

Document Control

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Revision History

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Natural England	Alex Maydew	03/06/2019	



Southern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (IFCA)

Monitoring and Control Plan

Site: Studland to Portland SAC

Feature(s): Reef

Sub-Feature(s): Circalittoral rock, Infralittoral rock, Subtidal stony reef

Gear types(s): Wrasse fishing – fish traps and handlines

1.0 Introduction

Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities (IFCAs) have a legal responsibility to ensure fishing activities taking place in Marine Protected Area(s) do not damage, disturb or lead to the deterioration of the habitats and species for which the site has been designated and thus ensure the conservation objectives of the site can be achieved. These responsibilities fall under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 to ensure compliance with the European Habitats and Birds Directives (with respect to European Marine Sites) and the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 (with respect to Marine Conservation Zones).

In 2012, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) announced a revised approach to the management of commercial fisheries in European Marine Sites (EMSs), with the objective of ensuring all existing and potential commercial fishing activities are managed in accordance with the Habitats Directive. This led to a risk-prioritised and phased assessment process, whereby the features of all sites were assessed against all fishing activities taking place within a site, in order to identify if these activities were compatible with the conservation objectives of the site and if the need for management was required. All interactions between commercial fishing activities and designated site features in the Southern IFCA district have been assessed and any necessary management has been introduced. A similar assessment process has been undertaken for Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs).

Fishing is a dynamic and ever-changing industry with potential changes in fishing effort, introduction of new or improvement of existing gear types or the development of new commercial fisheries. Such changes may have the potential to cause damage or lead to the deterioration of protected habitats and species if they occur within an MPA. A process to detect and assess such changes or any new evidence and determine the need for management is therefore imperative to ensure fishing activities remain compatible with the conservation objectives of MPAs. For such a process to be effective, a clear and defined feedback process must be established as part of the assessment process. The elements which make up the feedback process will be outlined in this Monitoring and Control Plan and this will provide a framework for adaptive management.

This Monitoring and Control Plan will sit alongside the relevant Habitat Regulation Assessment(s) and should be read in conjunction with those assessments.

2.0 Site Information

- Studland to Portland Special Area of Conservation (SAC) (UK0030382)

2.1 Overview and qualifying features

Studland to Portland SAC is located off the south coast of England in the county of Dorset. The site covers 33,191 hectares of marine habitats and is made up of two separate areas; the Studland Bay to Ringstead Bay reefs and the Portland reefs. These areas contain a diverse array of underwater reef habitats which distinguish the site as one of conservation importance. The qualifying features of the site so named and protected by the designation are:

Feature: Reefs.

- **Sub-features:**
 - Circalittoral rock
 - Infralittoral rock
 - Subtidal stony reef

2.2 Conservation Objectives

The site's conservation objectives apply to the site and the individual species and/or assemblage of species for which the site has been classified (Qualifying features: Reefs).

The objectives are to ensure that, subject to natural change, the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its qualifying features, by maintaining or restoring:

- The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats and habitats of the qualifying species.
- The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats.
- The structure and function of the habitats of the qualifying species.
- The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats and the habitats of qualifying species rely.
- The populations of qualifying species.
- The distribution of qualifying species within the site.

