour |
| Spring 2025 | 35mm | 36mm |
| Autumn 2025 | 34mm | 35mm |
| Common Cockle (MCRS = 23.8mm) | | |
| Spring 2025 | 29mm | 27mm |
| Autumn 2025 | 28mm | 25mm |

3.2.3. Spring Survey (post-season) Comparisons

Table 3: Average length of all Manila clam and Common cockle sampled during the Spring 2024 and 2025 surveys as an indication of population structure in relation to the MCRS of each species. Red shading indicates an average length that falls below the species' MCRS, green shading that the average length is above the species' MCRS. An * indicates a significant change in average length between the two surveys ($p < 0.01$).

| | BMA | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| Manila Clam (MCRS = 35mm) | Southampton Water | Portsmouth Harbour | Langstone Harbour |
| Spring 2024 | 33mm | 37mm | 37mm |
| Spring 2025 | 35mm* | 36mm* | 37mm |
| Common Cockle (MCRS = 23.8mm) | | | |
| Spring 2024 | 27mm | 28mm | 26mm |
| Spring 2025 | 29mm* | 27mm | 21.5mm |

3.2.4. Autumn Survey (pre-season) Comparisons

Table 4: Average length of all Manila clam and Common cockle sampled during the Autumn 2024 and 2025 surveys as an indication of population structure in relation to the MCRS of each species. Red shading indicates an average length that falls below the species' MCRS, green shading that the average length is above the species' MCRS. An * indicates a significant change in average length between the two surveys ($p < 0.05$).

| | BMA | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| Manila Clam (MCRS = 35mm) | Southampton Water | Portsmouth Harbour |
| Autumn 2024 | 34mm | 35mm |
| Autumn 2025 | 34mm* | 35mm |
| Common Cockle (MCRS = 23.8mm) | | |
| Autumn 2024 | 27mm | 27mm |
| Autumn 2025 | 28mm | 25mm |

4. Catch Data

The total kg of Manila clam caught across all vessels during the 2024/25 season was 149.2 tonne, an increase from all three previous seasons for which Southern IFCA holds data (Figure 14). The total reported catch for common cockle was 885kg in the 2024/25 season, an increase from 0 the previous year.

The average kg of manila landed per vessel for the 2024/25 season was 2.7 tonne, higher than both the 2021/22 (2.0 tonne) and 2022/23 (1.8 tonne) seasons but lower than the 2023/24 season (5.0 tonne). This was influenced by the presence of 2 to 3 (depending on the season) times more vessels operating within the fishery in the 24/25 season than the previous seasons. However, the average kg of manila clam landed per vessel per hour for the 2024/25 season was 2.78 kg/hour, the lowest for any reported season to date (7.06 kg/hr/vessel 2023/24, 4.57 kg/hr/vessel 2022/23, 3.23 kg/hr/vessel 2021/22). This difference in interannual trend is due to the large increase in hours spent within the fishery in the 2024/25 season in comparison to previous seasons (4,022.5 hours total compared to 1,974 hours in 2023/24) due to the increase in vessels targeting the fishery (Figure 14).

All reported cockle catch was caught in a period of two days in January, out of BMA 4 – Southampton Water.

Solent Bivalve Survey 2025

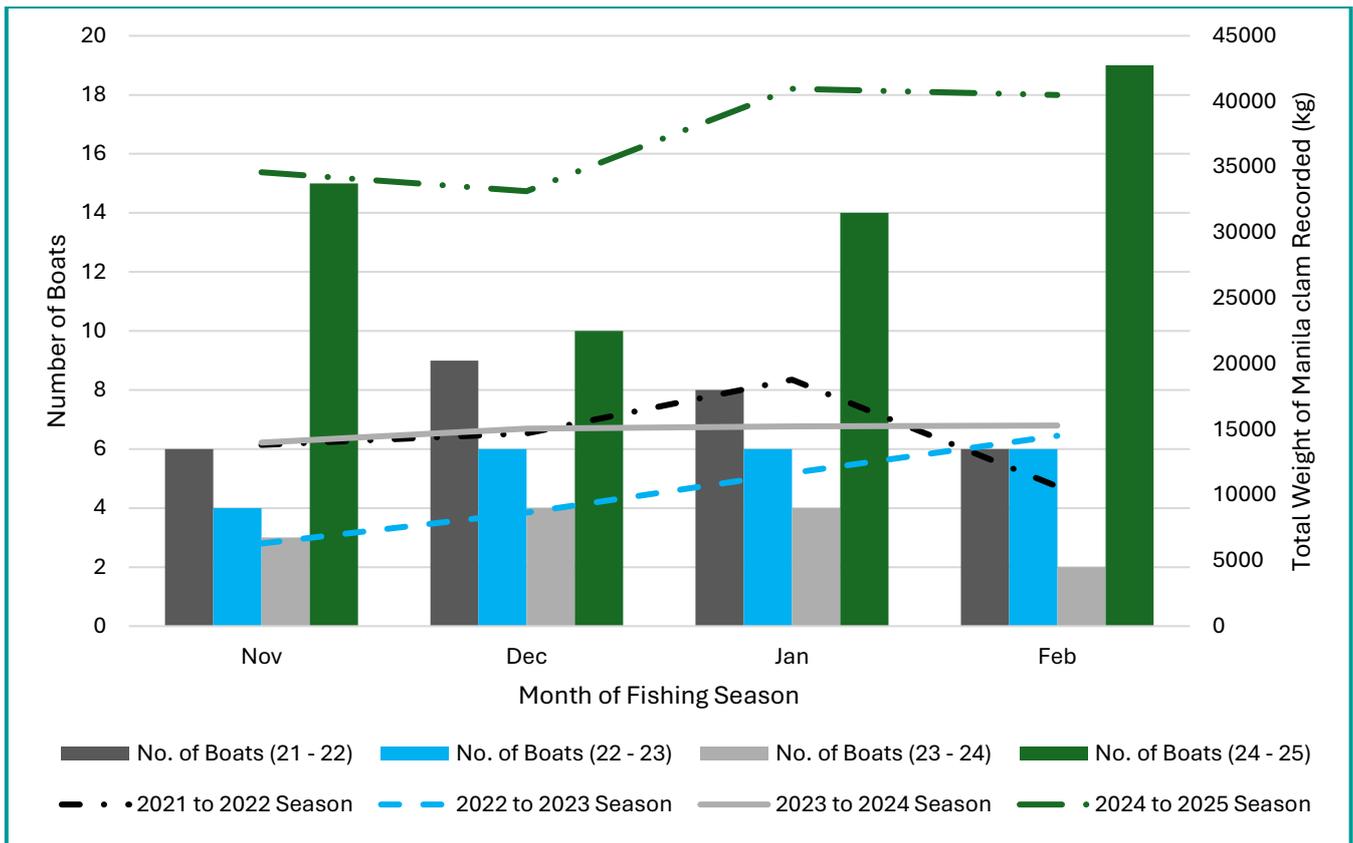


Figure 14: Total kg of Manila clam landed during each month of the last 4 seasons of the Solent Manila clam fishery, and the number of vessels operating in the fishery.

5. Discussion

5.1. CPUE

Between the Autumn 2024 and Spring 2025 surveys, no statistically significant changes in CPUE for Manila clam or common cockle, for any portion of the sampled population, were found. This would suggest that current fishing pressure is not having a significant effect on the populations of Manila clam or common cockle in the three sampled BMAs and that there are other factors which may be influencing changes in the stock levels between years. Catches of Manila clam within the Solent Bivalve fishery increased during the 2024/25 fishing season in comparison to the previous three seasons (Figure 13), however the size of the landings dataset to date (4 years) prevent clear conclusions from being drawn in terms of links between catch data and stock data, and does not preclude that results could instead be a factor of population changes during the year and the influence of environmental variables.

No statistically significant change in average CPUE was found for either Manila clam or common cockle between the Spring 2025 and Autumn 2025 surveys, in any of the sampled BMAs. This continues a trend observed in previous years of no significant change being seen during the Bivalve fishery closed season.

No statistically significant change in average CPUE was found for the Manila clam population in any of the sampled BMAs between the Spring 2025 survey and any previous spring surveys, or for the common cockle population within Southampton Water. In Portsmouth and Langstone Harbours, statistically significant decreases were seen in the equal to/above portion of the common cockle population between Spring 2025 and the spring surveys in 2020 and 2022 (both Harbours), and for the below MCRS portion of the population between

Spring 2025 and the spring surveys in 2020, 2022, and 2023 (Portsmouth Harbour). These decreases in common cockle continue the trend noted in the two previous Bivalve survey reports of decreasing common cockle populations within Portsmouth Harbour between Spring surveys. The observed decrease in common cockle stock occurs alongside no or very low harvesting of common cockle in the seasons since catch recording has been required, with the 2024/25 fishing season the first where any catch of common cockle has been recorded in the fishery. This was limited to two days of fishing. It is therefore possible that the stock variation is due to natural factors or environmental influence, however low levels of stock across all three areas requires close monitoring alongside any changes in fishing practice for this species. It is noted in other populations of common cockle, such as in Poole Harbour, that stocks can be cyclical over periods of 3-4 years, however levels have been noted to remain low in comparison to Manila clam over a longer timeframe than this. For example, over the Autumn surveys from 2022 to 2024, median CPUE values for the common cockle population equal to/above MCRS have ranged from 1.6 kg/m/hr to 2.7 kg/m/hr in Southampton Water, 0.3 kg/m/hr to 3.1 kg/m/hr in Portsmouth Harbour, and 0.0 kg/m/hr to 1.4 kg/m/hr in Langstone Harbour. The trends will continue to be monitored through analysis of survey data.

Statistically significant decreases between the Autumn 2025 survey and the Autumn 2021 (equal to/above CMRS) and Autumn 2022 (below MCRS) were found for common cockle within Southampton Water. Statistically significant decreases were also found within both portion of the Manila clam population and the equal to/above portion of the population in Portsmouth Harbour, however these should be considered alongside the significant difference ($p < 0.001$) found when comparing CPUE values from Portsmouth Harbour obtained with the SIFCA owned box dredge and the Fisher owned dredge operated in Autumn 2025.

5.2. Average Length

Between Autumn 2024 and Spring 2025 (the fishery open season) both Manila clam and common cockle populations within Southampton Water saw a statistically significant change in average length, an increase. Given these trends are the opposite to those that would be expected to be seen (a decrease in length during the fishing season), it suggests there are a number of influencing factors outside fishing activity that may be acting on the species size distribution. No other statistically significant changes were found during either the fishery open or closed season.

The significant results found between the Spring surveys of each year and between the Autumn surveys of each year (Table 3 & 4) are mixed and as such difficult to attribute to specific factors.

6. Summary

- No statistically significant change in median CPUE for either the Manila clam or common cockle populations were found during the 2024/25 fishing season, for any of the sampled BMAs.
- In addition, no significant trends were seen for either species in any BMA during the 2025 fishery closed season.
- The results from this CPUE analysis suggest that fishing pressure is not having a significant impact on this fishery, and that trends could be related to the influence of environmental variables.
- A continued trend of statistically significant decreasing common cockle stocks within Portsmouth Harbour when comparing Spring surveys was found for both portions of the population (equal to/above and below MCRS).
- Statistically significant decreases in the common cockle population between Autumn 2025 and Autumn 2021 (equal to/above MCRS) and Autumn 2022 (below MCRS) were found within Southampton Water.
- For common cockle, there is a trend in decreasing stock levels between years for spring and autumn surveys, however, recorded landings for this species under the Solent Dredge Permit Byelaw have been

Solent Bivalve Survey 2025

zero or very low, suggesting that fishing may not be the primary influencing factor on the stock trend. Trends are potentially due to natural variation or are environmentally driven. Continued monitoring through stock surveys is recommended.

- The median length of Manila clam sampled in the Spring 2025 survey was above the MCRS of 35mm in all three BMAs. The median length in the Autumn 2025 survey was above the MCRS in Portsmouth Harbour but below it in Southampton Water (by 1mm).
- The median length of Common cockle sampled in the Spring 2025 survey was above the MCRS of 23.8mm in Southampton Water and Portsmouth Harbour, but below it in Langstone Harbour (by 2.3 mm). The median length in the Autumn 2025 survey was above the MCRS in Southampton Water and Portsmouth Harbour.
- When comparing average length between subsequent Spring surveys, the general trend for both bivalve species in Southampton Water is an increase, while in Portsmouth Harbour a decrease in average length is seen for both species. Trends within Langstone Harbour are mixed.
- When comparing average length between subsequent Autumn surveys, the general trend for Manila clam is no change for either Southampton Water or Portsmouth Harbour, while trends for common cockle are mixed.
- The total kg of Manila clam caught during the 2024/25 season was higher than for the previous two seasons, but the kg of Manila clam caught per vessel and the kg of Manila clam caught per hour per vessel were lower than the 2023/24 season due to the increased number of vessels working in the fishery. For the first time since landings data was collected under the Solent Dredge Permit Byelaw, landings were recorded for common cockle, 885kg taken in two days in January 2025.

Annex 1

Average Length Analysis

Histograms for both species in each of the BMAs are provided below for all spring surveys and all autumn surveys within the dataset. NB: the Autumn 2025 survey was not completed for Langstone Harbour due to unforeseen circumstances, so Autumn histograms for Langstone Harbour are not presented. The length distribution trends for Manila clam and common cockle in Langstone Harbour up to 2024 are presented within Annex 1 of the ‘Solent Bivalve Survey 2024’ report.

Spring surveys (Post-season) Comparisons

Manila Clam

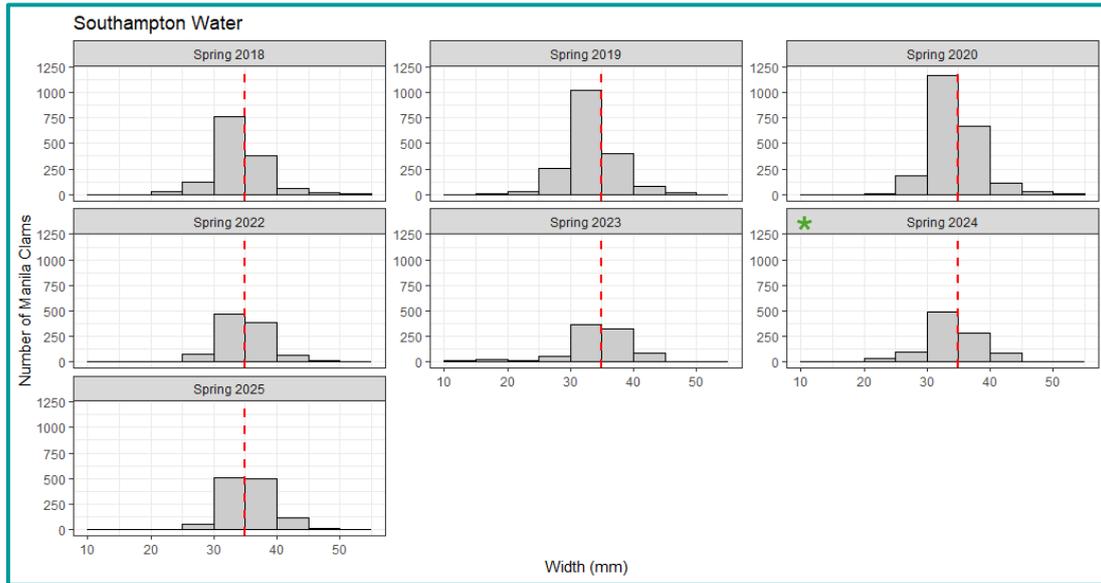


Figure 14: Length histograms for Manila Clam sampled in Southampton Water during the spring surveys within the Solent Bivalve survey timeseries (2018 to 2025). The red dashed line displays the Minimum Conservation Reference Size (35mm). Green symbol (*) indicates a significant increase in median length from Spring 2024 to Spring 2025.

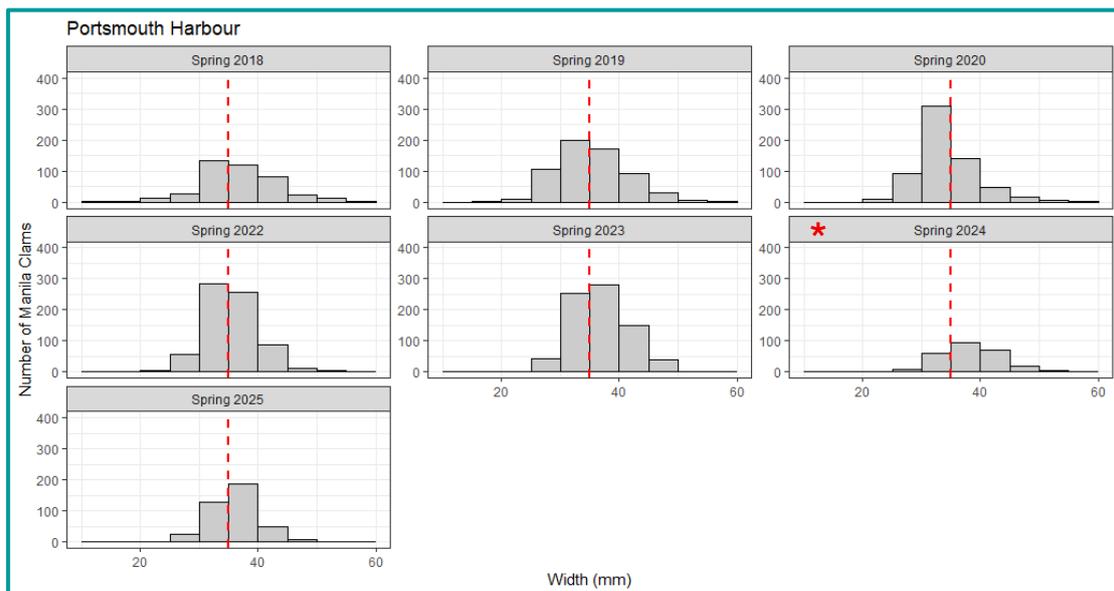


Figure 15: Length histograms for Manila clam sampled in Portsmouth Harbour during the spring surveys within the Solent Bivalve survey timeseries (2018 to 2025). The red dashed line displays the Minimum Conservation Reference Size (35mm). Red symbol (*) indicates a significant decrease in median length from Spring 2024 to Spring 2025.

Solent Bivalve Survey 2025

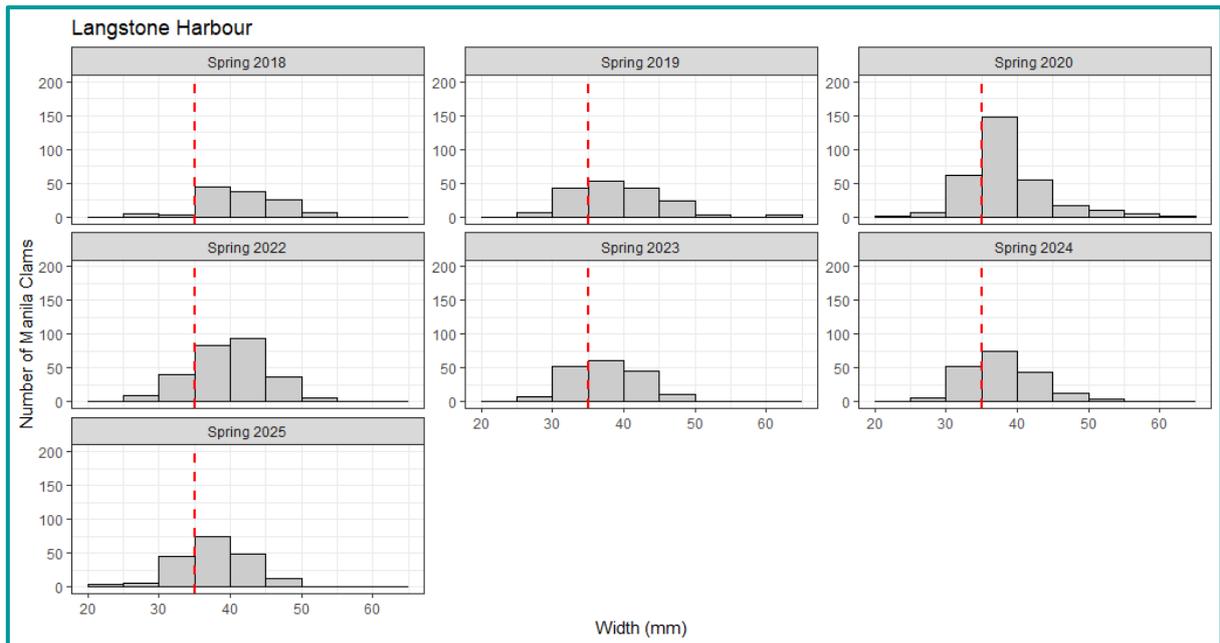


Figure 16: Length histograms for Manila clam sampled in Langstone Harbour during the spring surveys within the Solent Bivalve survey timeseries (2018 to 2025). The red dashed line displays the Minimum Conservation Reference Size (35mm).

