



Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Fishery Monitoring and Control Plan

Supporting Document as part of the Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Review

Document Control

Title	Southern IFCA Poole Harbour Dredge Fishery Monitoring and Control Plan
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Revision History

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1.0 Purpose of the Monitoring and Control Plan

This Monitoring and Control Plan (M&CP) has been developed as part of the 2024 Southern IFCA Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Review, to support management of the Poole Harbour dredge fishery for shellfish under the Southern IFCA Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Byelaw (PHDPB) and associated permits. The M&CP should be read in conjunction with the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) and relevant documentation for the PHDPB fishery.

The M&CP aims to provide a comprehensive framework for monitoring and feedback within the PHDPB fishery. Management of the permitted clam and cockle fishery will be informed by the M&CP, ensuring that the Authority utilises the best available evidence in understanding the operation of the fishery in relation to target stocks and environmental designations and in any determinations of changes to management.

The M&CP considers an **On-Site Monitoring Programme** and an **SPA Monitoring Programme**, which outline specific triggers for various monitoring variables and associated control mechanisms. In addition, an **In-Season Monitoring Programme** allows for continued high level monitoring to provide additional evidence to support a determination under the other two programmes.

The M&CP does not remove the ability of the IFCA, in the event of unforeseen or extreme circumstances, to act within a fishing season to deliver additional management as appropriate to address the specific situation through the mechanisms set out in the PHDPB or any other relevant legislation, and/or work with other bodies who may regulate the Harbour, for example, the Food Standards Agency to manage the fishery as required in response to an unforeseen event.

The M&CP is a live document and will be reviewed as appropriate in accordance with the Review Procedure outlined in paragraph (11) of the PHDPB.

1.1 Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Fishery

Dredging for shellfish in Poole Harbour is regulated through the annual issue of permits under the PHDPB. Permit conditions attached to the permit provide technical regulations for dredge fishing operations. This approach enables the consolidated management of multiple species under a unified regulatory framework.

Permits are issued annually, with a total of 45 permits currently issued each year. All vessels operating within the fishery are under 9 metres in length, typically small, open boats that conduct day trips during high water periods. The Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Byelaw regulates several key aspects of fishing operations, including:

- Catch restrictions and reporting requirements
- Gear types and specifications
- Gear construction standards and limitations
- Spatial and temporal restrictions
- Mandatory equipment fittings on vessels

1.2 Site designation

The fishery operates within the Poole Harbour Special Protection Area (SPA), Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), and Ramsar Site. Management of the fishery has been developed in close consultation with Natural England and other relevant organisations to ensure that fishing practices align with the site's conservation objectives. Site-specific details can be found in the Poole Harbour SPA Appropriate Assessment – Issue of Permits Under PHDPB (2025 Update).

The issuing of permits under the PHDPB is in line with the conclusions of a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) for the Poole Harbour SPA. The M&CP facilitates the transition from an annual review of the HRA to a process where revision of the HRA is in response to identified trigger points.

2.0 Monitoring & Control Plan

The M&CP considers an **On-Site Monitoring Programme** and **SPA Monitoring Programme**, which outline specific triggers for different control measures based on the type of data collected under each monitoring variable. In addition, the M&CP includes an **In-Season Monitoring Programme** which is used to assess the status of the fishery during each fishing season, monitoring variables under the In-Season Monitoring Programme are not linked to control mechanisms but provide information to support ongoing monitoring and potential information to support any Authority decisions in the event a control mechanism is activated.

2.1 On-Site Monitoring Programme

2.1.1 Threshold Trigger Levels

Threshold Trigger Levels (TTLs) have been established for Manila clam stocks for each monitoring variable under the On-Site Monitoring Programme, with TTLs activating a control mechanism (Section 2.1.3).