2.3 Site Feature Map

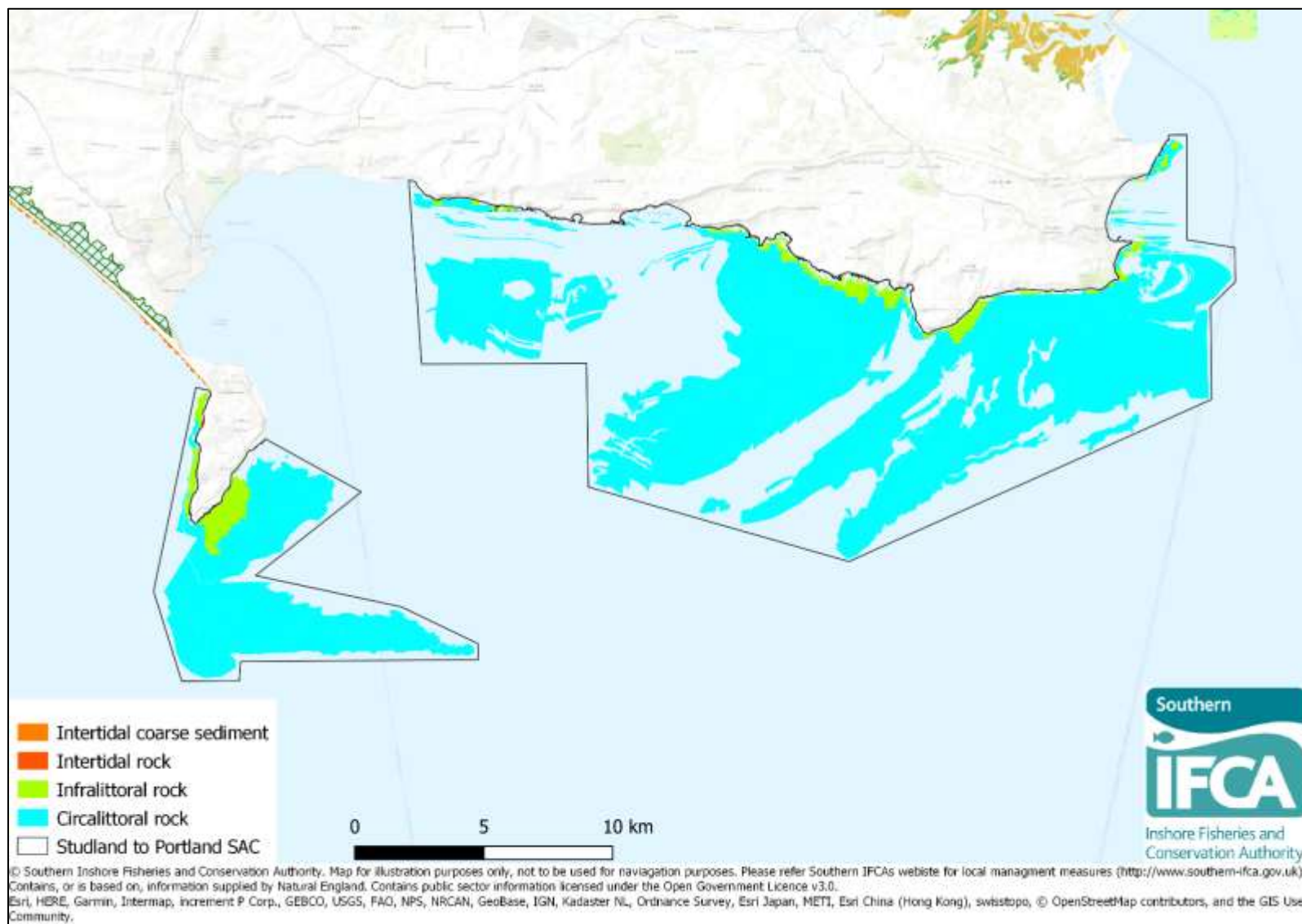


Figure 1. Site feature/ sub-feature map for the Studland to Portland Special Area of Conservation.

3.0 Fishery Profile

During 2015/16, a fishery for live wrasse developed within the Southern IFCA district, with exploitation partially taking place inside the Studland to Portland SAC (1.72% of the total SAC area).

Wrasse are used as cleaner fish in Scottish salmon farms to remove sea-lice as a biological alternative to the use of anti-parasitic chemical treatments. Of the six species which occur on the south coast of England, four represent the target species of the fishery. These include Corkwing wrasse (*Symphodus melops*), Goldsinny wrasse (*Ctenolabrus rupestris*), Rock cook wrasse (*Centrolabrus exoletus*) and Ballan wrasse (*Larus bergylta*). Ballan wrasse have proved to be the most popular species due to their survivability and feeding efficiency.

In the first two years of the fishery wrasse were predominantly targeted using fish traps, typically baited in short strings and soaked for 24 to 48 hours. The number of traps used by each vessel varies and the Wrasse Fishery Guidance (see section 5.0) stipulates a pot limitation of 80 traps per vessel. However, towards the end of the 2017 season and into the 2018 season catching wrasse using handlines became more popular. This was because the size of the trap entrances no longer enabled Ballan wrasse (and to a lesser extent the other species) at the new Minimum Conservation Reference sizes and above to enter the traps.

Potting and handline activity for wrasse occurs subtidally, although close inshore (no deeper than 10 metres), over infralittoral rocky ground characterised by heavy kelp and seaweed cover; the favoured inshore habitat type for wrasse species.

The fishery operates on a seasonal basis and in 2016 and 2017 from April/May to October. In 2018 however, a four-month fishery closed season applied between April and June inclusive (as outlined in the Wrasse Fishery Guidance) which will continue to apply in forthcoming seasons. Therefore, the season operated from 1st July to October and will continue to do so. Fishers do not fish beyond late October/Early November due to the small size of their boats and the limiting factor of the weather at this time of year.