Common Cockle

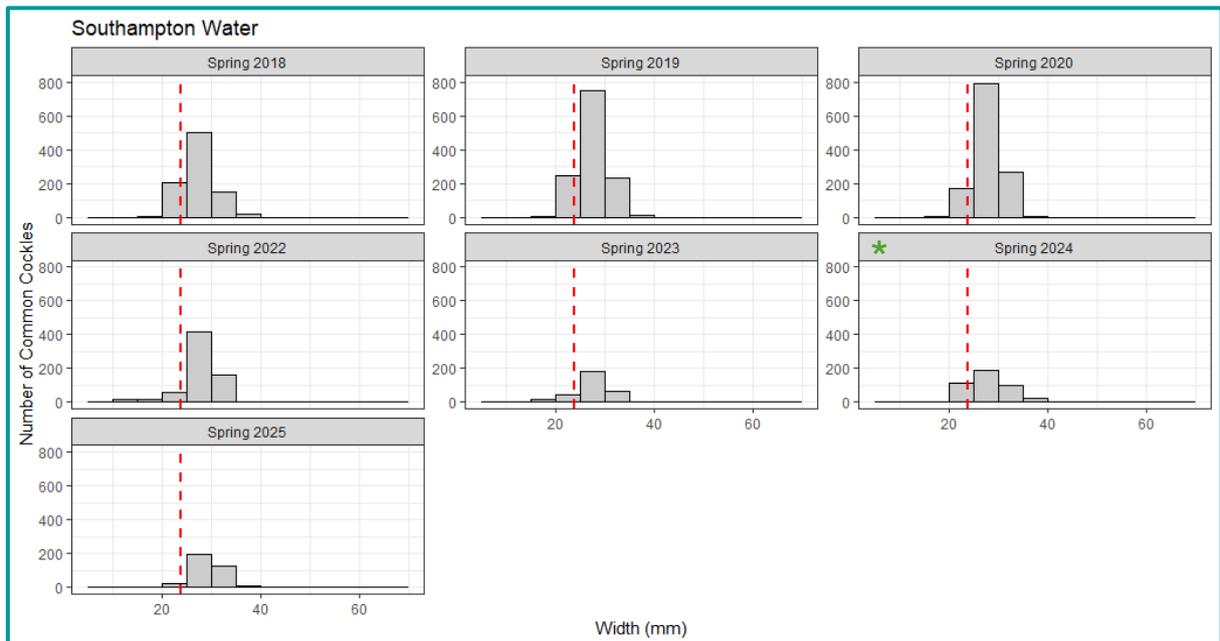


Figure 17: Length histograms for Common cockle sampled in Southampton Water during the spring surveys within the Solent Bivalve survey timeseries (2018 to 2025). The red dashed line displays the Minimum Conservation Reference Size (23.8mm). Green symbol (*) indicates a significant increase in median length from Spring 2024 to Spring 2025.

Solent Bivalve Survey 2025

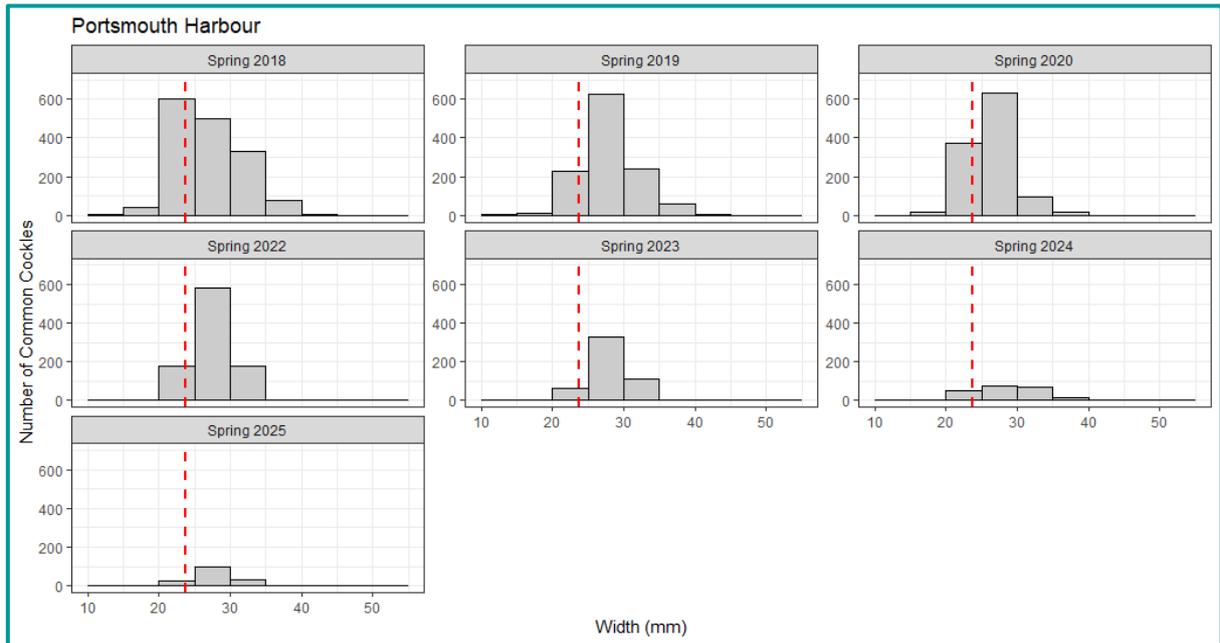


Figure 18: Length histograms for Common cockle sampled in Portsmouth Harbour during the spring surveys within the Solent Bivalve survey timeseries (2018 to 2025). The red dashed line displays the Minimum Conservation Reference Size (23.8mm).

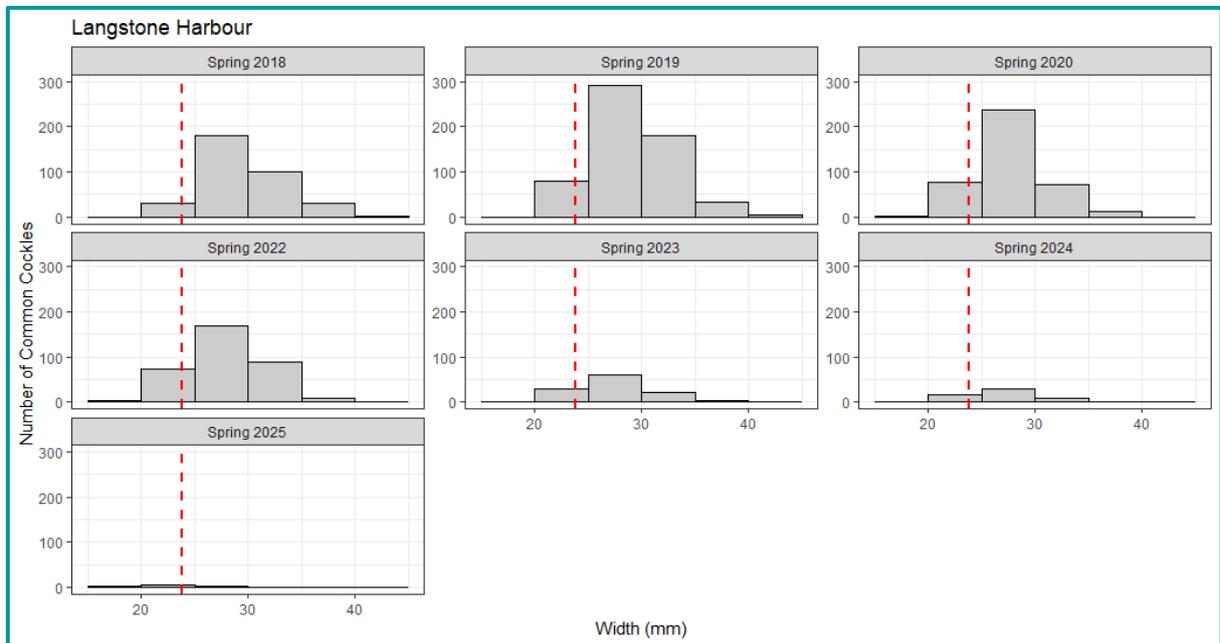


Figure 19: Length histograms for Common Cockle sampled in Langstone Harbour during the spring surveys within the Solent Bivalve survey timeseries (2018 to 2025). The red dashed line displays the Minimum Conservation Reference Size (23.8mm).

**Autumn Survey (pre-season) Comparisons
Manila Clam**

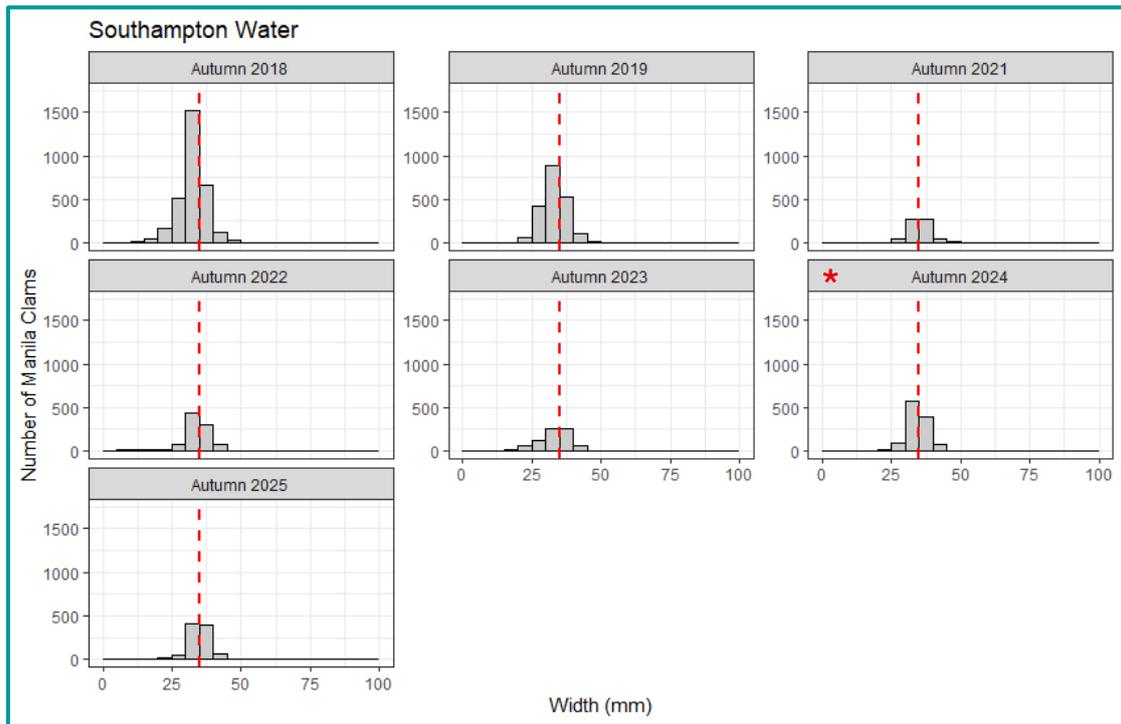


Figure 20: Length histograms for Manila Clam sampled in Southampton Water during the autumn surveys within the Solent Bivalve survey timeseries (2018 to 2025). The red dashed line displays the Minimum Conservation Reference Size (35mm). Red symbol (*) indicates a significant decrease in median length from Autumn 2024 to Autumn 2025.

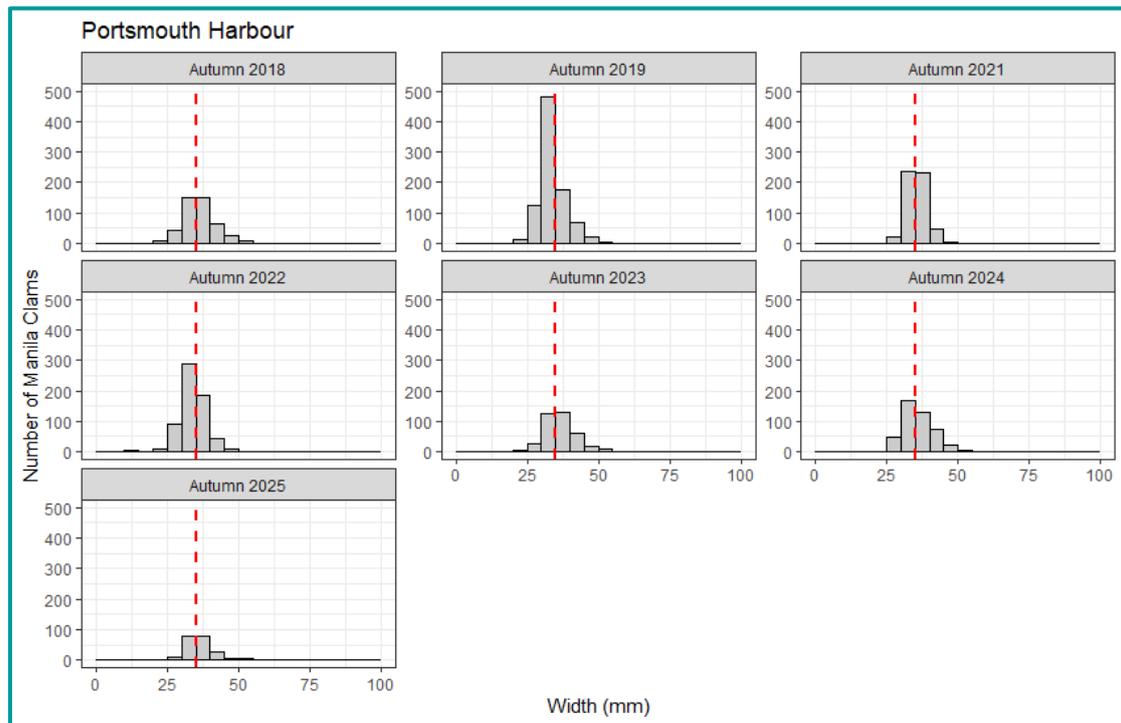


Figure 21: Length histograms for Manila clam sampled in Portsmouth Harbour during the autumn surveys within the Solent Bivalve survey timeseries (2018 to 2025). The red dashed line displays the Minimum Conservation Reference Size (35mm).

Common Cockle

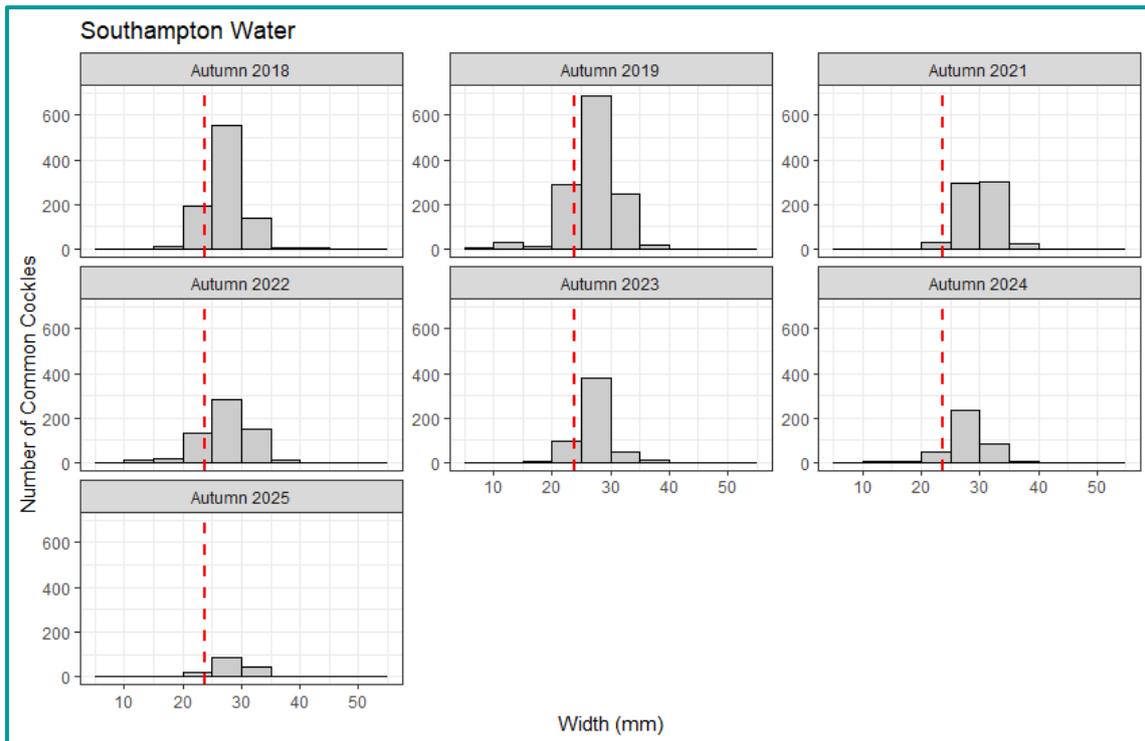


Figure 22: Length histograms for Common cockle sampled in Southampton Water during the autumn surveys within the Solent Bivalve survey timeseries (2018 to 2025). The red dashed line displays the Minimum Conservation Reference Size (23.8mm).

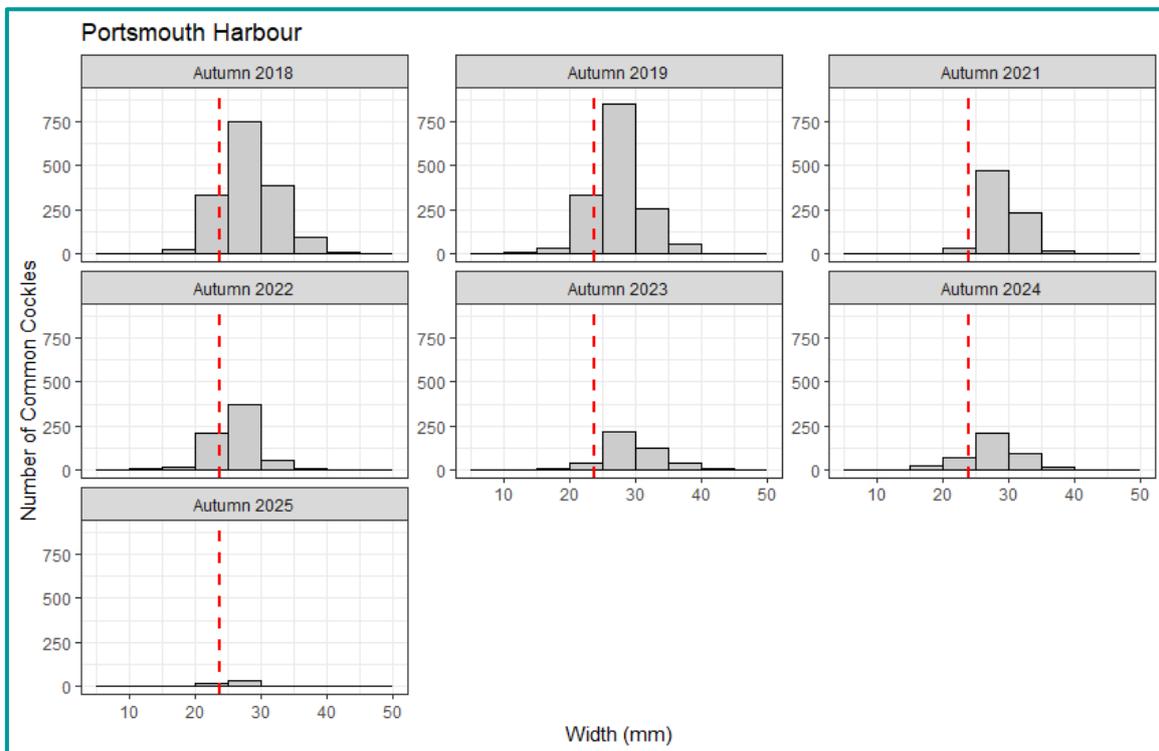


Figure 23: Length histograms for Common cockle sampled in Portsmouth Harbour during the autumn surveys within the Solent Bivalve survey timeseries (2018 to 2025). The red dashed line displays the Minimum Conservation Reference Size (23.8mm).

Juvenile Fish Surveys – A data summary from 2017 to 2025 **Paper For Information**

Report by IFCO Perrins.

A. Purpose

To provide members with a summary of data obtained during the 2025 Juvenile Fish Surveys in the District and an overall comparison to the timeseries dataset from 2017 to Autumn 2025.

B. Annex

- Annex 1: Southern IFCA Juvenile Fish Survey: Data Summary to Autumn 2025

1.0 Introduction

- As part of the Southern IFCA Inshore Netting Review, Southern IFCA determined to enhance the environmental, socio-economic and sustainability of fisheries within the District by supporting the use of harbours and estuaries by fish populations, collectively referring to the areas as **Essential Fish Habitats (EFH)**. These sites contain examples of habitats which provide nursery areas for juvenile fish as well as for fish species throughout their lifecycle for feeding, spawning and refuge.
- Collecting data through the Juvenile Fish Surveys allows Southern IFCA to improve understanding of the use of **EFH** by commercial and recreational fish species. Building a time-series dataset will allow any changes in fish communities to be observed to help in developing this understanding, contributing to a database that can then be used in conjunction with other evidence, when reviewing fisheries management and determining suitable management interventions.
- The dataset also aims to contribute to the Fisheries Management Plan (FMP) development and implementation processes for relevant FMPs, supporting the collation and collection of evidence to address evidence gaps and support considerations of management. Data from the JFS has to date been provided to the Bass FMP, Wrasses Complex FMP and Seabreams FMP.