The TTLs are calculated using a five-year rolling average of:

- a) **Poole Harbour Bivalve Survey data** – average total CPUE (kg/m of dredge/hr) of Manila clam for the Harbour = **CPUE TTL**
 - **Monitoring Variable 1: available data** - 2016-2024
- b) **Landings data** from monthly catch returns submitted by Permit Holders – average LPUE (kg/day) of Manila clam for fishing season = **LPUE TTL**
 - **Monitoring Variable 2: available data** - 2016-2024

For each data set, a baseline level was determined using the lowest five-year rolling average across all available data. Variations between each data year and this baseline was then reviewed to determine the level of expected variation around the baseline (expressed as a percentage) based on data available to date. An average of the percentage variation has been applied below the baseline to set the TTL for each data source, for CPUE TTL this is 35%, for LPUE TTL this is 19%. If data from a particular year falls below the TTL a control mechanism will be activated.

a) **2025 CPUE TTL = 34.60 kg/m of dredge/hr**

b) **2025 LPUE TTL = 78.25 kg/day**

2.1.2 Recovery Threshold Levels

In the event that further management is implemented to support a sustainable fishery following the activation of a control mechanism, annual monitoring at the end of the season will inform whether a control mechanism to consider the removal of that further management is activated through the setting of **Recovery Thresholds (RT)**. The RT utilises the same percentage variation applied to the baseline as used to define the TTL, applied above the baseline level for each data source. If data from a particular year, following a year where additional management was implemented for a full season, is above the RT a control mechanism will be activated.

a) 2025 CPUE RT = 53.09 kg/m of dredge/hr

b) 2025 LPUE RT = 114.35 kg/day

The TTL and RT calculation process is progressive and adaptive, evolving in response to the continued collection of data for the fishery under each monitoring variable. At such a time as the M&CP is reviewed, updates will be made to TTLs and RTs based on current best available data.

2.1.3 Control Mechanism

The following text is intended to supplement the Control Mechanism process (Figure 1) in order to provide further clarity regarding how and when **a control mechanism linked to the On-Site Monitoring Programme** will be activated. This section is to be read in conjunction with reporting requirements for the On-Site Monitoring Programme monitoring variables (Annex 1).

To ensure that the Authority is transparent in making management decisions in line with duties under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009, the Control Mechanism for the On-Site Monitoring Programme is subject to review at Authority level. If a TTL or RT is met for either Monitoring Variable 1 or 2 under the On-Site Monitoring Programme, Southern IFCA Officers (IFCOs) will consider the circumstances which may have led to the breach in the TTL or achievement of the RT, this will include an assessment of any contributing factor based on best available evidence. Where required IFCOs may also liaise with Permit Holders and/or partner agencies to ascertain a full compliment of information.

The activation of a control mechanism will be considered annually. The Technical Advisory Sub-Committee (TAC) at the annual May meeting will be provided with any evidence associated with the breaching of a TTL or the achievement of an RT = **Decision Point**. This meeting follows the completion of the annual stock survey and occurs prior to the start of the fishing season. As specified in paragraph 10 of the PHDPB, the Authority may attach, vary or revoke conditions attached to a Poole Harbour Dredge Permit, to be agreed at the Decision Point. Following any decision on changes to management through permit conditions agreed by the TAC, this will be communicated to Permit Holders ahead of the relevant fishing season under the PHDPB.

Through a review under the PHDPB in 2024, under which the M&CP was established, potential changes to permit conditions which could be considered by the TAC in the event that the outcome of the Decision Point is to introduce further management to support a sustainable fishery were explored and consulted on with Permit Holders. Information obtained through the review process will be presented to the Authority as part of the evidence to inform any decision on attaching, varying or revoking conditions attached to a Poole Harbour Dredge Permit at the Decision Point, including an Impact Assessment related to any proposed measures. In the event that further best available evidence is available to supplement information gathered during the review this will be collated and provided to the Authority.

In the event that unforeseen circumstances occur during a fishing season, for example an external environmental event or the emergence of disease in a commercial population, the Authority retains the right to introduce appropriate management outside of the M&CP Control Mechanism process in accordance with the PHDPB or any other suitable mechanism, operating in accordance with relevant legal duties. The Authority recognises that in such circumstances restrictions on the fishery may also be introduced by other relevant authorities, for example the Food Standards Agency (FSA).

