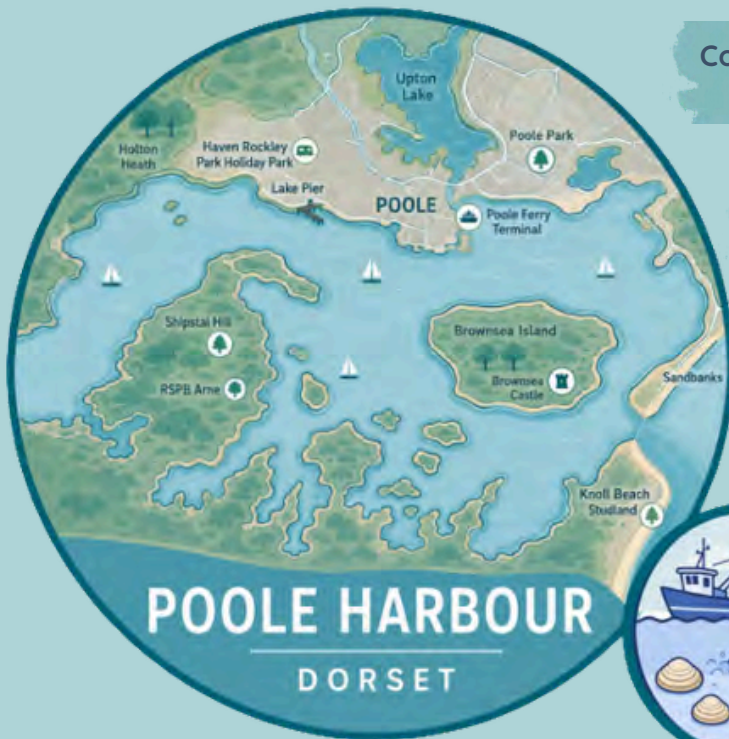


POOLE BIVALVE SURVEY 2026

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

FISHERY INSIGHT...

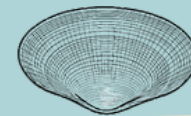


Commercial shellfish dredging has taken place in Poole Harbour for over 40 years.

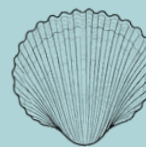
Pump-scoop dredges are used to harvest clam and cockle species from established shellfish beds.

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

TARGET SPECIES:



MANILA CLAM



COMMON
COCKLE



AMERICAN
HARDSHELL CLAM

FISHERIES MANAGEMENT...

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

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

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

WHY WE SURVEY...



To improve understanding of shellfish stocks and main fishing areas



Track changes in stocks each year



Guide management of the Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Fishery

2026 SURVEY KEY FINDINGS...

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

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

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

2026 FIRST LOOK: FISHER OBSERVATIONS

 Fishers report good stock numbers on the ground

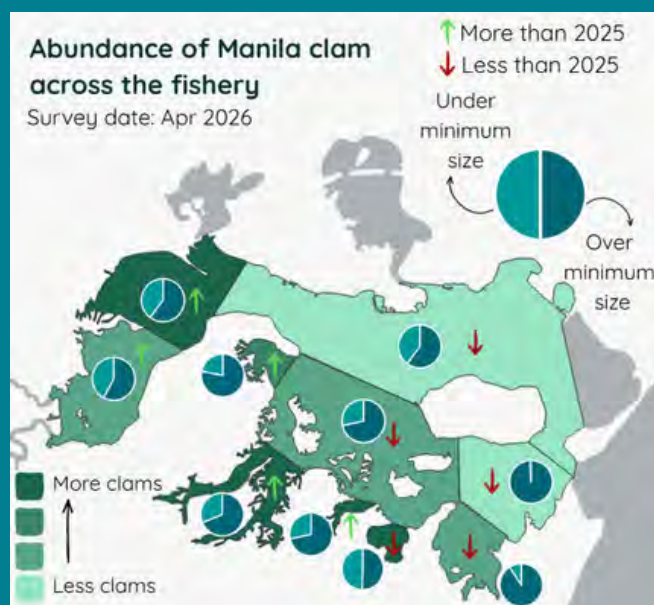
 Weed was abundant early in the season but has since declined, making grounds more fishable.

 High numbers of juvenile fish observed.

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

SPECIES SPECIFICS FROM THE SURVEY...

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



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

COMMON COCKLE

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