2.0 Survey Methodology

- Southern IFCA's Juvenile Fish Survey, forming part of the Southern IFCA Monitoring Program, has records dating back to Spring 2017. As time has progressed, the sites surveyed have changed and the number reduced to focus on key sites related to EFH.
- Since 2017, surveys have been conducted in The Fleet (Langton Hive and Ferry Bridge), Christchurch Harbour (Wick Hams and Mudeford Spit), and Yarmouth (River Yar). With the focus of key survey sites in recent years, the River Hamble has been surveyed since Autumn 2021 (locations in Figure A).
- The Juvenile Fish Surveys occur in Spring and Autumn each year. A 43-metre seine net is deployed in an arc adjacent to the shoreline. The net is hauled in, and the fish are transferred to aerated buckets where a length measurement (head to tail, mm) is taken for the first fifty individuals of each species (a count is taken for species over 50 individuals). The net is shot twice at each location, and fish returned to the sea as soon as possible following analysis.
- Data collected in 2025 was added to the time-series database and analysis was conducted to summarise the total species abundance, relative species abundance, species richness, and Shannon Diversity Indices for each survey.
- An additional assessment of Bass data (count and length) was conducted to determine the age groups (less than a year old, 1 year old, 2 years old, and 3+ years old) present at each site surveyed in 2025. Thanks to Mr Robin Bradley, Science Lead for the Bass Angler's Sportfishing Society, for his assistance in developing a methodology to determine the age classes of juvenile Bass using season-specific total length thresholds on the length data.



Figure A: Map showing the location of the sites surveyed in 2025 (and previous years).

3.0 Summary of Key Points

- Data analysis determined no statistically significant difference between surveys in Autumn or Spring across the dataset time range (2017-2025).
- There was no statistically significant difference for total abundance or species richness Index between Spring and Autumn Surveys. The only significant difference was for Shannon Diversity Index between Autumn surveys (2021 and 2024) at Mudeford Spit. This was due to the dominance of Grey Mullet not identified to species level (2021, $n = >1,500$). This is unlikely to recur due to improvements in species-level identification.
- **From the 2025 surveys:**
 - Ferry Bridge had the greatest **Total Abundance** for Autumn (379 fish), whereas Wick Hams had the greatest for Spring (928 fish) and the entire year (1218 fish).
 - Ferry Bridge had the greatest **Species Richness** for Autumn (9), Mudeford Spit for Spring (7.5), and Langton Hive for the entire year (6).
 - Langton Hive had the highest **Shannon Diversity Index (H)** for Spring (1.09), Wick Hams had the highest for Autumn (1.24), and Langton Hive for the entire year (1.14).
 - The most dominant fish species was **Goby sp.** found at all survey sites except for the Hamble (4 locations in Autumn, and 3 locations in Spring). This was followed by **Sand Smelt** which was found at all survey sites except for the Hamble (5 locations in Autumn and 3 locations in Spring).
 - 0-stage Bass (less than a year old) were recorded at The Fleet, Christchurch, and Yarmouth. A continued presence of young juveniles which was also observed in 2024, which shows a continued use of these sites as nursery habitats. This is important to note particularly for The Fleet due to its designation as a Bass Nursery Area.
 - There were also multiple age groups (0-3 years old) recorded at The Fleet, Christchurch, and Yarmouth, which suggests ongoing stock recruitment.
 - Older Bass (3+ years old) were recorded at The Fleet and Yarmouth indicating habitat use beyond early life stages.

4.0 Next Steps

- Officers will be undertaking the next round of Juvenile Fish Surveys in Spring 2026, aiming to maintain and expand the partnership working which is a key feature of this survey and offer a platform for continued research and networking. Each round of surveys will contribute to the time-series database with the aim of reporting annually on results.

Purpose

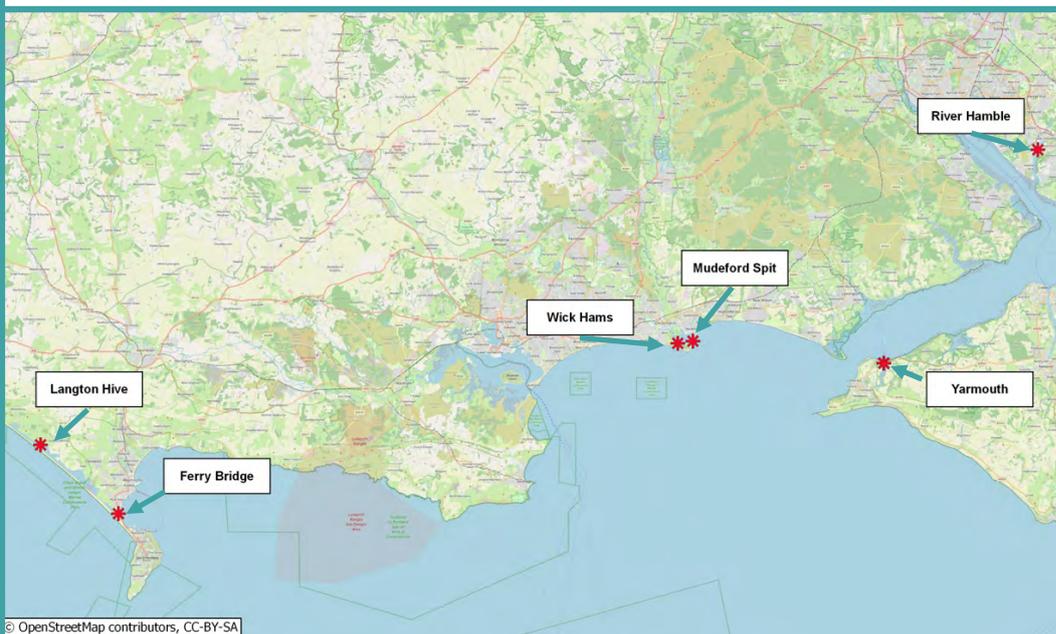
Estuaries and sheltered coastal habitats provide a range of ecosystem services and are known for their high productivity and biodiversity. They offer suitable habitats for juvenile fish as nursery areas as well as species throughout their lifecycle for feeding, spawning and refuge.

As part of the Southern IFCA Inshore Netting Review, Southern IFCA is determined to enhance the environmental, socio-economic and sustainability of fisheries within the District by supporting the use of harbours and estuaries by fish populations for these purposes, collectively referring to the areas as **Essential Fish Habitats (EFH)**.

As part of the Southern IFCA's Fish Monitoring Programme, surveys are carried out at a range of sites across the District in order to understand the use of these EFH by commercial and recreational fish species. Building a time-series dataset will allow any changes in fish communities to be observed to help understanding of EFH, contributing to a database that can be used for reviewing fisheries management. The dataset also aims to contribute to the Fisheries Management Plan (FMP) implementation process for relevant FMPs, to help support the collation and collection of evidence to address evidence gaps and support considerations of management.

Method

1. Southern IFCA carry out Juvenile Fish Surveys in Spring and Autumn each year.
2. A 43 meter seine net is used to sample fish, deployed either by hand or using a vessel depending on location.
3. The net is set in a semi-circle from the shore and is recovered to the shore with any fish retained placed in aerated buckets.
4. The length of the first 50 fish of each species are measured (head-to-tail, total length) and carefully returned to the sea as quickly as possible.
5. Any remaining fish of each species are counted and returned to the sea.
6. The net is shot and hauled twice at each survey site.



Statistical Analysis:

- Data was used to calculate the total species abundance (n), relative species abundance, species richness (S), and species diversity (Shannon Diversity Index, H).
- Diversity (H) considers both the abundance of each species and the balance of abundance between all species, also known as the species evenness. A larger H represents a more diverse community.
- Due to multiple hauls being conducted at each survey site, mean values were used for descriptive purposes. However, statistical significance between surveys was assessed using the raw haul-level data to retain within-site variability.

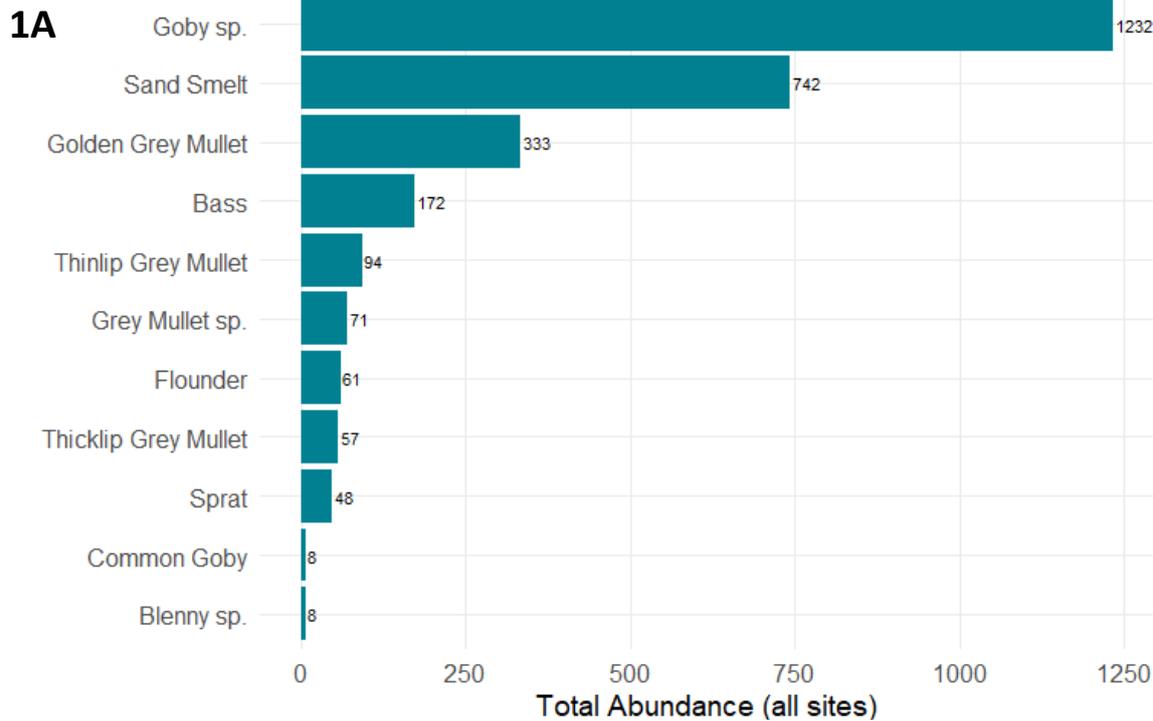


Partnership Working

Southern IFCA's juvenile fish surveys would not be possible without the help, permissions, resources and knowledge of multiple organisations. Thank you to the representatives of the following organisations for their help with the 2025 surveys.



2025 Juvenile Fish Surveys - dominant species of 2025



| Survey Site | Total Count |
|------------------|-------------|
| Langton Hive | 588 |
| Ferry Bridge | 428 |
| Wick Hams | 1218 |
| Mudeford Spit | 288 |
| Donkey Place | 46 * |
| Yarmouth Harbour | 283 |

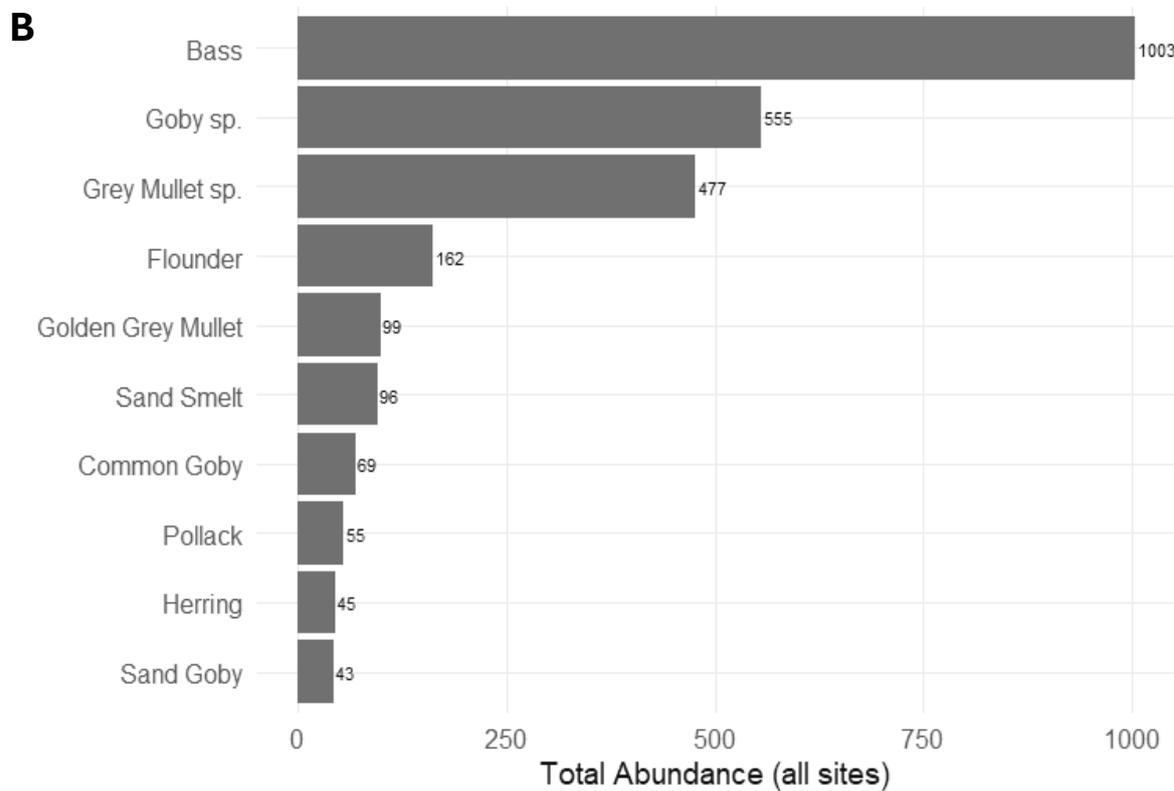


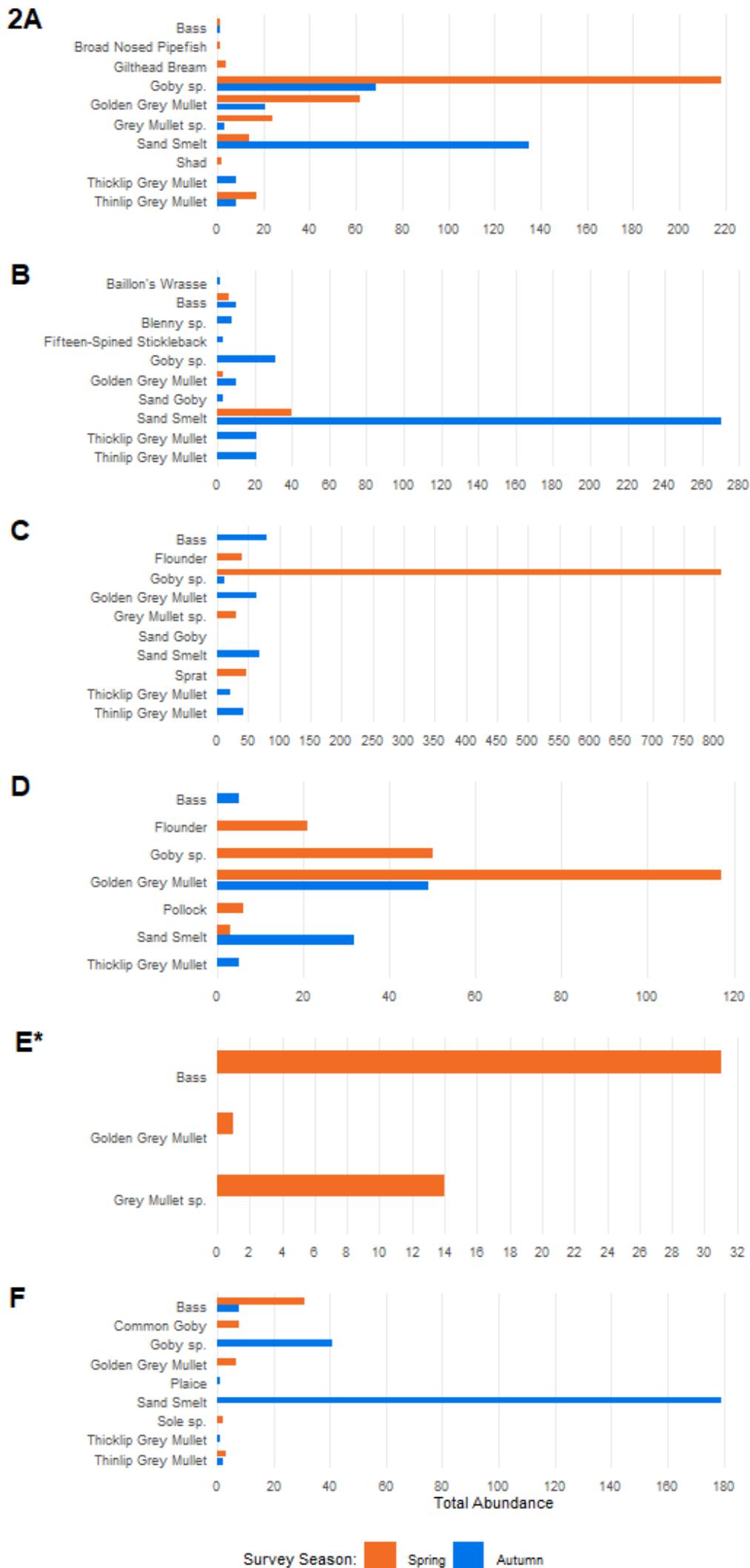
Figure 1A shows the ten most dominant species recorded across all surveys 2025 conducted, combining total counts from all six sites for both Spring and Autumn. The three most abundant species in 2025 were Goby species, Sand Smelt and Golden Grey Mullet. In comparison, Figure 1B shows the ten most dominant species for the 2024 surveys. The three most abundant species were Bass, Goby species and Grey Mullet species.

The decrease in Grey Mullet abundance from 2024 ($n = 477$) to 2025 ($n = 71$) is likely due to improvements in survey officer identification to species level. Variations in Sand Smelt and Goby species abundance may reflect changes in distribution, natural population fluctuations, or environmental factors. This dominance is particularly evident at Langton Hive, Ferry Bridge, Wick Hams, and Yarmouth Harbour (Figures 2A-C, F).

Using a negative binomial test, Bass total abundance per year was analysed across the entire time series (2016-2025). It was determined that the change from most dominant species (2024) to 4th most dominant (2025) is due to the populations natural fluctuations since there was no significant change throughout the years ($p > 0.05$).

*Donkey Place was only surveyed in Spring due to environmental conditions preventing surveying in Autumn (weather conditions, tides, and daylight availability).

2025 Juvenile Fish Surveys - distribution of species across sites



Figures 2A-F display the total species catch at each location for the 2025 Spring (orange) and Autumn (blue) surveys: A) Langton Hive, B) Ferry Bridge, C) Wick Hams, D) Mudeford Spit, E) Donkey Place, F) Yarmouth Harbour.

Of the top three dominant species for all 2025 surveys (Figure 1: Goby species, n = 1232; Sand Smelt, n = 742; Golden Grey Mullet, n = 333), only Golden Grey Mullet occurred at all six sample sites, while Goby spp. and Sand Smelt were absent from Donkey Place in Spring (n = 0). Goby were abundant at most Essential Fish Habitats (EFH), likely due to inshore shelter and feeding, with a Spring peak during spawning. Sand Smelt were generally less abundant in Spring, possibly due to mature individuals migrating to rivers, and congregated in Autumn in inshore habitats for overwintering or pre-spawning.

Commercially important species were present at all six sample sites, including Bass and Grey Mullet species (Golden, Thicklip and Thinlip). Flounder were only found at Christchurch (Mudeford Spit and Wick Hams, n = 21 and 40, respectively) in Spring.

Both The Fleet (Langton Hive and Ferry Bridge) and the River Hamble (Donkey Place) are Essential Fish Habitats that are also designated Bass Nursery Areas. From these surveys, Bass have been consistently dominant at the River Hamble (relative abundance, Figure 17), and present across the two Fleet sites (relative abundance, Figures 5 and 8) since sampling began there in 2017. For 2025 Bass have also been found across all six sites, although they were only recorded in Autumn at Christchurch.

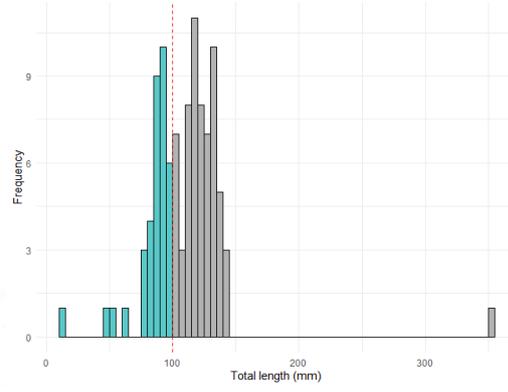
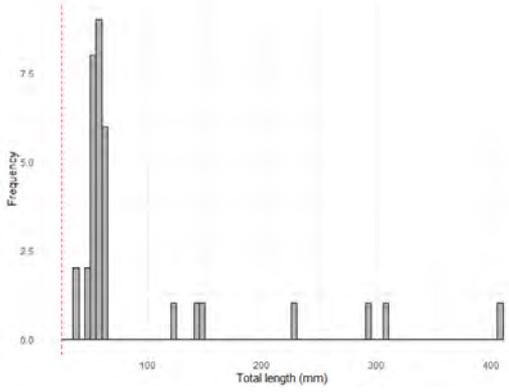
*Donkey Place (River Hamble) was only surveyed in Spring due to environmental complications in the Autumn (weather, tides, and daylight availability).