It is important to contextualise the level of live wrasse removed as part of this fishery, by comparing it to the quantities of wrasse taken in some parts of the country for use as pot bait. The use of wrasse as bait for crab and lobster pot fisheries has been a longstanding practice. The quantities of wrasse retained as bait is difficult to quantify because wrasse are often not landed and therefore not recorded.

4.0 Assessments Completed to Date

The table below sets out the assessments completed to date and their outcome.

Trigger Point	Feature/ Sub-feature	Gear Type	Assessment Type (tLSE/HRA)	Assessment Outcome	Management Measures	Document Reference
Emerging Fishery	Reef – Circalittoral rock, Infralittoral rock, Subtidal stony reef	Fish traps	tLSE	Maybe likely significant effect.	Wrasse Fishery Guidance; Vessel Used in Fishing Byelaw	SIFCA/TLSE/02/007
Emerging Fishery	Reef – Circalittoral rock, Infralittoral	Fish traps	HRA	No adverse effect on site integrity.	Wrasse Fishery Guidance;	SIFCA/HRA/02/002

	rock, Subtidal stony reef				Vessel Used in Fishing Byelaw	
2 and 7	Reef – Circalittoral rock, Infralittoral rock, Subtidal stony reef	Hand lines	tLSE	Maybe likely significant effect.	Wrasse Fishery Guidance; Vessel Used in Fishing Byelaw	SIFCA/TSLE/02/008
2 and 7	Reef – Circalittoral rock, Infralittoral rock, Subtidal stony reef	Hand lines	HRA	TBC	Wrasse Fishery Guidance; Vessel Used in Fishing Byelaw	SIFCA/HRA/02/003

5.0 Management Relevant to this Monitoring and Control Plan

Vessels Used in Fishing Byelaw – whilst not intended for any particular gear/feature interaction specifically, this byelaw prohibits commercial fishing vessels over 12 metres from fishing within the Southern IFCA district. The reduction in the size of vessels restricts the type of gear that can be used and the level of static gear that can be worked.

Wrasse Fishery Guidance – following IFCA byelaw making guidance, Southern IFCA developed a suite of non-statutory measures in June 2017 for any person commercially fishing for live wrasse within the Southern IFCA. The measures are based on best-available evidence and are designed to maintain a sustainable population of wrasse and to enable the enjoyment of the species by other users.

- **Minimum and maximum conservation reference sizes** – All live wrasse outside of the following size ranges should be returned to the fishery immediately:
 - Ballan wrasse (*Labrus bergylta*): 18cm to 28cm;
 - Corkwing wrasse (*Symphodus melops*): 14cm to 22cm;
 - Rock cook wrasse (*Centrolabrus exoletus*): 12cm to 18cm;
 - Goldsinny wrasse (*Ctenolabrus rupestris*): 12cm to 18cm;
 - and all live Cuckoo wrasse (*Labrus mixtus*) should be returned to the fishery immediately.
- **No take zones** (Annex 1) – All forms of commercial fishing for live wrasse should not take place within the coastal areas (Figure 2):
 - Within Poole Rocks Marine Conservation Zone1;
 - From Broad Bench (50° 36.495' N 002° 08.777'W) to Anvil Point (50° 35.489'N 001° 57.583'W);
 - From Grove Point (50° 32.965'N 002° 24.965'W) to Portland Bill (50° 30.848'N 002° 27.375'W);
 - From Chesil Cove (50° 33.549'N 002° 26.907'W) to a point East of Burton Mere (002°41.40'W);
 - From the base of Golden Cap (50° 43.360'N 002° 50.400'W) to the western boundary of the district; and
 - within 50 metres of Swanage Pier, Weymouth Pier, West Bay Pier and Ferrybridge.

Potting for live wrasse should not take place in the area between Portland Bill and Chesil Cove.

- **Maximum fishing depth** – The placing of pots and handline fishing for wrasse should not take place in water deeper than 10 metres.
- **Effort limitation** – Any fishing vessel using baited wrasse pots should use no more than 80 pots per vessel.
- **Closed season** – The commercial fishing for live wrasse should not take place between the 1st April and the 30th June each year.
- **Catch data** – All first-sale buyers of wrasse must register with the UK fisheries authorities and submit a 'sales note'. In addition, fishers within the District are requested to submit monthly catch returns detailing the quantities of species caught, fishing locations and fishing effort.
- **Biosecurity and husbandry** – When storing and transporting live fish and seawater, appropriate biosecurity and husbandry measures should be followed in order to prevent the mixing of genetic structure and the transport of disease, parasites and non-native species.

