

POOLE BIVALVE SURVEY 2026

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

WHY WE SURVEY...



To improve understanding of shellfish stocks and main fishing areas



Track changes in stocks each year



Guide management of the Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Fishery

2026 SURVEY KEY FINDINGS...



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

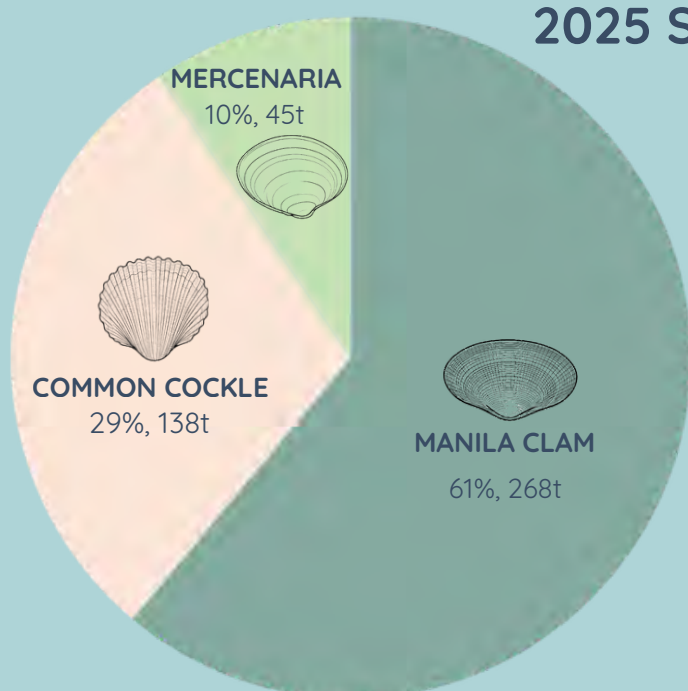


Overall, the clam and cockle stocks appear stable across the fishery.



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

2025 SEASON LANDINGS OVERVIEW...



Proportion of landings by species
(May-December 2025)

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

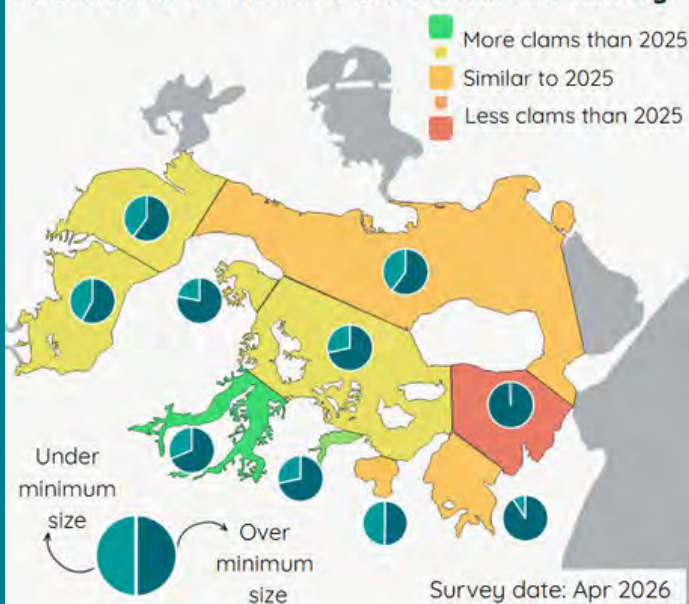
Cockle made up 29% (138t) and Mercenaria made up 10% (45t) for the season.

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

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

SPECIES SPECIFICS FROM THE SURVEY ...

Abundance of Manila clam across the fishery



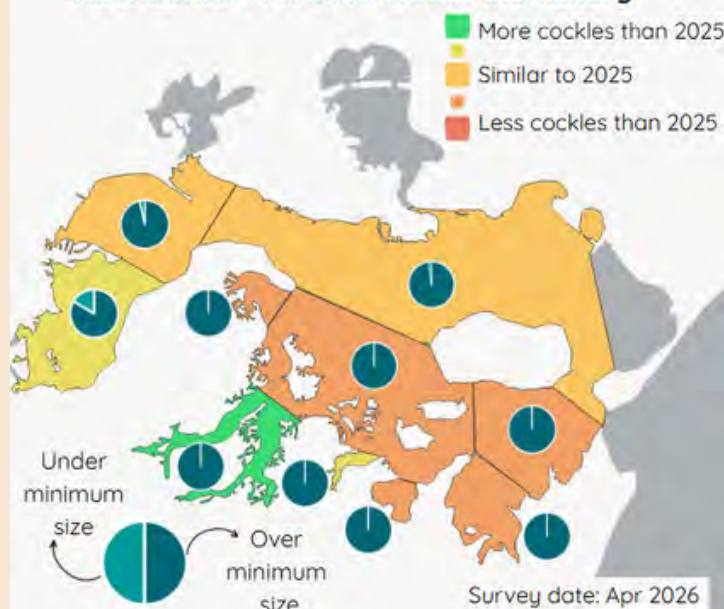
MANILA CLAM

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

COMMON COCKLE

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

Abundance of cockle across the fishery



2026 FIRST LOOK: FISHER OBSERVATIONS

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

NEXT STEPS



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

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