2025 Juvenile Fish Surveys - Bass age groups across sites

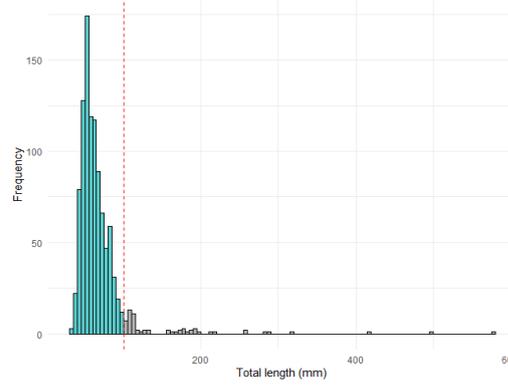
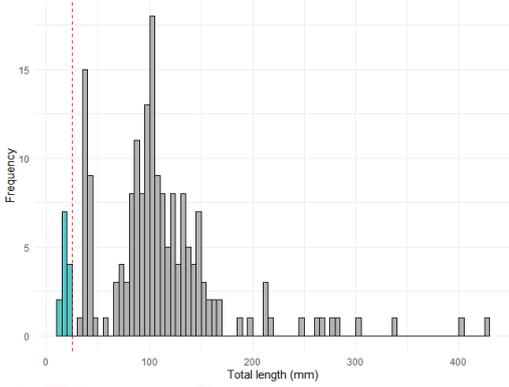
Spring:

Autumn:

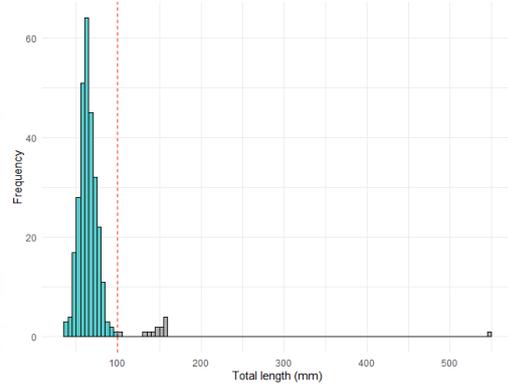
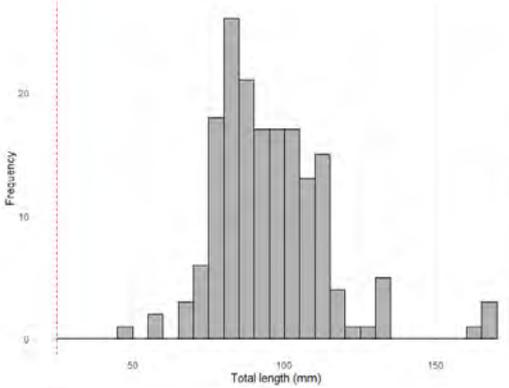
3A



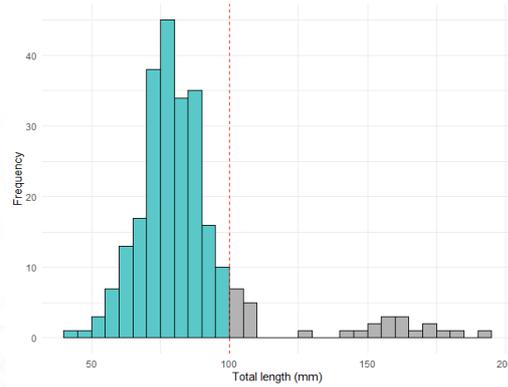
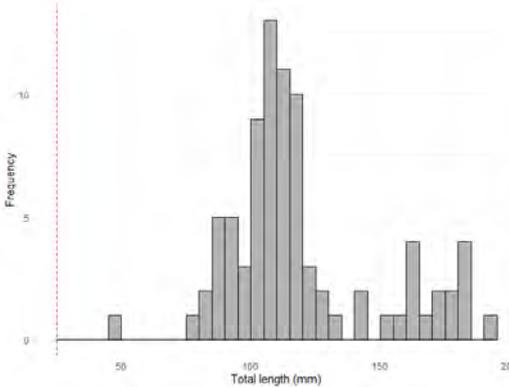
B



C*



D



The age groups of Bass were defined using **season-specific total length thresholds** to reflect expected growth between Spring and Autumn surveys.

Individuals classified as 0-stage (young-of-the-year) were defined as those ≤ 25 mm total length in Spring surveys, corresponding to recently settled post-larvae and early juveniles, and ≤ 100 mm total length in Autumn surveys, following growth over the first summer. Larger individuals were classified into subsequent life stages using fixed length ranges.

| | Spring | Autumn |
|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| 0-stage | ≤ 25 mm | ≤ 100 mm |
| 1-stage | $>25 - 100$ mm | $>100 - 170$ mm |
| 2-stage | $>100 - 180$ mm | $>170 - 250$ mm |
| (3+)-stage | > 180 mm | > 250 mm |

These thresholds were selected to minimise overlap between cohorts while providing a conservative and consistent proxy for age where direct ageing was not available.

In Figure 3 (A–D), the shaded bars are individuals at 0-stage, grey bars are individuals larger than 0-stage, the red line indicates length threshold for 0-stage.



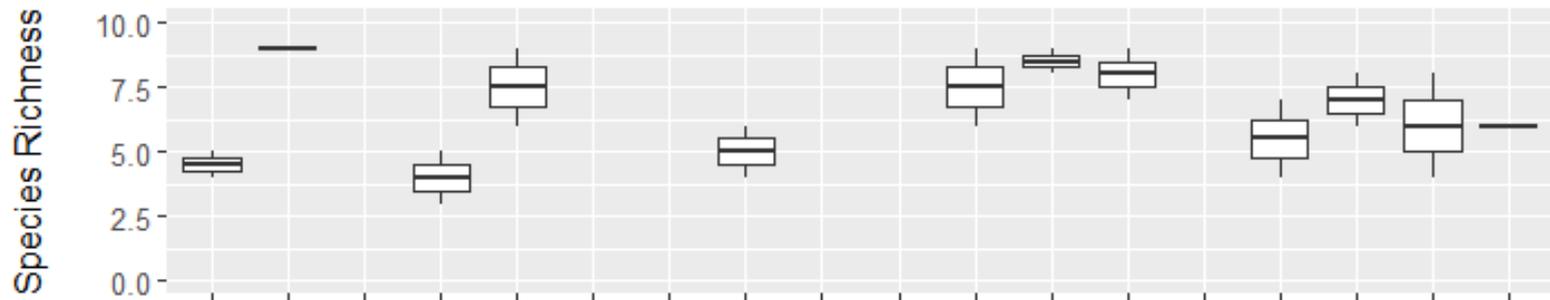
Figure 3 (A–D) presents length–frequency histograms for Bass (*Dicentrarchus labrax*) at four survey areas: (A) The Fleet (Langton Hive and Ferry Bridge), (B) Christchurch (Wick Hams and Muddeford Spit), (C) the River Hamble, and (D) Yarmouth.

The continued presence of 0-stage Bass across multiple sites suggests site fidelity. Individuals of this age class were recorded at the Fleet (Ferry Bridge, $n = 3$), Christchurch (Muddeford Spit and Wick Hams, $n = 1$ and 58 respectively), and Yarmouth ($n = 1$). The occurrence of multiple age classes (0–3 years), indicative of ongoing stock recruitment, was observed at the Fleet (Ferry Bridge, $n = 17$), Christchurch (Muddeford Spit, $n = 12$), and Yarmouth ($n = 39$). The River Hamble site (Donkey Place, $n = 31$) also supported Bass from 1- and 2-stage age classes. Bass aged 3+ years, suggesting habitat use beyond early life stages, were recorded at the Fleet (Ferry Bridge, $n = 4$) and Yarmouth ($n = 2$). The presence of multiple life stages at both the Fleet and the River Hamble is particularly noteworthy given their designation as Bass Nursery Areas.

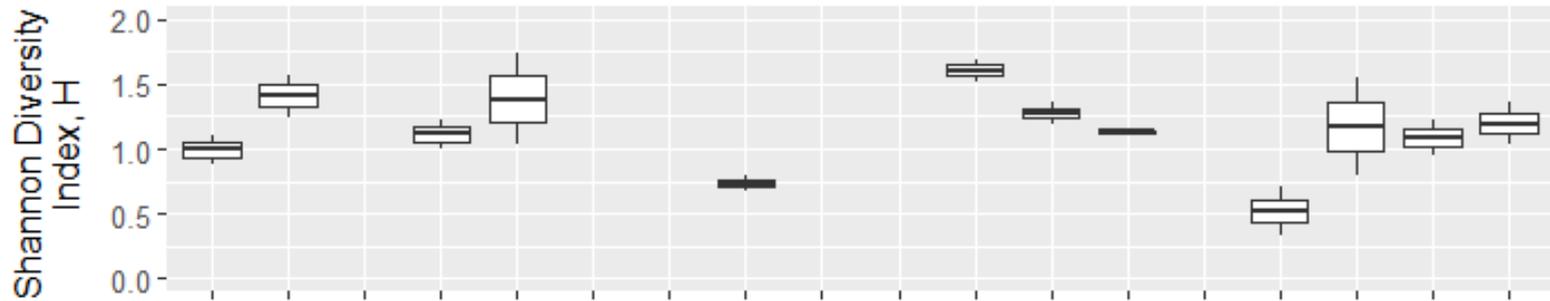
*Donkey Place (River Hamble) was only surveyed in Spring due to environmental complications in the Autumn (weather, tides, and daylight availability).

Langton Hive

4A



B



C

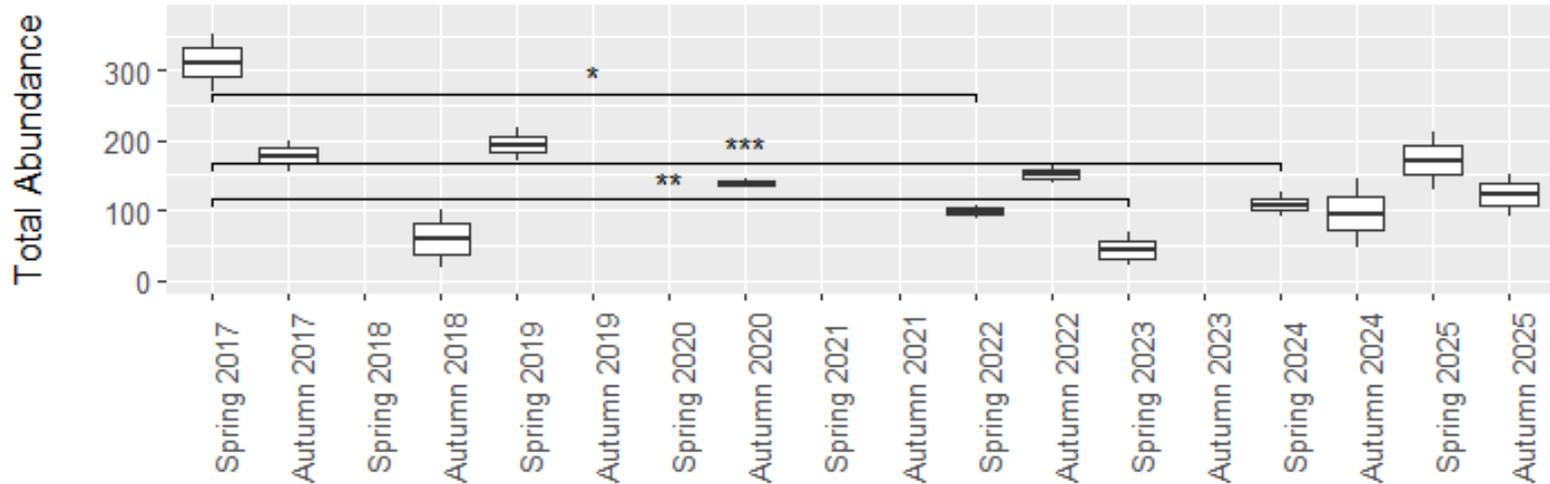


Figure 4 (A-C) displays the Species Richness, Shannon Diversity Index (H), and Total Abundance in each survey carried out from Spring 2017 to Autumn 2025.

Mean **Species richness** was highest in Autumn 2017 ($S = 9$) and lowest in Autumn 2018 ($S = 4$). Of the Spring surveys, mean species richness was highest in 2023 ($S = 8$) and lowest in 2017 ($S = 4.5$). No significant differences in species richness were detected between Spring surveys or between Autumn surveys ($p > 0.05$).

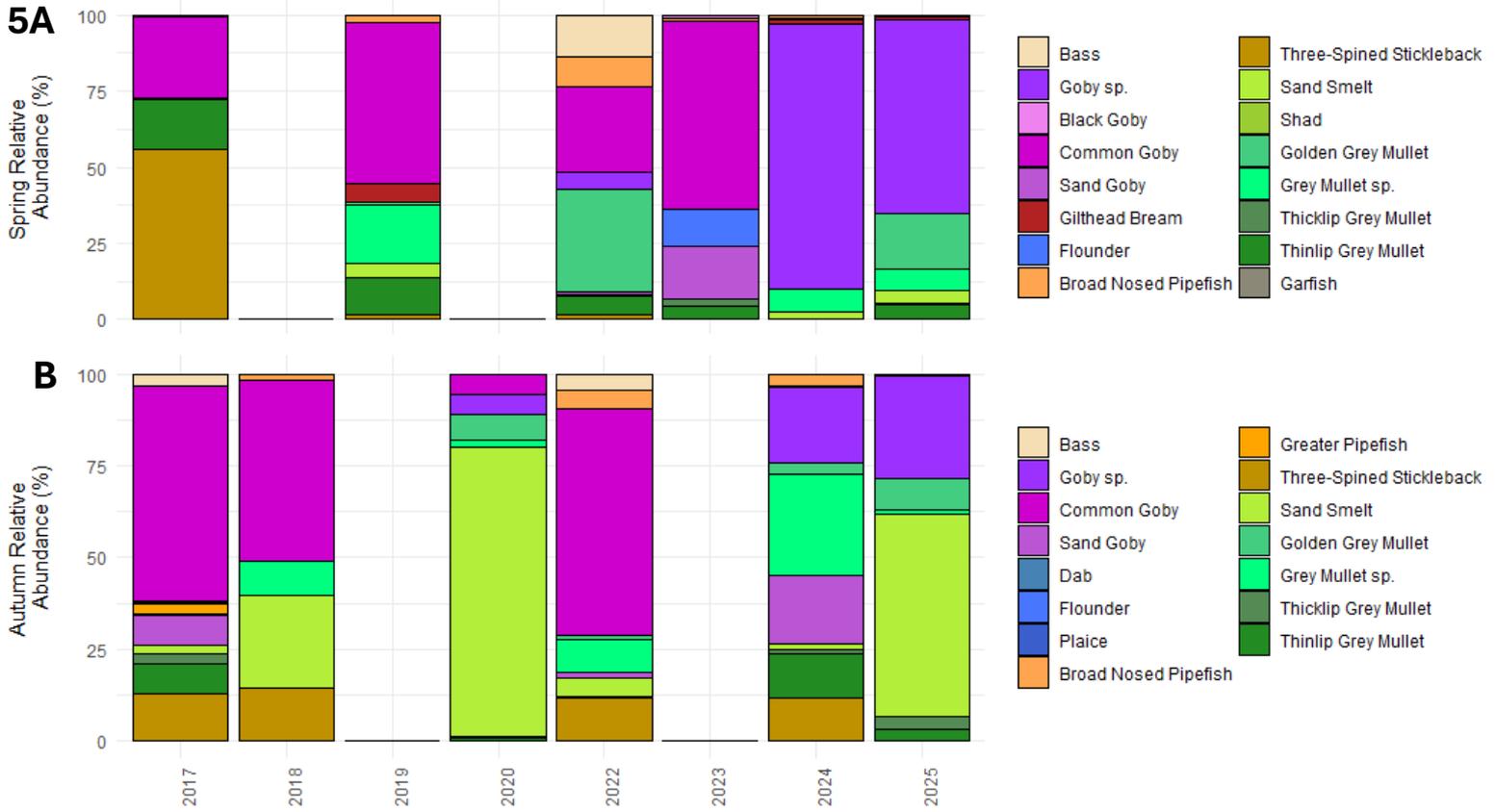
Spring 2025 ($H = 1.09$) had a slightly lower mean **Shannon Diversity Index** than the Autumn 2025 survey ($H = 1.20$). This lower evenness was due to the dominance of Goby species (64%, Figure 5A) in the Spring survey. No survey differed significantly from another in terms of species diversity (H ; $p > 0.05$).

Of the Spring surveys, 2017 had the highest mean **total abundance** of fish ($n = 311$) and 2023 the lowest ($n = 44$). Of the Autumn surveys, 2017 had the highest total abundance of fish ($n = 178$) and 2018 the lowest ($n = 59$). There is no significant difference in total abundance between Autumn surveys ($p > 0.05$). There was a significant difference between Spring surveys: 2017 was significantly different to 2022, 2023, and 2024 (* ** ***, $p < 0.05$). Aside from this outlier-driven effect in Spring 2017, there was no evidence of statistically significant variation among the remaining survey years.

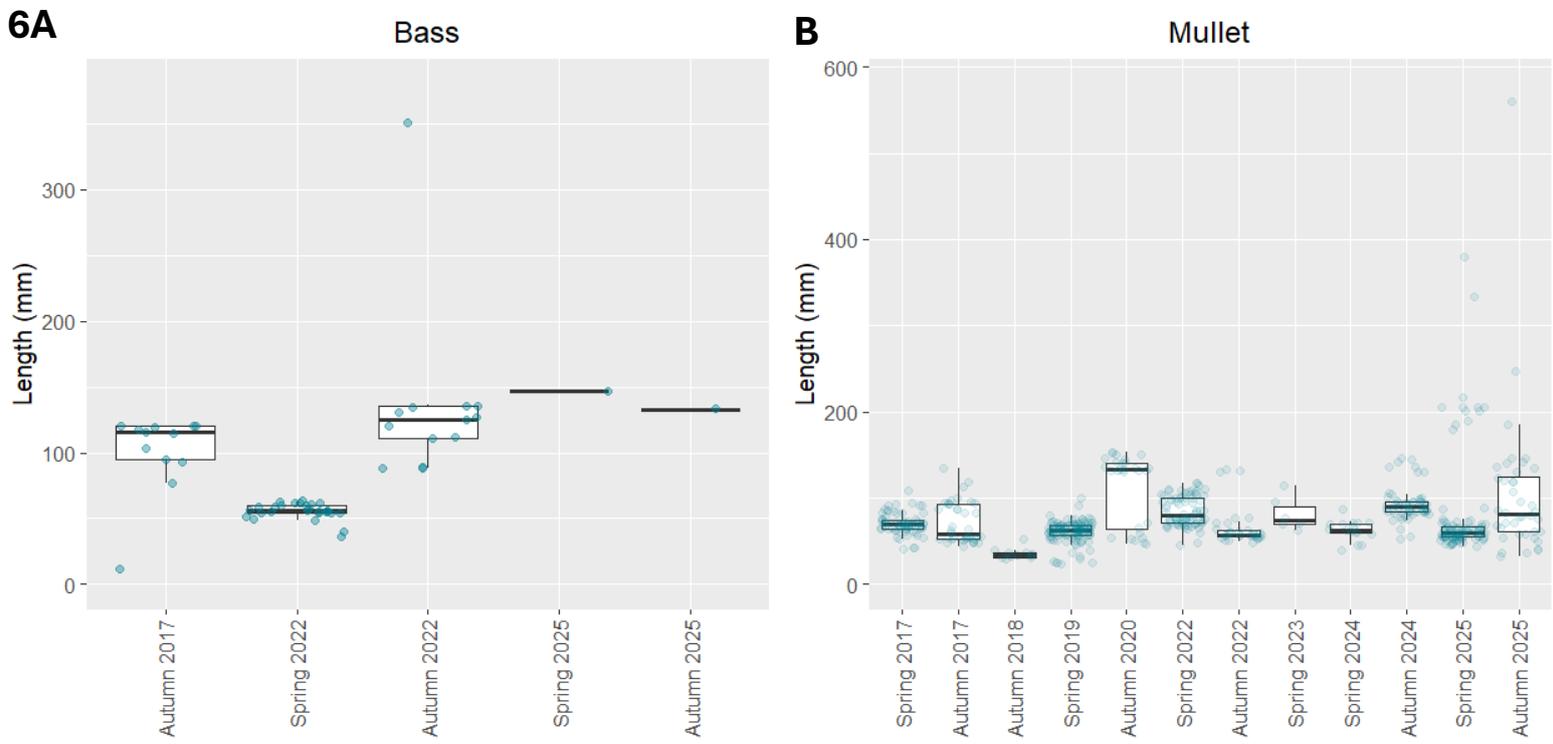
There were no statistically significant differences in species richness, Shannon Diversity Index (H) or total abundance between Spring surveys or between Autumn surveys (table to the right).

| Surveys 2017 - 2025 | All Spring surveys | All Autumn surveys | P<0.05 |
|----------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------|
| Mean Species Richness | 6.50 | 6.58 | No |
| Mean Shannon Diversity Index (H) | 1.12 | 1.15 | No |
| Mean Total Abundance | 154 | 124 | No |

Langton Hive



Figures 5A (Spring) and B (Autumn) display the percentage **relative abundance** of each species during each survey. In Spring 2025 Goby species were the most abundant species (64%) followed by Golden Grey Mullet (18%). Whereas in Autumn 2025, Sand Smelt were the most abundant species (55%) followed by Goby species (28%).