6.0 Monitoring Activities

The table below outlines a set of variables and how they will be monitored. These include any new evidence relating to impacts or mitigating factors, any change in the fishery (gear type, intensity, scale) or environmental parameters.

Monitoring Variable	Monitoring Activity	Organisation Responsible	Reporting
Fishing effort (no. of vessels/ pots used)	Fishing effort, specifically the number of vessels participating within the fishery and the number of pots being fished, will be monitored through the submission of monthly catch returns from fishers under the Wrasse Fishery Guidance and through ongoing compliance and engagement systems. The monthly catch return requires fishers to record the number of pots worked per trip. This allows analysis of the number of pots hauled per trip and number of pots worked per fishing area. For handline activity the catch return form requires fishers to record the number of rods used and number of hours fished per trip. This allows analysis of the hours/handlines per trip and per fishing area. Sightings data will be recorded during regular compliance patrols, both afloat and ashore. This involves recording vessel information (boat name and number (PLN)), location (latitude and longitude position of activity) and gear type.	Southern IFCA	Data to be collated and analysed on an annual basis at the end of the fishing season.
Extent (fishing location)	Extent of the fishery will be monitored through the submission of monthly catch returns from fishers. The monthly catch returns require fishers to record fishing location per trip by fishing area, using a polygon system. This allows the analysis of fishing effort by fishing area, including inside and outside the SAC.	Southern IFCA	Data to be collated analysed on an annual basis at the end of the fishing season.
Landings	Landings data will be obtained from the monthly catch returns that are submitted by fishers. These will be cross-checked with buyers and seller's data submitted to Southern IFCA.	Southern IFCA/ MMO	Data to be collated analysed on an annual basis at the end of the fishing season.
Landings per unit effort (LPUE)	Landings per unit effort will be calculated from data recorded on monthly catch returns (number of wrasse landed/ number of pots/handline/hours worked). This allows analysis of LPUE over the fishing season. LPUE can be used as an indirect measure of target species abundance and is a useful indicator as to whether the fishery is operating sustainability i.e. a decreasing LPUE can indicate over exploitation.	Southern IFCA	Data to be collated analysed on an annual basis at the end of the fishing season.

Population structure	Catch sampling will be undertaken as part of the three-year research project co-ordinated by University of Exeter and, where possible, supported by Southern IFCA officers. At sea catch sampling will be conducted on an ad-hoc basis on board regular fishing trips, recording and measuring the catch of each pot, including target wrasse and bycatch species. The data collected from this can be used to provide information on the population structure of the catchable population through size frequency distribution analysis.	University of Exeter/ Natural England/ Southern IFCA	To be completed as part of the research project written report. Where available Southern IFCA data to be collated analysed on an annual basis at the end of the fishing season.
Non-compliance of Wrasse Fishery Guidance	Non-compliance will be monitored through regular compliance patrols and landing inspections conducted by IFCOs and partner agencies. Any non-compliance is recorded on an information report and is fed back through the Tactical Co-Ordination Group, held on a fortnightly basis. This forms part of Southern IFCAs intelligence-led and risk-based approach to enforcement and compliance. ¹	Southern IFCA/ MMO	Non-compliance is recorded in an information report and fed through the TCG process. The outcome of which establishes enforcement priorities for the following two weeks.
Condition assessment	Natural England is responsible for the condition monitoring of designated sites and this is undertaken every six years. Monitoring will provide an indication as to whether the condition of the site has changed during the six-year period.	Natural England	Written report/ Updated conservation advice
New evidence (functional role of wrasse)	The University of Exeter is undertaking a three-year PhD to investigate the functional role of wrasse within the inshore reef systems on the south west coast of England.	University of Exeter/ Natural England/ Southern IFCA	Written report completed at the end of the research project or as-and-when significant information becomes available.
New evidence (fishery sustainability)	The fishery is subject to regular monitoring and new evidence relating to impacts or mitigating factors may become available. This includes scientific literature (i.e. potting impact studies or wrasse ecological function studies) or results from research being undertaken by other organisations, for example a study currently being undertaken by CEFAS on the spawning periods of different wrasse species.	Southern IFCA	Document new evidence on an annual basis at the end of the fishing season.