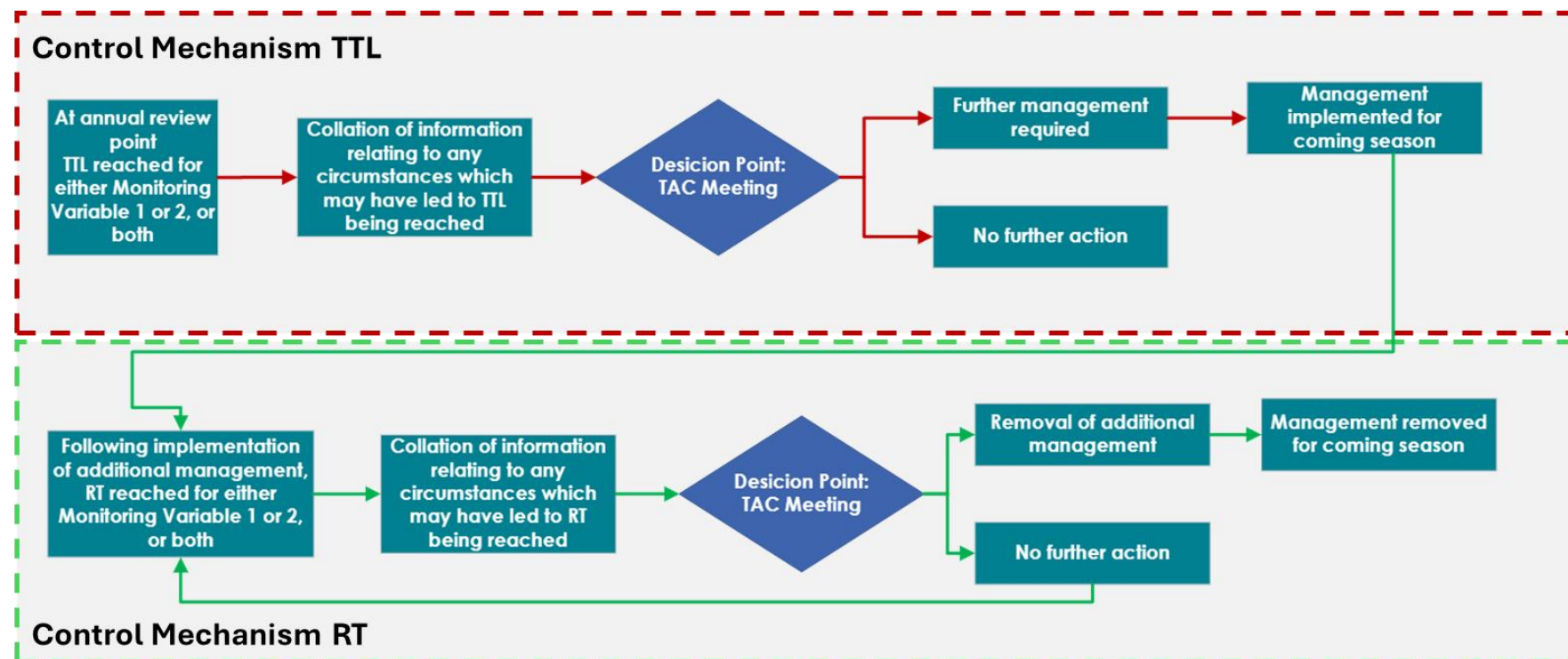


Figure 1: Control mechanism for On-Site Monitoring Programme

2.1.4 On-Site Monitoring Programme Monitoring Variables

The On-Site Monitoring Programme captures two monitoring variables, data from which will indicate whether a TTL or RT has been reached.