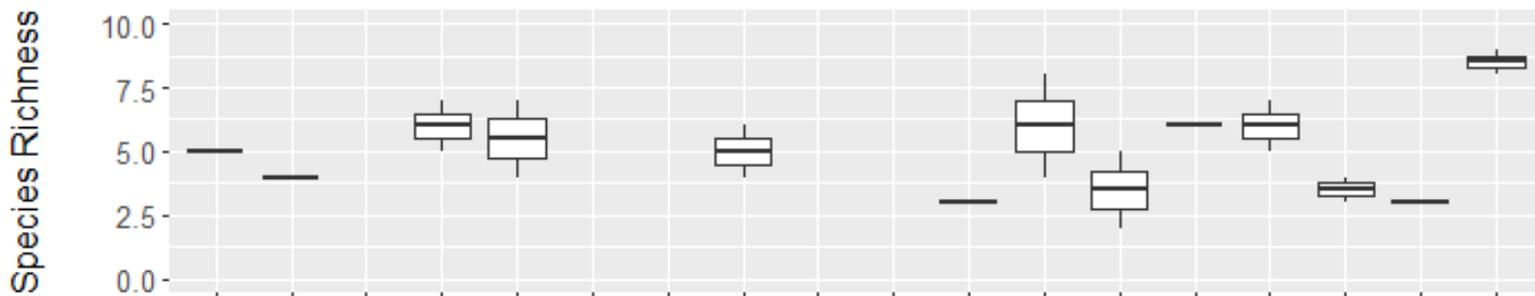


Figures 6A and 6B display the measured length of Bass and all Mullet species; only these taxa are shown due to their commercial importance within the Southern IFCA district. All Grey Mullet species were combined for Figure 6B due to difficulties in species-level identification at the juvenile stage.

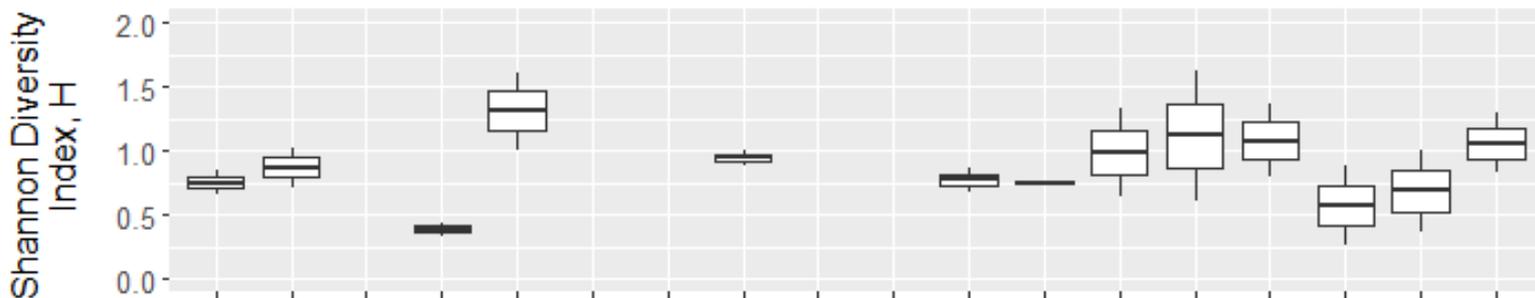
No 0-stage Bass individuals were recorded in either the Spring or Autumn 2025 surveys. The length thresholds for 0-stage were set based on available literature (60-140 mm) and informed by the complete dataset. Conservative thresholds of 25 mm (Spring) and 100 mm (Autumn) total length were applied to minimise overlap with 1-stage individuals and to account for variability in spawning time, larval settlement, and growth rates.

Ferry Bridge

7A



B



C

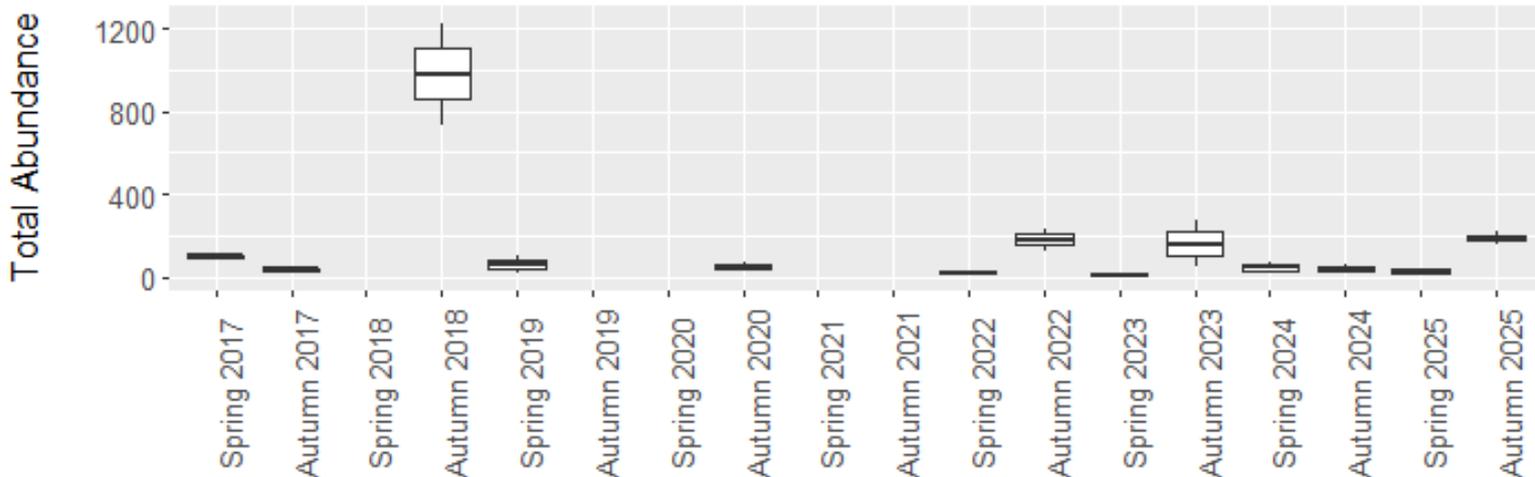


Figure 7 (A-C) displays the Species Richness, Shannon Diversity Index (H) and Total Abundance in each survey carried out from Spring 2017 to Autumn 2025.

Mean **Species richness** was highest in Autumn 2025 ($S = 9$), and lowest in Autumn 2024 ($S = 3.5$). Of the Spring surveys, mean Species Richness was highest in Spring 2024 ($S = 6$), and lowest in Spring 2022 and 2025 ($S = 3$). No significant differences in species richness were detected between Spring surveys or between Autumn surveys ($p > 0.05$).

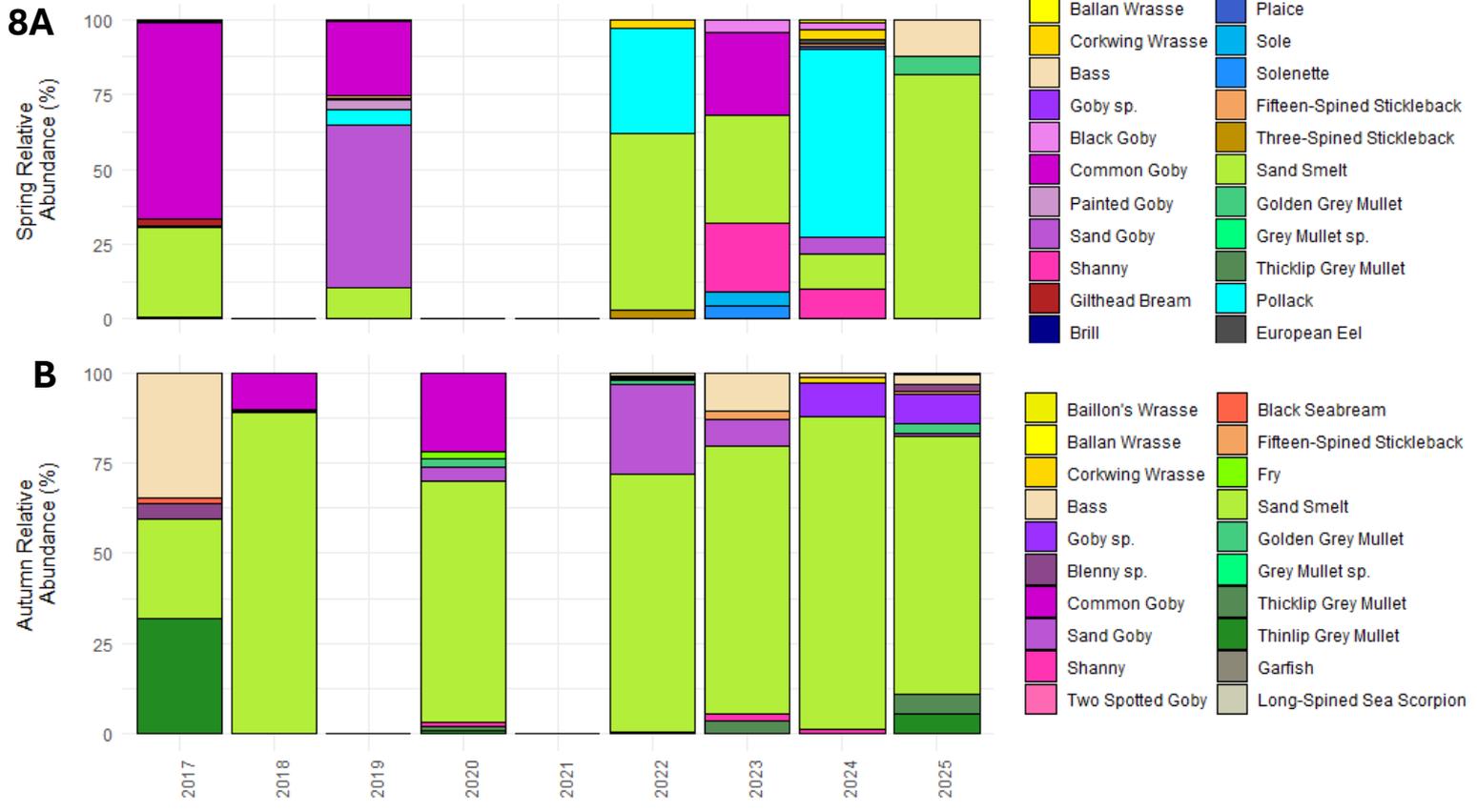
Spring 2025 ($H = 0.69$) had a lower mean **Shannon Diversity Index** than the Autumn 2025 survey ($H = 1.06$). This was due to the high dominance of Sand Smelt (82%, Figure 8A) in the Spring survey. No survey differed significantly from another in terms of species diversity (H ; $p > 0.05$).

Of the Spring surveys, 2017 had the highest mean **total abundance** of fish ($n = 98$) and 2023 the lowest ($n = 11$). Of the Autumn surveys, 2018 had the highest mean total abundance of fish ($n = 980$) and 2024 the lowest ($n = 37$). No significant differences in total abundance were found between surveys ($p > 0.05$).

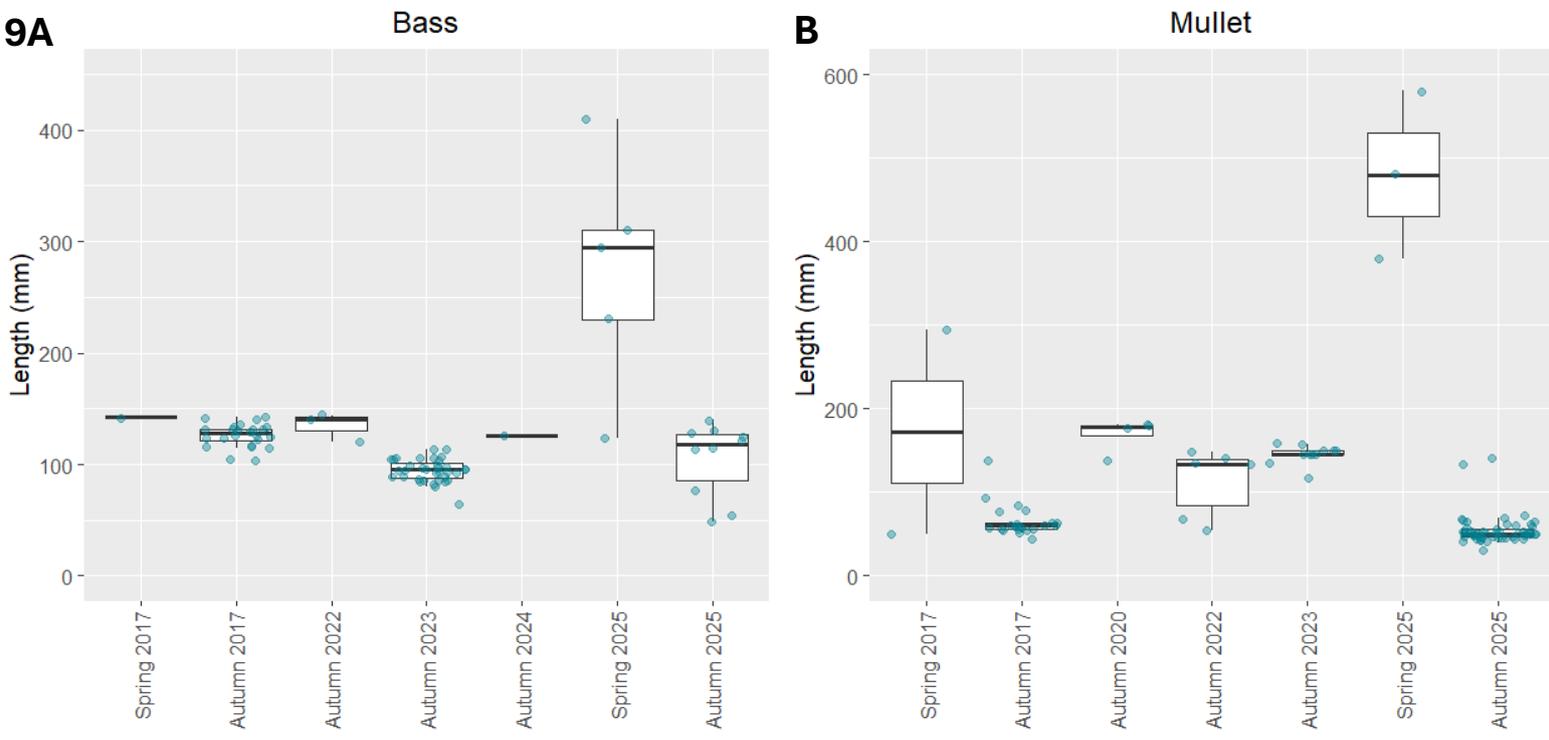
There were no statistically significant differences in species richness, Shannon Diversity Index (H) or total abundance between Spring surveys or between Autumn surveys (table to the right).

| Surveys 2017 - 2025 | All Spring surveys | All Autumn surveys | P<0.05 |
|----------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------|
| Mean Species Richness | 4.33 | 5.57 | No |
| Mean Shannon Diversity Index (H) | 0.93 | 0.81 | No |
| Mean Total Abundance | 43 | 233 | No |

Ferry Bridge



Figures 8A (Spring) and B (Autumn) display the percentage **relative abundance** of each species during each survey. In Spring 2025 Sand Smelt were the most abundant species (82%) followed by Bass (12%). In Autumn 2025 Sand Smelt were again the most abundant species (71%), followed by Goby species (8%).

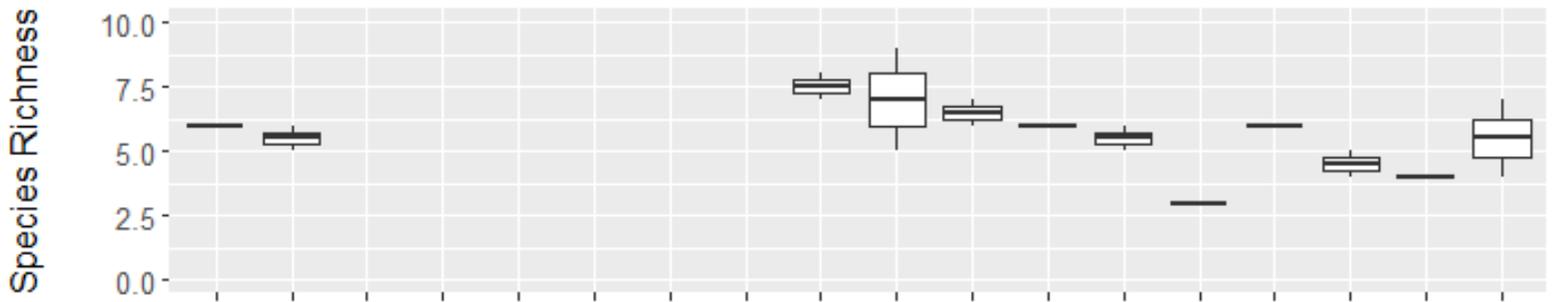


Figures 9A and 9B display the measured length of Bass and all Mullet species; only these taxa are shown due to their commercial importance within the Southern IFCA district. All Grey Mullet species were combined for Figure 9B due to difficulties in species-level identification at the juvenile stage.

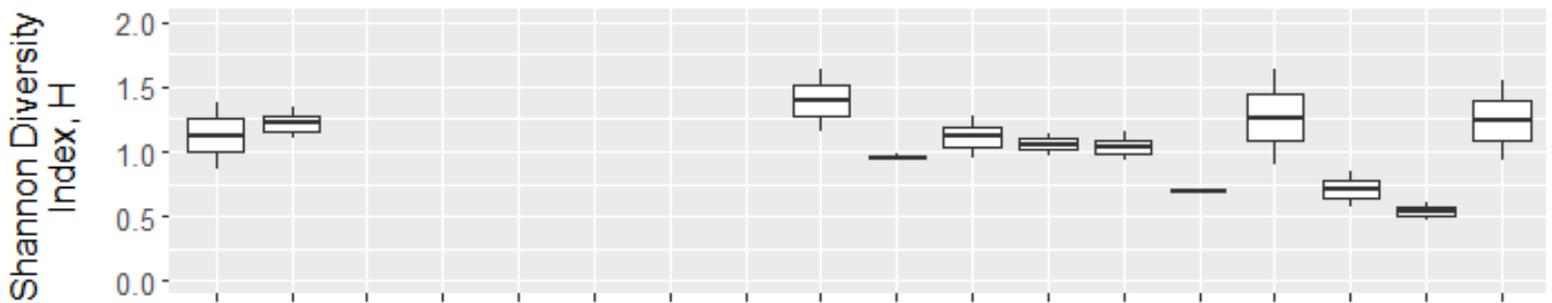
The total count of Bass individuals at 0-stage for Spring and Autumn 2025 surveys were 0 and 3 respectively. The length thresholds for 0-stage were set based on available literature (60-140 mm) and informed by the complete dataset. Conservative thresholds of 25 mm (Spring) and 100 mm (Autumn) total length were applied to minimise overlap with 1-stage individuals and to account for variability in spawning time, larval settlement, and growth rates.

Wick Hams

10A



B



C

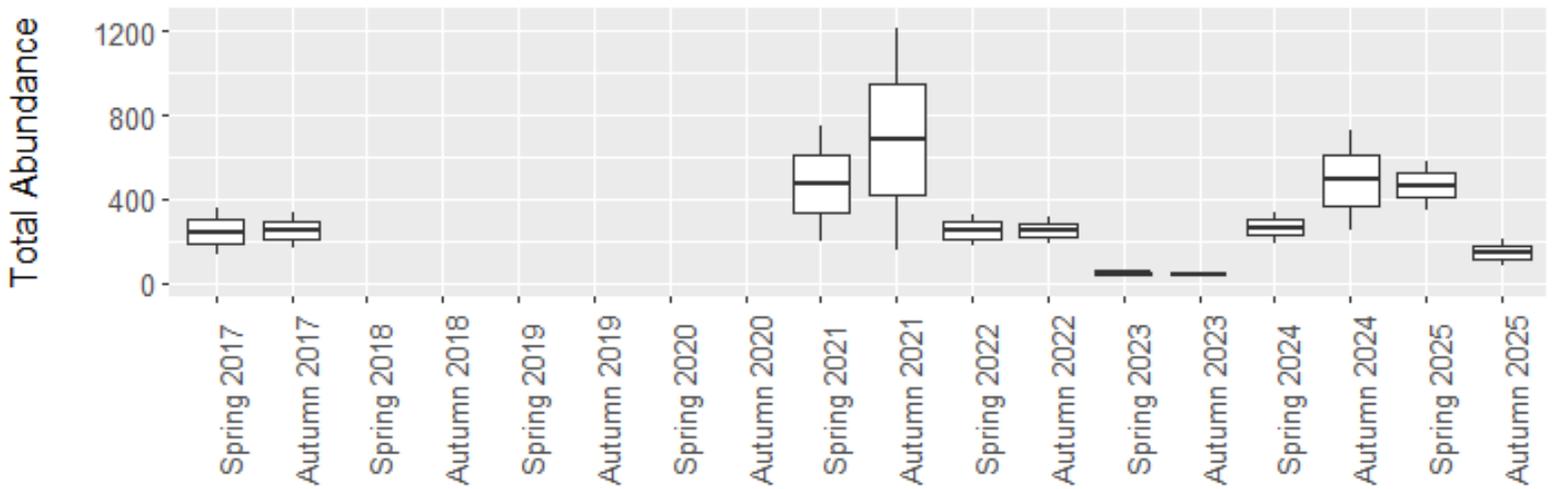


Figure 10 (A-C) displays the Species Richness, Shannon Diversity Index (H), and Total Abundance in each survey carried out from Spring 2017 to Autumn 2025.