¹ For more information on Southern IFCAs approach to achieving compliance and enforcement and the general principles followed by the Authority please see the Compliance and Enforcement Framework <https://secure.toolkitfiles.co.uk/clients/25364/sitedata/files/EnforcementFramework.pdf>
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7.0 Triggers for Assessment

The table below outlines the monitoring variable and triggers for assessment.

No.	Monitoring Variable	Trigger for Assessment
1	Non-compliance of Wrasse Fishery Guidance	Repeated non-compliance of the Wrasse Fishery Guidance on an individual vessel basis.
2	Fishing effort – number of vessels working	A 25% increase in the number of vessels fishing inside the SAC from the baseline.
3	Fishing Effort – number of pots/handlines being used	A 25% increase in the number of pots or handlines being used inside the SAC from the baseline.
4	Industry demand – the number of wrasse required by the salmon farms	A 25% increase in the total number of wrasse required or bought from the fishery.
5	LPUE	A 25% or greater seasonal reduction in LPUE between years. Caution must be taken to ensure the reduction in LPUE can be attributed to the fishery and not seasonal changes in population.
6	New evidence relating to impacts or mitigating factors	New evidence to demonstrate the activity is potentially having a significant effect on the features of the SAC, adverse or positive. New evidence to better inform the Wrasse Fishery Guidance i.e. size at which maturity occurs to inform maximum and minimum conservation reference sizes or spawning period of wrasse species to inform closed season
7	Significant change in the fisheries gear type	A shift from one gear type to another, or the introduction of a new gear type.
8	Condition of the SAC	Decline in the condition of the SAC and the likely cause of the decline attributed to the fishing activity.

8.0 Assessment Feedback Process

Step 1: Ongoing monitoring activities (outlined in section 6.0).

Step 2a: For monitoring variable 1 - if there is repeated non-compliance of the Wrasse Fishery Guidance go Step 3.

Step 2b: For monitoring variables 2 to 7 - if one (or more) of the monitoring variables (outlined in section 7.0) are triggered:

- Reassess the Habitat Regulations Assessment, starting with a test of likely significant effect (tLSE).
- If deemed to have a LSE, undertake an appropriate assessment (together making a HRA). If deemed to have no LSE no further action is necessary, go back to step 1.
- If deemed to have an adverse effect on site integrity go to step 3. If deemed to have no adverse effect on site integrity no further action is required, go back to step 1.

Step 2c: For monitoring variable 8 - A periodic review of the HRA should be completed every 6 years in line with condition assessment of the SAC.

- If deemed to have an adverse effect on site integrity go to step 3. If deemed to have no adverse effect on site integrity no further action is required, go back to step 1.