Monitoring Variable	Frequency of Reporting	Data Requirement	Responsibility	Analysis	Control
1. Poole Harbour Bivalve Survey	Annual <i>Survey conducted in April each year</i>	Manila clam Catch Per Unit Effort (CPUE) data (see Annex 1)	Southern IFCA	Survey data to be analysed following completion of survey in April each year. CPUE data analysis prioritised.	CPUE TTL or RT reached <i>Figure 1</i>
2. Landings data from monthly catch returns submitted by Permit Holders	Annual <i>Catch data obtained monthly reported as an annual value for the season</i>	Manila clam Landings Per Unit Effort (LPUE) data (see Annex 1)	Permit Holders	Catch data analysed monthly during the season, used to provide an annual average following end of fishing season in December.	LPUE TTL or RT reached <i>Figure 1</i>

2.2 SPA Monitoring Programme

The SPA Monitoring Programme allows the HRA for the issuing of permits under the PHDPB to be linked to specific monitoring variables, moving from an annual review to consideration of a review under the activation of a control mechanism related to the outputs of one of the **5 identified monitoring variables**. Monitoring the relationship between the fishery and the SPA under the M&CP ensures that updates to the HRA are in line with changes in relevant data and ensures that the Authority continues to meet its duties under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, as amended by the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019.

The number of permits issued under the PHDPB each year (2015 to 2024), in line with the conclusions of the HRA, is 45. A review of the HRA (2025 Update) has been carried out alongside the development of the M&CP. Best available evidence in relation to the potential for an adverse impact from the fishery on species and supporting habitats for which the Harbour is designated remains consistent with that used to inform previous versions of the HRA, **therefore the conclusion of the HRA (2025 Update) is to issue 45 permits under the PHDPB**. This will remain the case for each fishing season unless the HRA is reviewed, in line with the SPA Monitoring Programme.

The HRA (2025 Update) considers the potential outputs of the M&CP, in the event that a control mechanism is activated under the On-Site Monitoring Programme. In considering potential outcomes of a control mechanism being additional management intervention to support a sustainable fishery through the limitation of fishing effort, it is determined that this outcome would further support the mitigation provided through the PHDPB and associated permit conditions. On that basis, the conclusion of the HRA (2025 Update), incorporating the potential for the activation of a control mechanism and associated possible management intervention, is that the issuing of permits will not hinder the site from achieving its conservation objectives and as such will not have an adverse effect upon the integrity of the Poole Harbour SPA. In the event that the outcome of the control mechanism process determined management intervention where there was an identified potential risk to site integrity then the specific management measures would be assessed through an addendum to the HRA, to be annexed to the document following seeking advice from Natural England.

2.2.1 SPA Monitoring Programme Monitoring Variables

The SPA Monitoring Programme captures five monitoring variables, analysis of data from which will be used, in conjunction with all other best available evidence to determine whether the control mechanism is initiated, namely whether a review of the HRA for the issuing of permits under the PHDPB is required.

Monitoring Variable	Data Requirement	Responsibility	Analysis	Control
1. Change to MPA designation within Poole Harbour	Detail of new designation and any associated species/habitats including conservation objectives.	Natural England provision of information to Southern IFCA	Any information or data received under Monitoring Variables 1-5 will be reviewed in conjunction with all other best available evidence.	Outputs of analysis will be used to inform a determination as to whether a review of the HRA is required. In the event that a review is required this will be carried out and Formal Advice will be sought from NE on the updated HRA. Any outputs of the updated HRA which suggest further management
2. Change to designated features or supporting habitats within the Poole Harbour SPA	Detail of new designated features or habitats status and conservation objectives.	Natural England provision of information to Southern IFCA		
3. Change to fishery operation or management measures	Detail of new operations/gear types/species as relevant, and/or detail of new management measures and relation to the current assessment under the HRA for the fishery	Southern IFCA		
4. Substantive change to site condition	Updated information on site condition and evidence supporting	Natural England provision of information to Southern IFCA.		