Mean **Species richness** was highest in Autumn 2021 (S = 7) and lowest in Autumn 2023 (S = 3). For the Spring surveys, species richness was highest in 2021 (S = 7.5) and lowest in 2025 (S = 4). No significant differences in species richness were detected between Spring surveys or between Autumn surveys ($p > 0.05$).

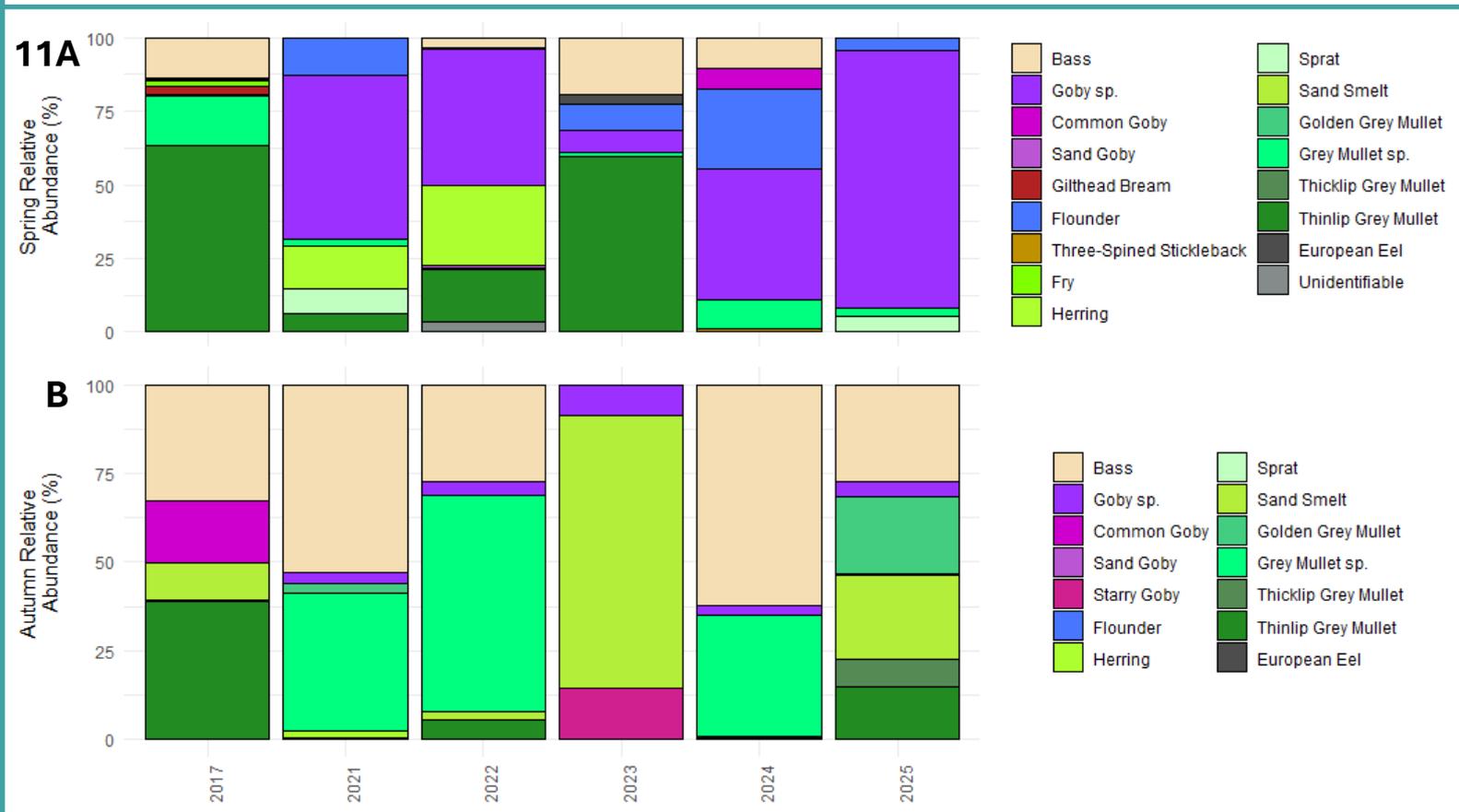
Spring 2025 (H = 0.53) had a lower mean **Shannon Diversity Index** than Autumn 2025 (H = 1.24). This is due to the high dominance of Goby species (87%, Figure 11A) in the Spring survey. Additionally, Spring 2025 (H = 0.53) was the lowest species diversity for all Spring surveys, and Autumn 2025 (H = 1.24) was the highest species diversity for all Autumn surveys. No survey differed significantly from another in terms of species diversity (H; $p > 0.05$).

Of the Spring surveys, 2021 had the highest mean **total abundance** of fish (n = 476) and 2023 the lowest (n = 46). This was similar for the Autumn surveys, 2021 had the highest mean total abundance of fish (n = 687) and 2023 the lowest (n = 35). No significant differences in total abundance were found between surveys ($p > 0.05$).

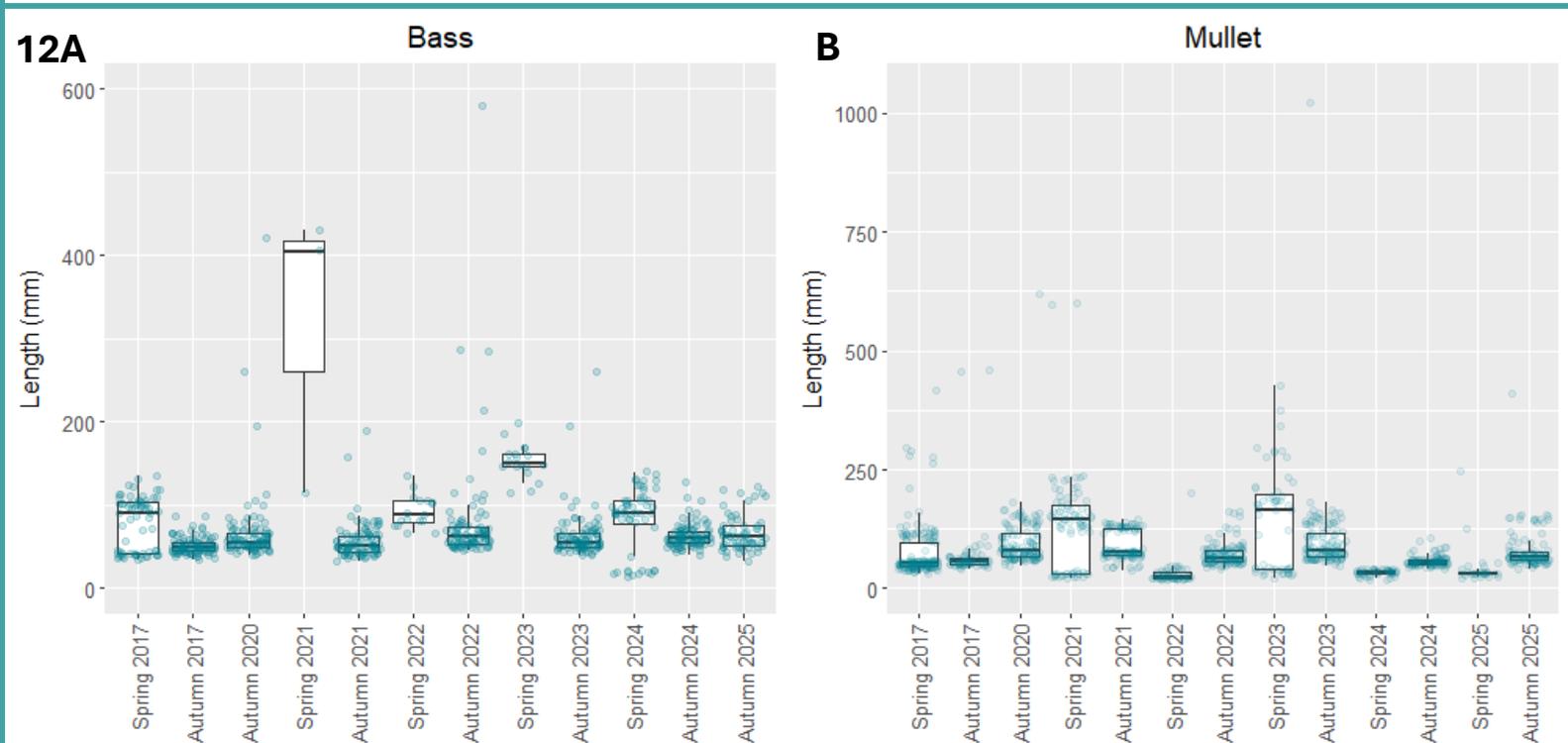
There were no statistically significant differences in species richness, Shannon Diversity Index (H) or total abundance between Spring surveys or between Autumn surveys (table to the right).

| Surveys 2017 - 2025 | All Spring surveys | All Autumn surveys | P<0.05 |
|----------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------|
| Mean Species Richness | 5.92 | 5.45 | No |
| Mean Shannon Diversity Index (H) | 1.08 | 1.01 | No |
| Mean Total Abundance | 291 | 334 | No |

Wick Hams



Figures 11A (Spring) and B (Autumn) display the percentage **relative abundance** of each species during each survey. In Spring 2025 Goby species were the most abundant species (87%) followed by Sprat (5%). Whereas in Autumn 2025, Bass were the most abundant species (27%) followed by Sand Smelt (24%).

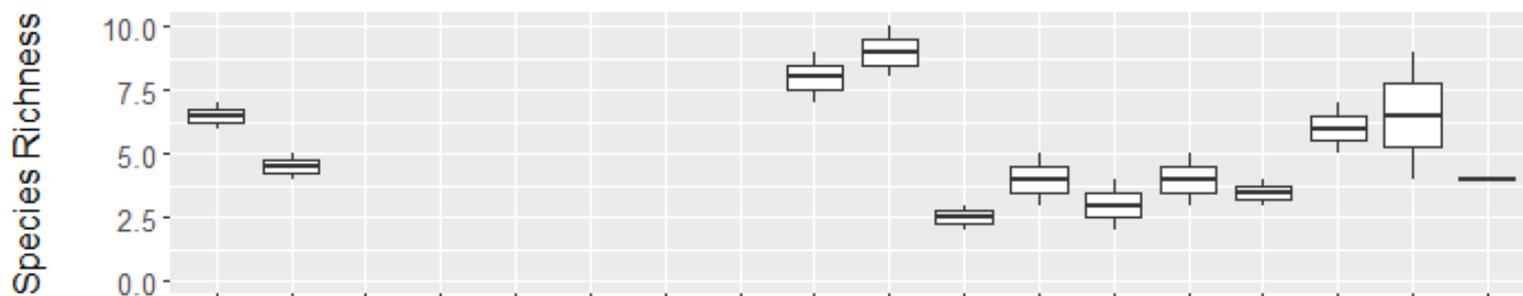


Figures 12A and 12B display the measured length of Bass and all Mullet species; only these taxa are shown due to their commercial importance within the Southern IFCA district. All Grey Mullet species were combined for Figure 12B due to difficulties in species-level identification at the juvenile stage.

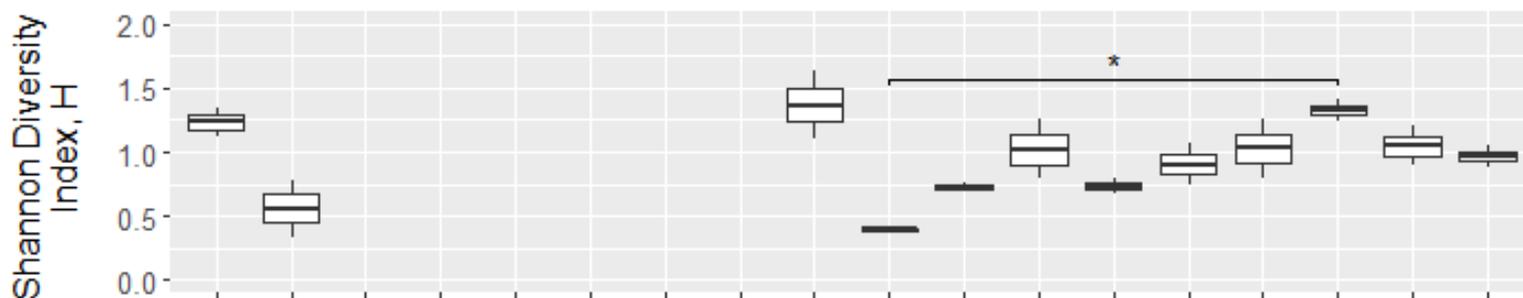
The total count of Bass individuals at 0-stage for the Autumn 2025 survey was 58 fish. There were no Bass present in the Spring 2025 survey. The length thresholds for 0-stage were set based on available literature (60-140 mm) and informed by the complete dataset. Conservative thresholds of 25 mm (Spring) and 100 mm (Autumn) total length were applied to minimise overlap with 1-stage individuals and to account for variability in spawning time, larval settlement, and growth rates.

Mudford Spit

13A



B



C

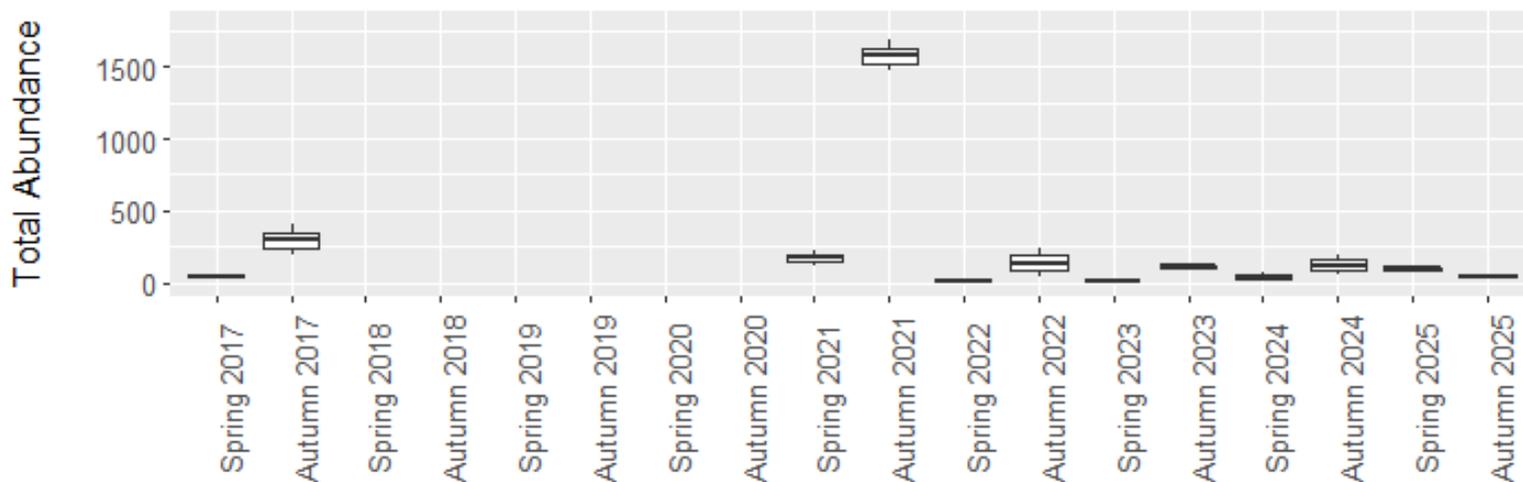


Figure 13 (A-C) displays the Species Richness, Shannon Diversity Index (H) and Total Abundance in each survey carried out from Spring 2017 to Autumn 2025.

Mean **Species richness** was highest in the 2021 surveys (Autumn: S = 9; Spring: S = 8), and lowest in Spring 2022 (S = 2.5) and Autumn 2022, 2023 and 2025 (S = 4). No significant differences in species richness were detected between Spring surveys or between Autumn surveys ($p > 0.05$).

Spring 2025 (H = 1.05) had a higher mean **Shannon Diversity Index** than the Autumn 2025 survey (H = 0.97). This was due to the dominance of Golden Grey Mullet (54%, Figure 14B) in the Autumn survey. A significant difference in species diversity was detected among Autumn surveys, with the lowest mean diversity in 2021 (H = 0.40) and the highest in 2024 (H = 1.33; $p = 0.04$).

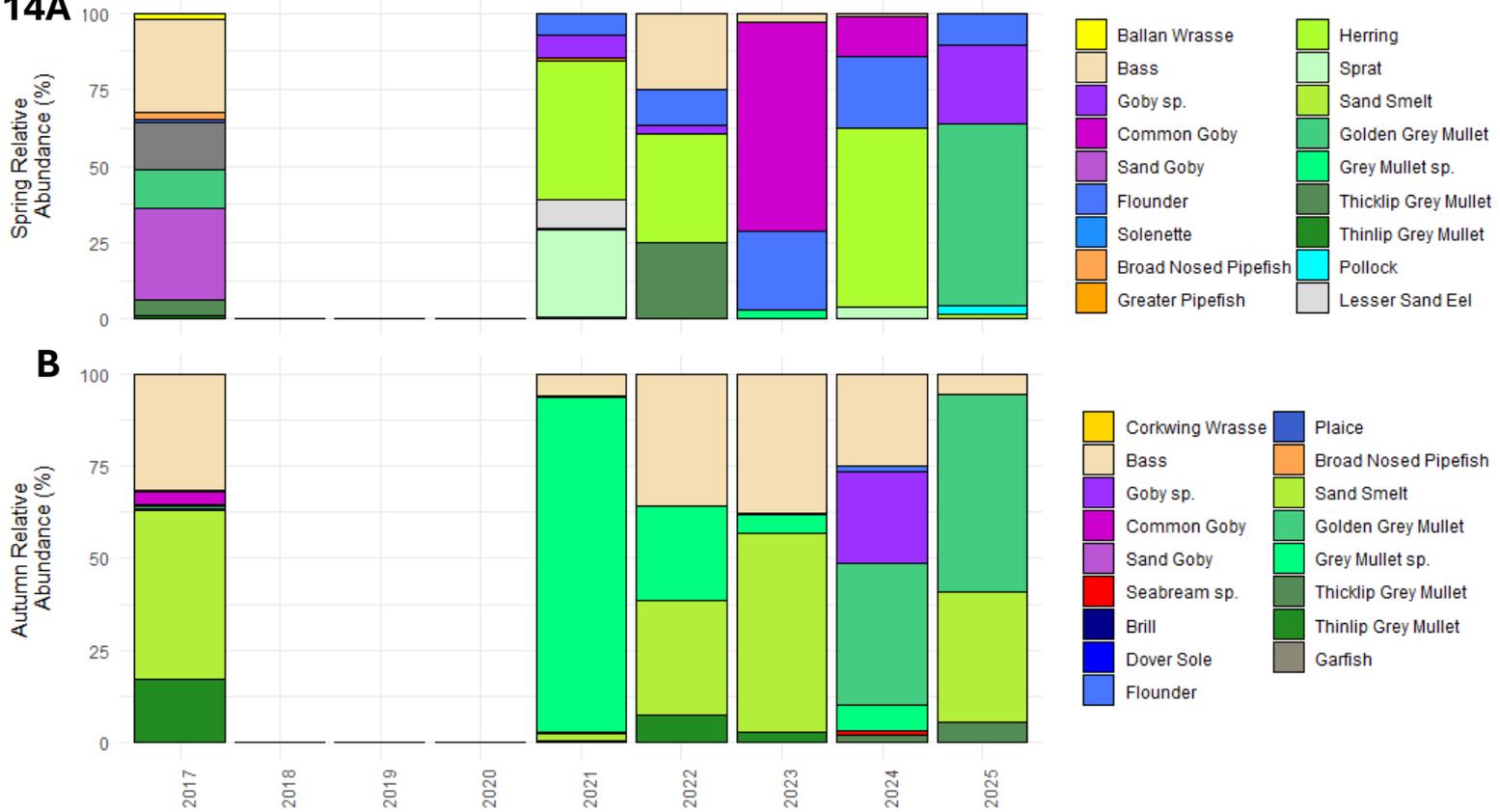
Of the Spring surveys, 2021 had the highest mean **total abundance** of fish (n = 173) and 2022 the lowest (n = 11). Of the Autumn surveys, 2021 had the highest mean total abundance of fish (n = 1575) and 2025 the lowest (n = 46). No significant differences in total abundance were found between surveys ($p > 0.05$).

There were no statistically significant differences in species richness or total abundance, but there was a significant difference in species diversity (H) between Autumn surveys (table to the right).