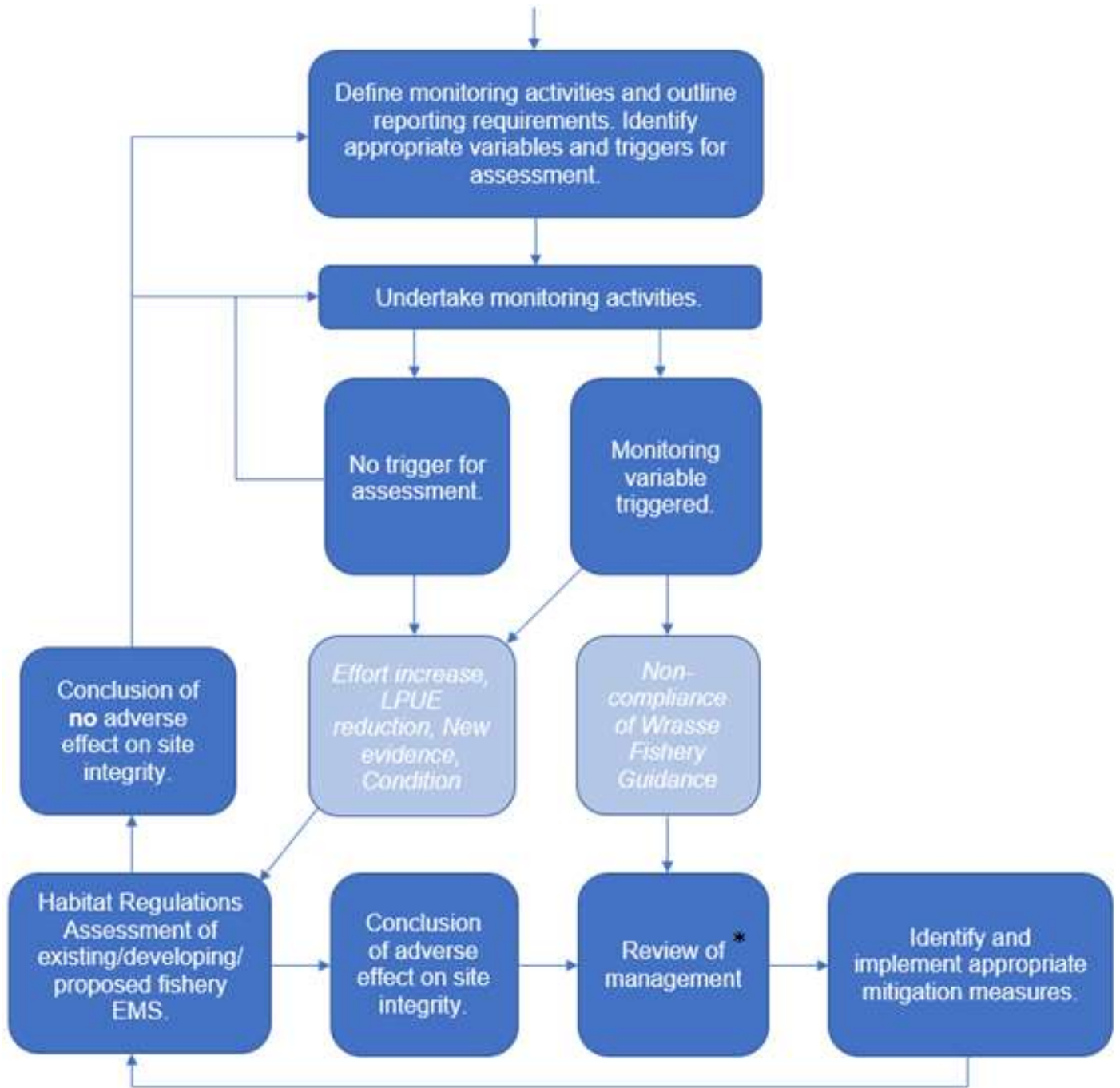
Step 3: Review of management²

- Identify and document issues with current management approach.
- Identify and implement appropriate mitigation measures to prevent adverse effect on site integrity and/or repeated non-compliance. Mitigation measures may include new or changes to existing management including emergency measures³ (depending on the circumstances), additional monitoring or data collection, increase awareness and/or stakeholder engagement.
- Once mitigation measures are in place update the Monitoring and Control Plan and HRA (if appropriate), then return to step 1.

² Whilst this feedback process is important in triggering a review of management in the light of changes to the fishery, new evidence or non-compliance with existing voluntary guidance, a review of management by Southern IFCA is an ongoing process. As part of this process, a requirement for management related to the harvesting and taking of specific marine resources for live trade and aquaculture has been identified. For further details see section 8.0 Planned Management.

³ Section 157 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 allows an IFCA to make emergency byelaws. The IFCA may make an emergency byelaw in circumstances where it considers there is an urgent need for a byelaw and that the need to make the byelaw could not reasonably have been foreseen.

8.1 Assessment Feedback Process Schematic



*Whilst this feedback process is important in triggering a review of management in the light of changes to the fishery, new evidence or non-compliance with existing voluntary guidance, a review of management by Southern IFCA is an ongoing process. As part of this process, a requirement for management related to the harvesting and taking of specific marine resources including fish for live trade has been identified. For further details need section 8.0 Planned Management.

9.0 Planned Management

A review of management by Southern IFCA is an ongoing process and ensures workstreams reflect the nationally agreed Vision and Success Criteria. Currently, the Authority is reviewing its management arrangements for potting and netting within the Southern IFCA district. However, fishing for wrasse does not fall under either of these workstreams.

As described in Southern IFCA's five-year plan the Authorities next phase of the review process has identified a requirement to manage the harvesting and taking of specific marine resources for the purposes of live trade and aquaculture. Following the conclusion of the netting review, resources will be allocated for the development of management if needed to address this requirement. Any new management, if needed, will look to incorporate the removal of fish (including wrasse species and lump suckers) for live trade and aquaculture purposes, as well as the removal of shellfish (including), for the purposes of relaying and harvesting of seaweed.

Annex 1 - No take zones (including no potting zone) in the Studland to Portland Special Area of Conservation and Poole Rocks MCZ, Chesil Beach and Stennis Ledges MCZ and Lyme Bay and Torbay SAC (Lyme Bay region) as outlined the Wrasse Fishery Guidance.