attributed to fishing activity	relationship between site condition change and fishing activity.	Southern IFCA, to the best of its ability, will maintain an awareness of changes in best available evidence and, where deemed appropriate in line with the duties and remit of the IFCA, will explore evidence collection in consideration of available resourcing.		intervention is required will be explored through the Review Procedure as outlined in paragraph (11) of the PHDPB.
5. Substantive new best available evidence on potential impacts to the SPA resulting from fishing activity in the PHDP fishery	Provision of new evidence (peer-reviewed or subject to standard QA practice for relevant agency) showing potential impacts to the SPA from fishing activity related to the PHDP fishery.	Natural England provision of information to Southern IFCA Provision of information to Southern IFCA from relevant other organisation/academic institution. Southern IFCA, to the best of its ability, will maintain an awareness of changes in best available evidence and, where deemed appropriate in line with the duties and remit of the IFCA, will explore evidence collection in consideration of available resourcing		

(*) Note, changes to management relates to those separate to any action resulting from activation of M&CP control mechanism for stock, the potential actions resulting from these measures are deemed to result in reduced effort within the fishery and therefore would not lead to a risk of adverse effect to the SPA, the implementation of the M&CP has been considered in the 2025 update to the PHDP HRA.

2.2 In-Season Monitoring Programme

The **In-Season Monitoring Programme** outlines monitoring variables which will be monitored during each fishing season to assess the status of the fishery. Monitoring variables under the In-Season Monitoring Programme are not linked to control mechanisms but provide information to support ongoing monitoring and potential information to support any Authority decisions in the event a control mechanism is activated under either the **On-Site Monitoring Programme** or the **SPA Monitoring Programme**.

Monitoring Variable	Data Requirement	Responsibility	Analysis
1. Monthly analysis of LPUE data	Landings of Manila clam during the fishing season, supplied through monthly catch return submissions by Permit Holders.	Permit Holders	Data analysed to provide average LPUE (kg/day) for each month, identification of any trends in data and comparisons to previous fishing seasons.
2. Pilot Mid-Season Stock Observer Program	CPUE data from active fishing vessels during fishing season.	Southern IFCA with facilitation from Permit Holders.	A pilot program will be explored for the 2025/26 season to determine the ability to obtain CPUE data from active fishing vessels at the mid-season point, collecting data on weight of Manila clam at/above and below MCRS across different fishing areas within the Harbour. Data would be analysed to provide CPUE values that can be compared to annual stock survey data obtained pre-fishing season.

Annex 1: Data for Monitoring Variables, On-Site Monitoring Programme

The table below outlines the monitoring activity, responsible organisation and reporting methods for each of the two monitoring variables for the On-Site Monitoring Programme.

Monitoring Variable	Monitoring Activity	Organisations Responsible	Reporting
Catch Per Unit Effort (CPUE)	Sampling of Manila clam and other key bivalve species (common cockle, American hard-shell) from 27 sites under the annual Southern IFCA Poole Harbour Bivalve Survey. The samples are weighed to determine the CPUE expressed as kilograms of shellfish per meter of dredged ground per hour (kg/m/hr). CPUE is calculated for the total catch, as well as for the catch at/above and below the Minimum Conservation Reference Size (MCRS). Additional information is also gathered from the survey on length-frequency distributions and population structure. This includes determining the proportion of individuals above and below MCRS. This data can be used as an additional data source to inform decisions under the control mechanism for the On-Site Monitoring Programme if required.	Southern IFCA	Data will be collated and analysed on an annual basis following the survey taking place in April each year (<i>changes to survey time period may be required on the basis of extenuating circumstances such as weather</i>). CPUE data analysis is prioritised to inform the On-Site Monitoring Programme. A full survey report will be produced annually following completion of all data analysis.
Landings per Unit Effort (LPUE)	Permit holders are required to submit monthly catch returns by the 14th of the following month under the Permit Conditions. Data is required to be provided on the hours fished, quantity of each species caught, fishing zone(s) from which the catch was taken and the buyer(s) of the catch for each day of the month. Data on catches of Manila clam for each month will be used to determine an average annual LPUE value (kg/day) for the fishing season.	Submission: Permit Holders Data Analysis: Southern IFCA	Data will be analysed monthly (see <i>In-Season Monitoring Programme</i>) and collated on an annual basis to inform the On-Site Monitoring Programme. Data on annual LPUE and in-season patterns will be reported annually as part of the full survey report for the Poole Harbour Bivalve Survey.