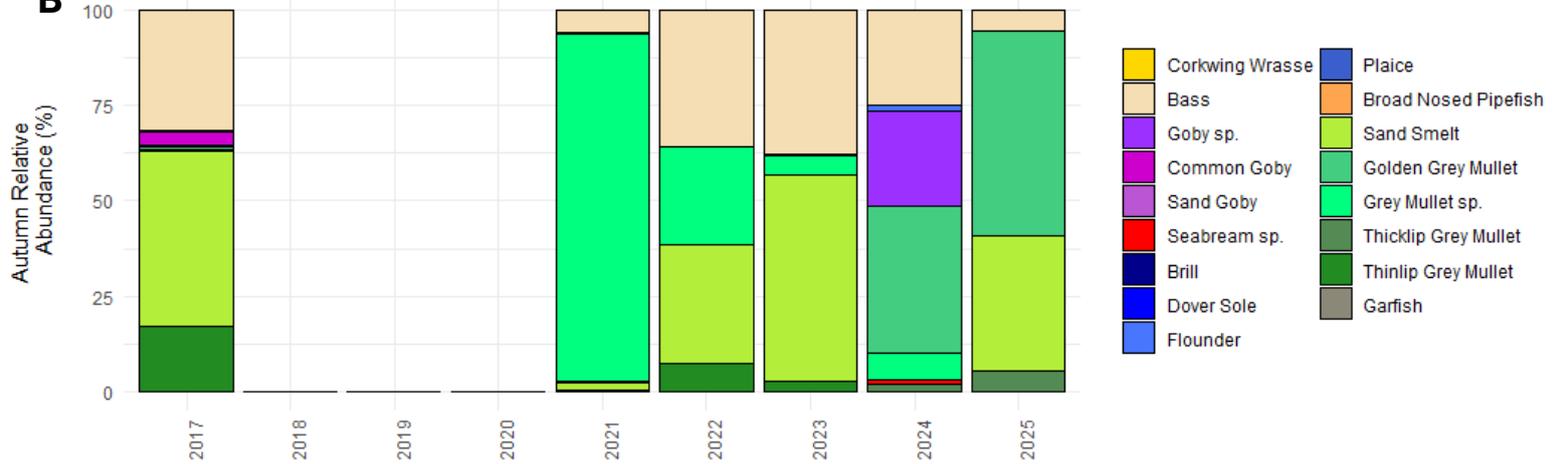
| Surveys 2017 - 2025 | All Spring surveys | All Autumn surveys | P<0.05 |
|----------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|------------|
| Mean Species Richness | 5.00 | 5.25 | No |
| Mean Shannon Diversity Index (H) | 1.02 | 0.86 | Yes |
| Mean Total Abundance | 63 | 381 | No |

Mudford Spit

14A



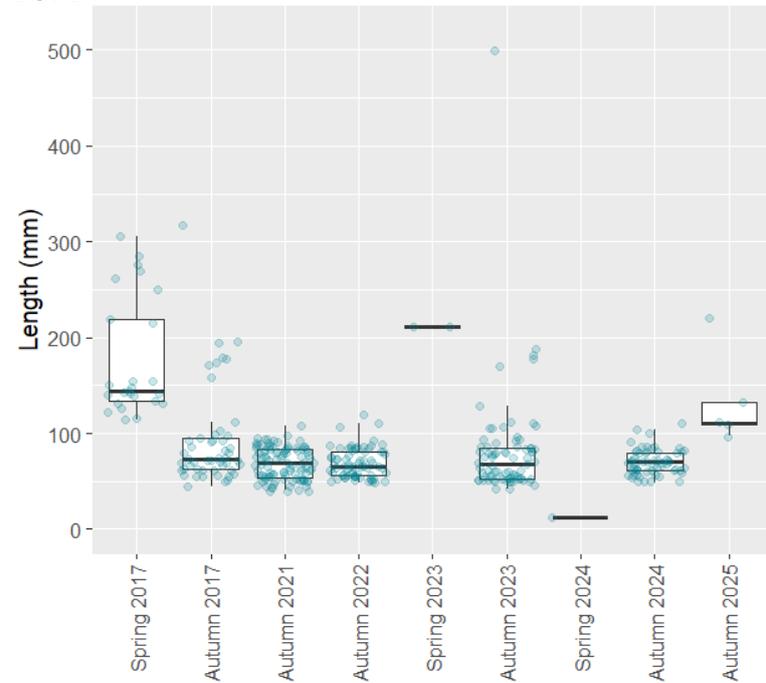
B



Figures 14A (Spring) and B (Autumn) display the percentage **relative abundance** of each species during each survey. In Spring 2025 Golden Grey Mullet were the most abundant species (59%) followed by Goby species (25%). In Autumn 2025 Golden Grey Mullet were again the most abundant species (54%), followed by Sand Smelt (35%).

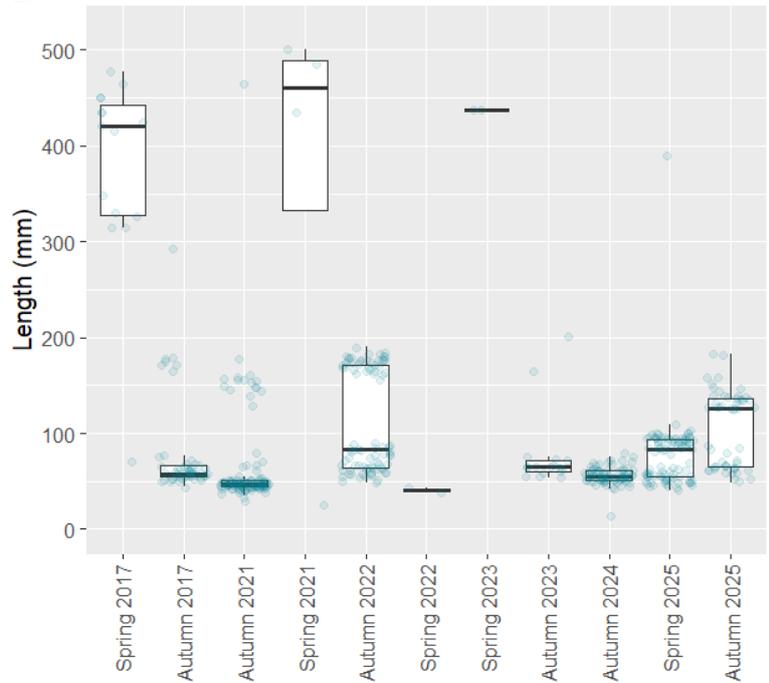
15A

Bass



B

Mullet



Figures 15A and 15B display the measured length of Bass and all Mullet species; only these taxa are shown due to their commercial importance within the Southern IFCA district. All Grey Mullet species were combined for Figure 15B due to difficulties in species-level identification at the juvenile stage.

The total count of Bass individuals at 0-stage for the Autumn survey was 1 fish. There were no Bass present in the Spring 2025 survey. The length thresholds for 0-stage were set based on available literature (60-140 mm) and informed by the complete dataset. Conservative thresholds of 25 mm (Spring) and 100 mm (Autumn) total length were applied to minimise overlap with 1-stage individuals and to account for variability in spawning time, larval settlement, and growth rates.

River Hamble

16A

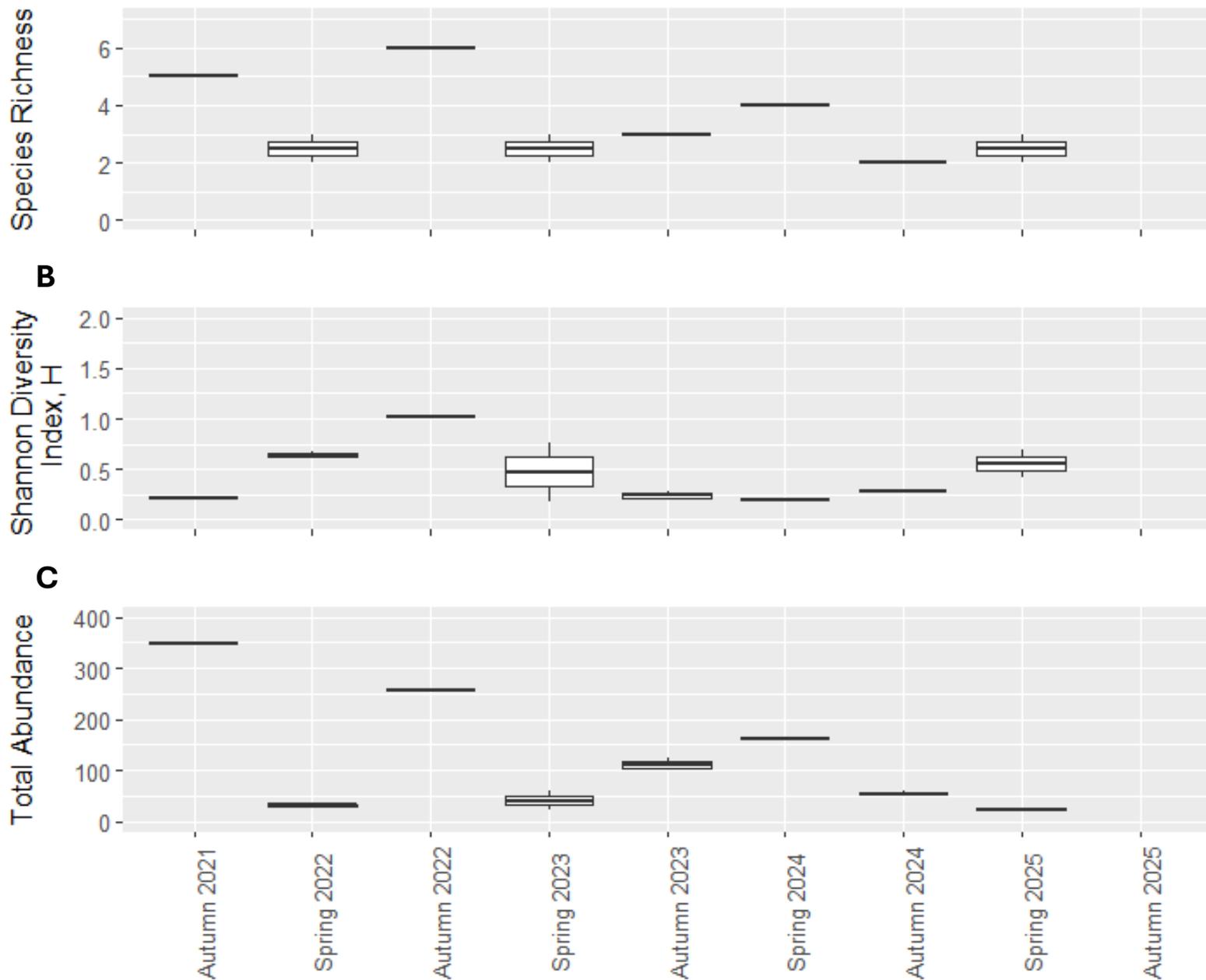


Figure 16 (A-C) displays the Species Richness, Shannon Diversity Index (H) and Total Abundance in each survey carried out from Autumn 2021 to Spring 2025. This site was only surveyed in Spring in 2025 due to environmental complications in the Autumn (weather conditions, tides, and daylight availability).

Mean **Species richness** was highest in Autumn 2022 (S = 6) and lowest in Autumn 2024 (S = 2). Of the Spring surveys mean species richness was highest in 2024 (S = 4) whereas the rest of the Spring surveys (2022, 2023, 2025) had equal species richness (S = 2.5). No significant differences in species richness were detected between Spring surveys or between Autumn surveys ($p > 0.05$).

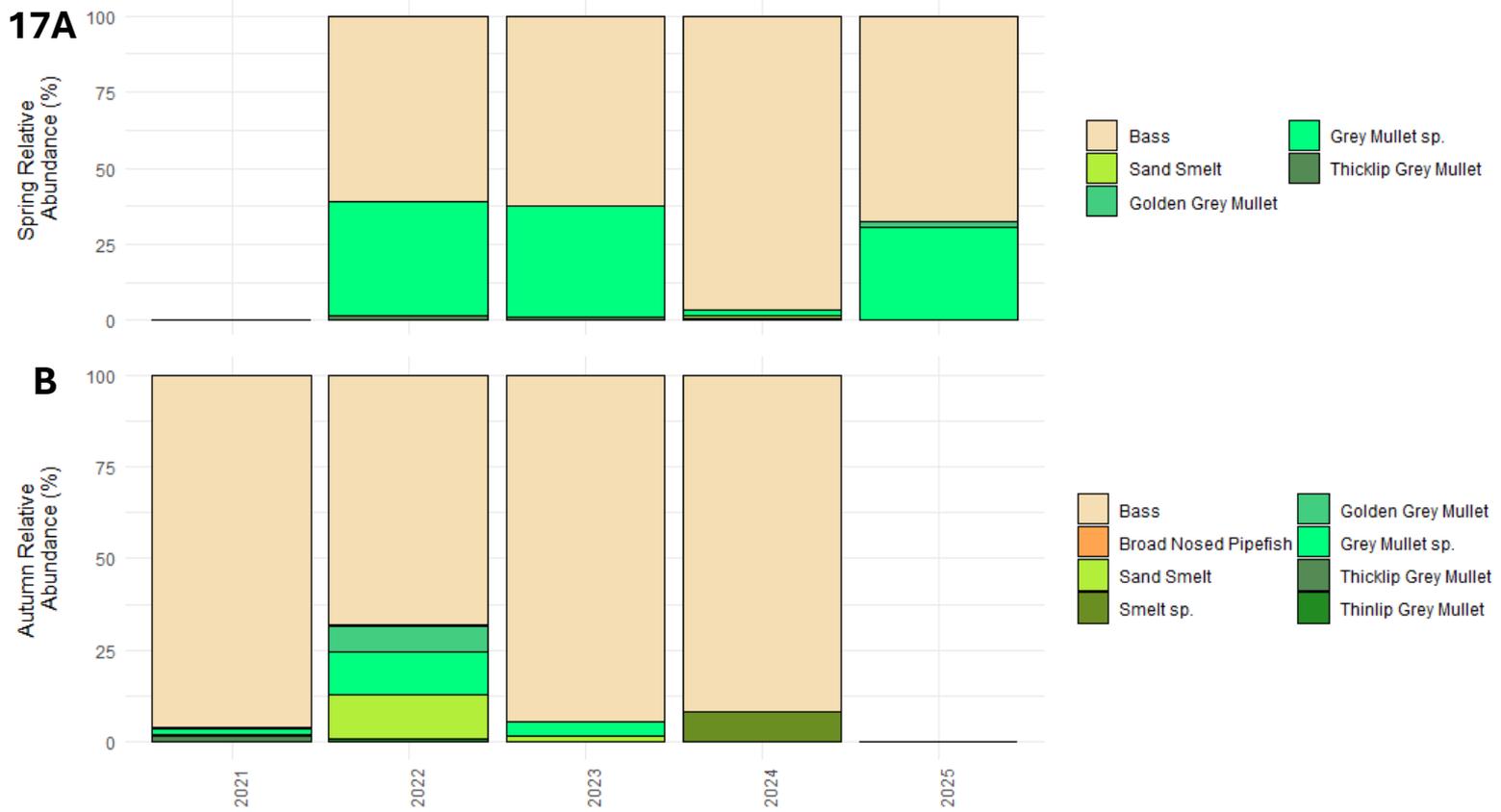
Spring 2025 had a mean **Shannon Diversity Index (H)** of 0.55. The reason for this low evenness of species was due to the dominance of Bass (67%, Figure 17A) in the survey. Spring 2024 (H = 0.20) and Autumn 2021 (H = 0.22) had the lowest mean species diversity, and Spring 2022 (H = 0.64) and Autumn 2022 (H = 1.01) had the highest. No survey differed significantly from another in terms of species diversity (H; $p > 0.05$).

Of the Spring surveys, 2024 had the highest mean **total abundance** of fish (n = 162) and 2025 the lowest (n = 23). Of the Autumn surveys, 2021 had the highest mean total abundance of fish (n = 349) and 2024 the lowest (n = 55). No significant differences in total abundance were found between surveys ($p > 0.05$).

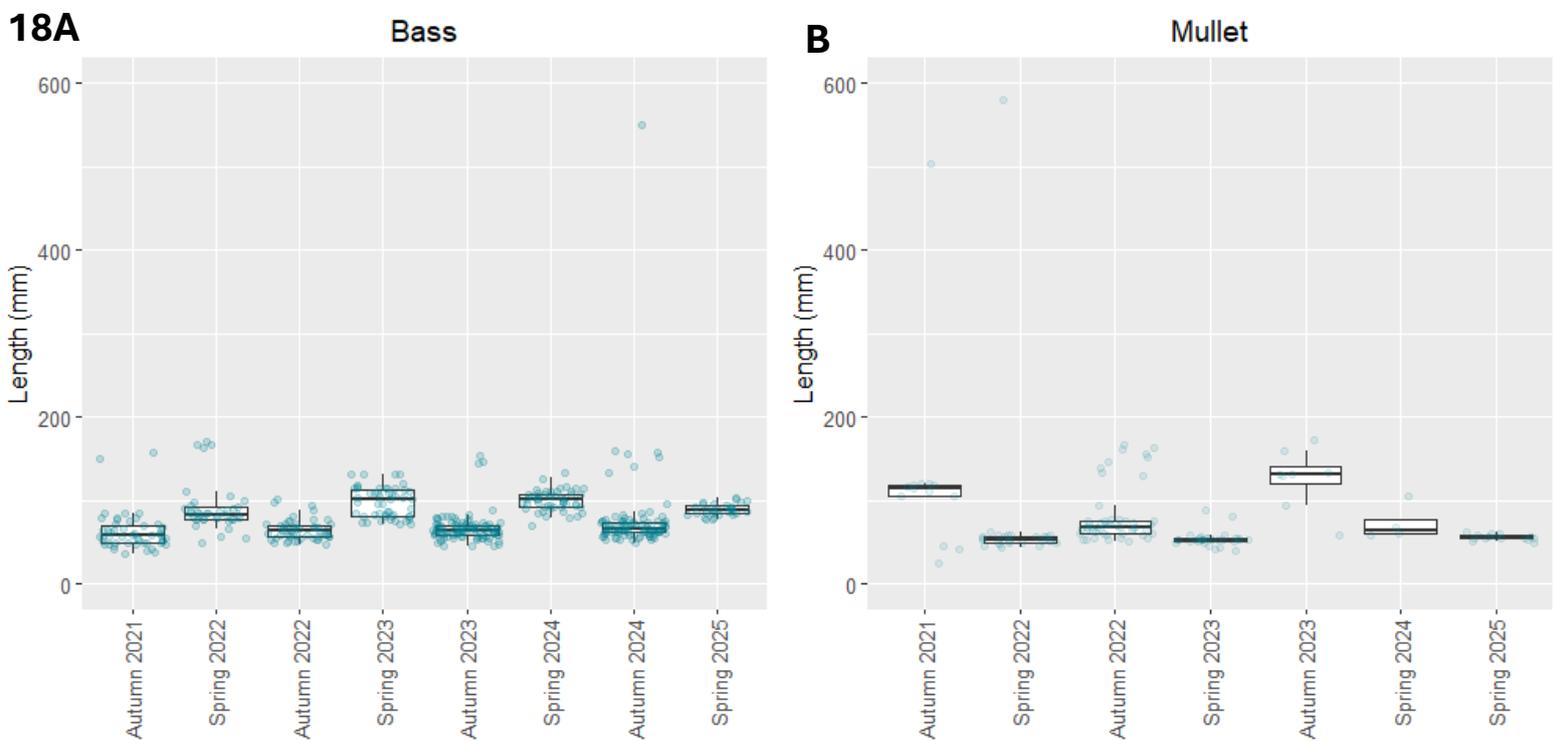
There were no statistically significant differences in species richness, Shannon Diversity Index (H) or total abundance between Spring surveys or between Autumn surveys (table to the right).

| Surveys 2021 - 2025 | All Spring surveys | All Autumn surveys | P<0.05 |
|----------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------|
| Mean Species Richness | 2.71 | 3.50 | No |
| Mean Shannon Diversity Index (H) | 0.55 | 0.38 | No |
| Mean Total Abundance | 23 | 157 | No |

River Hamble



Figures 17A (Spring) and B (Autumn) display the percentage **relative abundance** of each species during each survey. In Spring 2025 Bass were the most abundant species (67%) followed by Grey Mullet species (30%). No survey was able to be conducted in Autumn due to environmental complications.

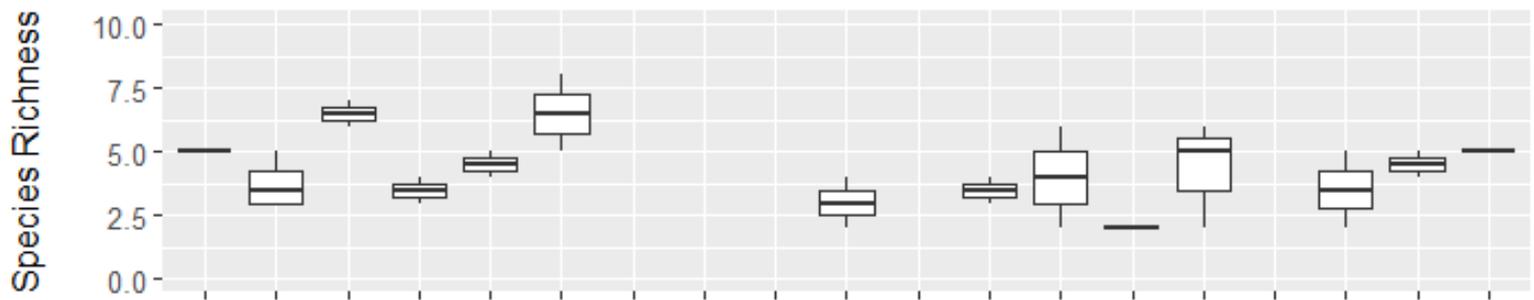


Figures 18A and 18B display the measured length of Bass and all Mullet species; only these taxa are shown due to their commercial importance within the Southern IFCA district. All Grey Mullet species were combined for Figure 18B due to difficulties in species-level identification at the juvenile stage.

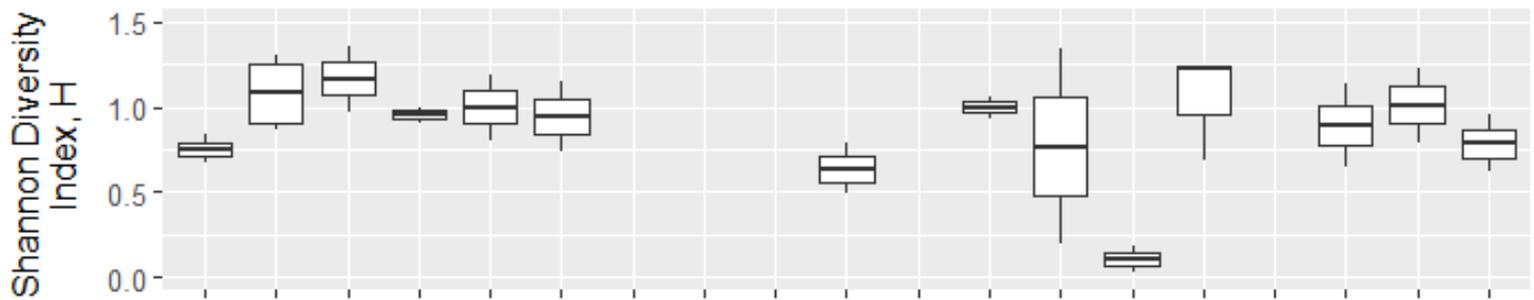
The total count of Bass individuals at 0-stage for the Spring 2025 survey was 0 fish. The length thresholds for 0-stage were set based on available literature (60-140 mm) and informed by the complete dataset. Conservative thresholds of 25 mm (Spring) and 100 mm (Autumn) total length were applied to minimise overlap with 1-stage individuals and to account for variability in spawning time, larval settlement, and growth rates.

Yarmouth

19A



B



C

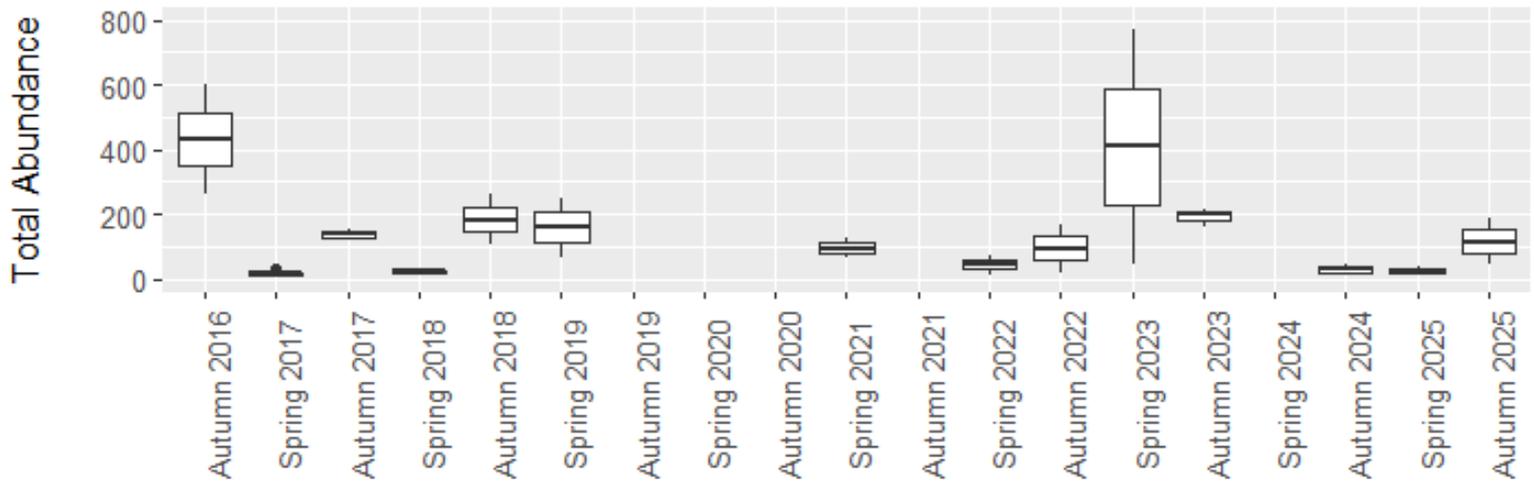


Figure 19 (A-C) displays the Species Richness, Shannon Diversity Index (H), and Total Abundance in each survey carried out from Autumn 2016 to Autumn 2025.

Mean **Species richness** was highest in Autumn 2017 ($S = 6.5$) and lowest in Autumn 2024 ($S = 3.5$). Of the Spring surveys mean species richness was highest in 2019 ($S = 6.5$) and lowest in 2023 ($S = 2$). No significant differences in species richness were detected between Spring surveys or between Autumn surveys ($p > 0.05$).

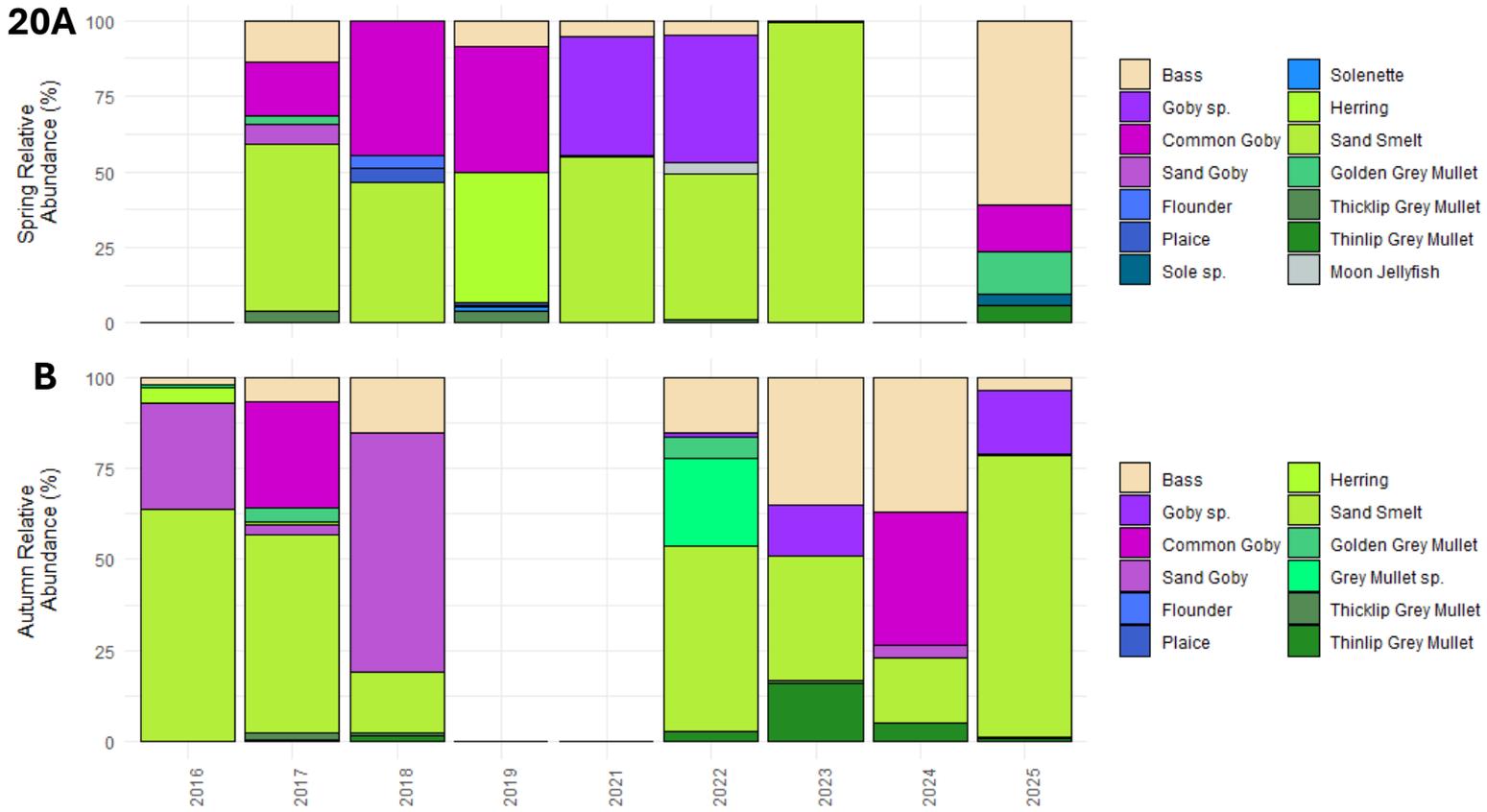
Spring 2025 ($H = 1.01$) had a higher mean **Shannon Diversity Index** than the Autumn 2025 survey ($H = 0.79$). This was due to the dominance of Sand Smelt (77%, Figure 20B) in the Autumn survey. No survey differed significantly from another in terms of species diversity (H ; $p > 0.05$).

Of the Spring surveys, 2023 had the highest mean **total abundance** of fish ($n = 408$) with 2017 and 2018 the lowest ($n = 23$). Of the Autumn surveys, 2016 had the highest mean total abundance of fish ($n = 432$) and 2024 the lowest ($n = 29$). No significant differences in total abundance were found between surveys ($p > 0.05$).

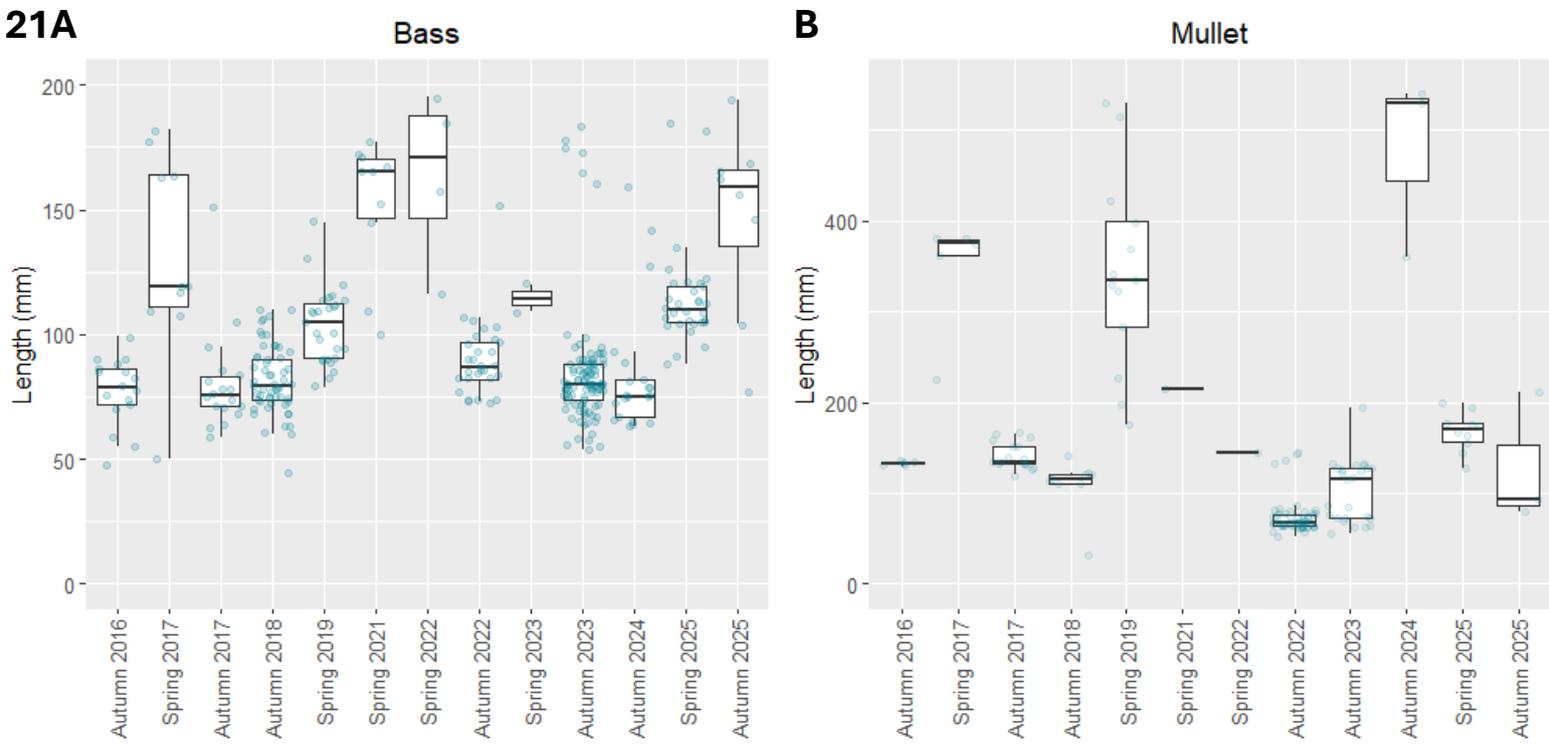
There were no statistically significant differences in species richness, Shannon Diversity Index (H) or total abundance between Spring surveys or between Autumn surveys (table to the right).

| Surveys 2016 - 2025 | All Spring surveys | All Autumn surveys | P<0.05 |
|----------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------|
| Mean Species Richness | 3.81 | 4.67 | No |
| Mean Shannon Diversity Index (H) | 0.85 | 0.93 | No |
| Mean Total Abundance | 99 | 171 | No |

Yarmouth



Figures 20A (Spring) and B (Autumn) display the percentage **relative abundance** of each species during each survey. In Spring 2025 Bass were the most abundant species (61%) followed by Common Goby (16%). Whereas in Autumn 2025, Sand Smelt were the most abundant species (77%) followed by Goby species (18%).



Figures 21A and 21B display the measured length of Bass and all Mullet species; only these taxa are shown due to their commercial importance within the Southern IFCA district. All Grey Mullet species were combined for Figure 21B due to difficulties in species-level identification at the juvenile stage.

The total count of Bass individuals at 0-stage for Spring and Autumn 2025 surveys were 0 and 1 respectively. The length thresholds for 0-stage were set based on available literature (60-140 mm) and informed by the complete dataset. Conservative thresholds of 25 mm (Spring) and 100 mm (Autumn) total length were applied to minimise overlap with 1-stage individuals and to account for variability in spawning time, larval settlement, and growth rates.

Summary

Based on the evidence presented in this report, the Essential Fish Habitats surveyed continue to function as nursery areas for a range of juvenile fish species. These include several commercially and recreationally important species including Bass, Bream spp., Flounder, Grey Mullet spp., Plaice, Pollack, Sole spp., and Wrasse spp.

No statistically significant differences were identified among the 2025 surveys; however, a significant difference in species diversity was observed between the Mudeford Spit Autumn surveys conducted in 2021 and 2024. The 2021 survey recorded the lowest species diversity despite the highest total abundance (>1,500 individuals), largely due to the dominance of Grey Mullet that were not consistently identified to species level at the time. Improvements in species-level identification since this survey mean that a similar apparent dominance is unlikely to occur in future monitoring.

Bass (*Dicentrarchus labrax*), a key commercial and recreational species within the Southern IFCA district, were again recorded as 0-group individuals at The Fleet, Christchurch, and Yarmouth during the Autumn 2025 surveys. This repeated juvenile presence is consistent with continued use of these sites as nursery habitat and is of particular significance for The Fleet, given its designation as a Bass Nursery Area. The additional presence of older Bass (≥ 3 years) at The Fleet and Yarmouth also indicates habitat use beyond early life stages. Taken together, the occurrence of juvenile Bass (0–2 years) across these sites is indicative of ongoing stock recruitment.

These surveys, as well as contributing to Southern IFCA understanding of juvenile fish species within EFH in the District, also provide data which can be used to help inform the development and implementation of relevant FMPs (Bream and Wrasse). Although the data are limited in spatial and temporal coverage and cannot, in isolation, address all evidence needs, the Juvenile Fish Survey provides a consistent and valuable evidence base that complements wider regional and national datasets. Continued delivery of this survey is therefore important in supporting FMP development, particularly the Bass FMP, by improving understanding of key life-history processes such as the distribution and relative importance of nursery grounds and potential regional variation in spawning periods.



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, 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

- **Bass FMP**
 - The Bass Authorisation Review Report was published in December, following engagement throughout the country. All the information on this can be found at [MMO publishes bass authorisation review report – Fisheries Management Plans](#) and a full copy of the review report is available on the Bass FMP webpage [MMO Fisheries Management Plan Updates - GOV.UK](#)
 - There are 24 recommendations based upon the consultation process that will be further considered by Defra and the Bass Management Group, and possible further public consultation.
 - The main points from the review that have been highlighted by the MMO are:
 - Increasing the number of authorisations to land bass
 - A scheme providing access for young people wishing to enter the fishery

- Allowing fishers the option to switch from fixed gillnet authorisation to hooks and lines
 - Gear trials - including an inshore drift netting scientific trial
 - Establishing a working group to review demersal trawls and seines
 - A bycatch allowance trial for non-authorized fixed gillnet fishers
 - Development of an accredited hook-to-plate bass fishery
 - Adjustments to engine power and vessel size restrictions
- **Crab and lobster FMP**
 - The MMO and Defra are introducing a new minimum conservation reference size (MCRS) for European lobster increasing from 87mm to 90mm, this will be applied via a license condition. A phased approach is being utilised to gradually align management across the country.
 - From 1st March 2026 the new MCRS will be:
 - 90mm in the South West all vessels fishing in English waters west of 2°56.78'W and south of 52°0.0'N
 - **88mm in the rest of the country**, to be phased to 90mm by 2028 with an increase of 1 mm each year. The District falls under this part of the implementation plan.
 - The MCRS for brown crab (*Cancer Pagurus*) has been increased within the scope of the South West Crab Trial which covers Isles of Scilly, Cornwall and Devon & Severn IFCAs only and the equivalent offshore areas. **At present there is no MCRS increase for brown crab within the Southern IFCA District.**
 - **Channel Demersal Non-Quota Species FMP**
 - Progress on the Cuttlefish Action Plan continues to be made with the following outputs being published:
 - The Market Sampling Report, this project tested the effectiveness of species ID cards and gathered biological data from landings at Newlyn, Brixham, and Hastings. The review showed that all three species were being correctly identified, that there is increasing understanding of the grading of offshore trawl catches and that seasonal and biometric trends at a species level are able to be investigated.
 - The Action Plan Review confirmed that there was significant progress on the plan including:
 - The completion of: Voluntary Code of Practice on trap handling, delivery of species ID cards, market sampling, and initial harvest strategy exploration.
 - Ongoing tasks of: Exploration into gear selectivity trials, CPUE analysis, and collaborative research projects to address evidence gaps.
 - A Spring 2026 Cuttlefish Roadshow has been announced to: Review progress on actions and shape future management priorities, discuss findings from the market sampling project and share feedback on voluntary Codes of Practice. Further details on dates and venues are to follow.

Tranche 3 FMPs

- The Tranche 3 FMPs were **published 16th December 2025**. All five of the Tranche 3 FMPs were published, four of which apply to the District.
- The five Tranche 3 FMPs are:
 - Cockle (*all Southern IFCA District*)
 - North Sea and Channel sprat (*all Southern IFCA District*)
 - Queen scallop (*all Southern IFCA District*)
 - Southern North Sea and Channel skates and rays (*all Southern IFCA District*)
 - Southern North Sea demersal non-quota species (*does not cover the Southern IFCA District*)

- The published FMPs are currently being reviewed to understand how the goals and actions within each of the FMPs relate to the relevant fisheries within the District.
- Southern IFCA attended an MMO and IFCA briefing run by Defra to understand the main goals and actions in the FMPs, along with any changes that have been made since the consultation.
- It is anticipated that implementation of these FMPs will commence during 2026.

Tranche 4 FMPs

- There are 4 T4 FMPs which are currently being developed:
 - Seabream FMP (*all Southern IFCA District*)
 - Wrasses complex FMP (*all Southern IFCA District*)
 - Celtic Sea and Western Channel demersal FMP (*ICES 7e part of Southern IFCA District*)
 - Celtic Sea and Western Channel pelagic FMP (*ICES 7e part of Southern IFCA District*)
- There are currently no updates on the Tranche 4 FMPs at this time, the next stage will be public consultation, anticipated for spring 2026 but no dates have been confirmed at present.

Scottish lead FMPs

- There are 11 Scottish lead demersal FMPs currently at the public consultation phase, the deadline for responses is Wednesday 11th March 2026.
- A full list of these FMPs can be found on the Defra website [11 Proposed Joint UK Fisheries Management Plans for Demersal Fish Stocks - Scottish Government consultations - Citizen Space](#)
- Three of these FMPs are relevant to the District:
 - North Sea and Eastern Channel Whiting (*ICES 7e part of Southern IFCA District*)
 - Northern Shelf Cod (*ICES 7e part of Southern IFCA District*)
 - Northern Shelf Hake (*all Southern IFCA District*)
- Each of the relevant FMPs is being reviewed to understand how any proposed goals and actions relate to relevant fisheries within the District. Southern IFCA is engaging with IFCA colleagues and the AIFCA to understand other perspectives on the Scottish led FMPs and the potential for a joint response to the consultation.

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 \(southern-ifca.gov.uk\)](#).