

# Sussex IFCA Shellfish Permit Byelaw Review

## September 2025

The Shellfish Permit Byelaw 2015 was developed to help achieve more productive and sustainable shellfish fisheries in Sussex. Sussex IFCA hugely appreciate the efforts of fishers to comply with the byelaw and provide catch returns, which are vital to allowing us to track and better understand the health of shellfish stocks in the District.

We are now working to review the Sussex IFCA Shellfish Permit Byelaw. Our aim is to incorporate the views and expertise of local fishers at the earliest possible stage of the review process to inform our consideration of potential changes to the byelaw.

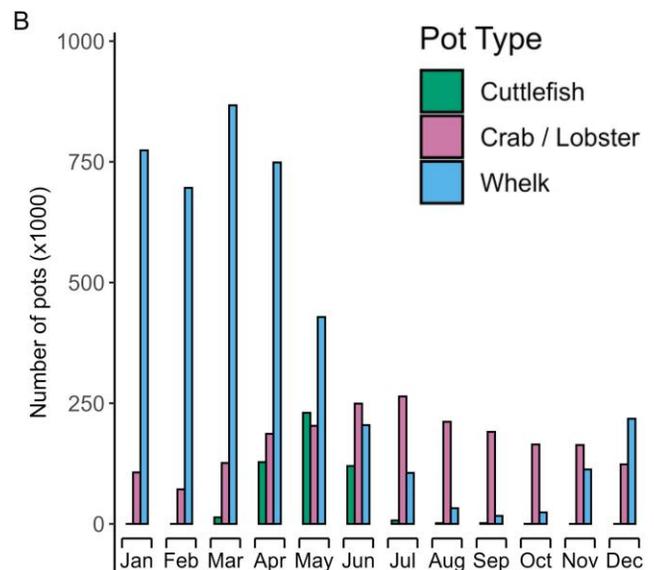
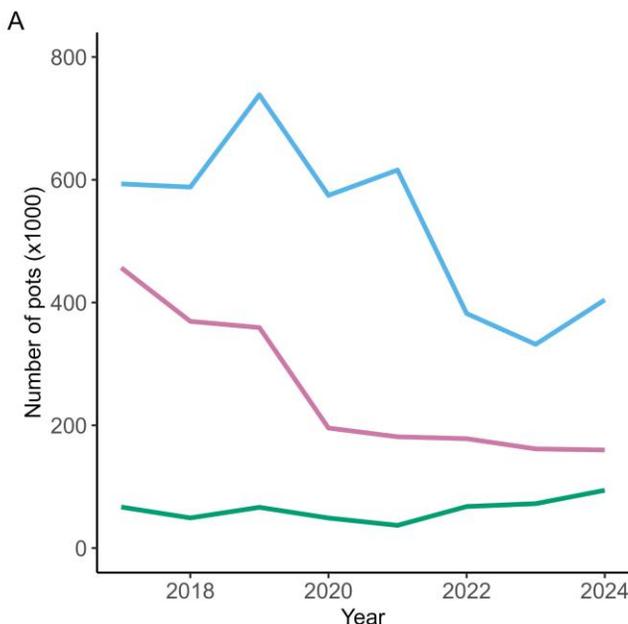
We now invite you to take part in conversations with the Sussex IFCA Conservation and Research Team, to help us understand the opinions of local fishers. Understanding your perspective is our first step in the review process. This understanding, of your vision for shellfish fisheries in Sussex, and opinions on specific topics such as stock health will be central to any changes made to the byelaw. Importantly, this information will be collected anonymously.

### Trends in Sussex shellfish stocks 2017-2024

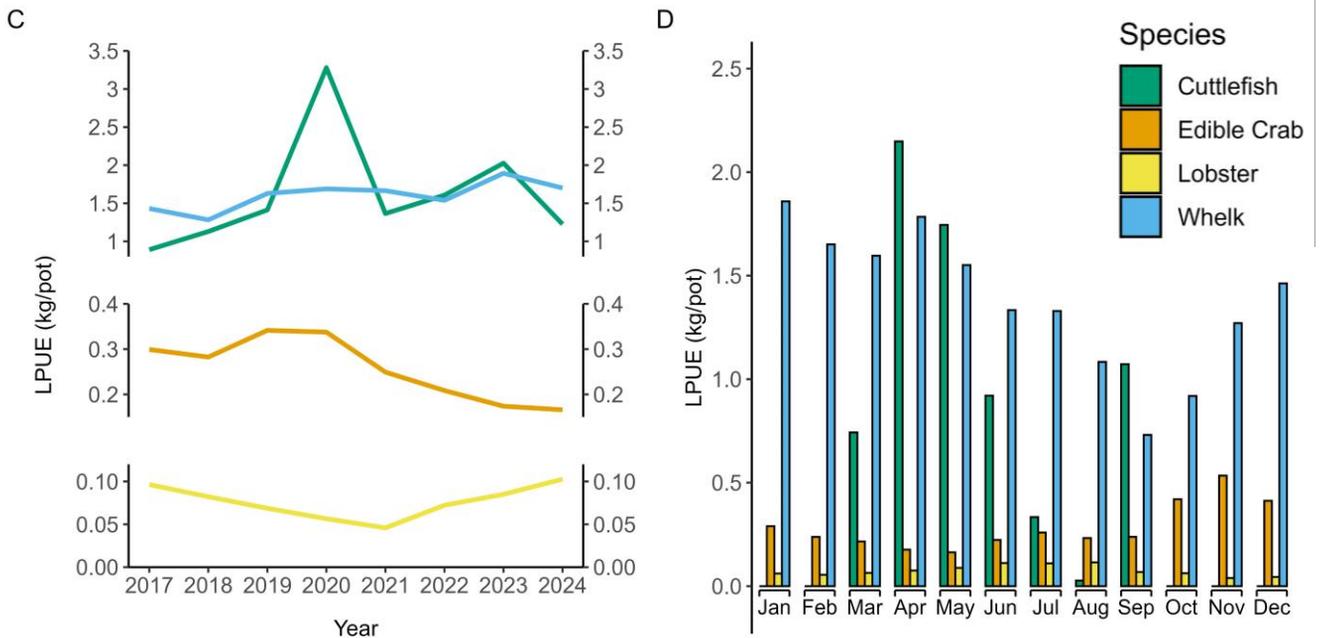
Before we ask for any of your time, we want to share information with you about the performance and status of the fishery; this is only possible due to the catch return data you have submitted between 2017-2024, and we hope this short report demonstrates its value.

Graph A shows that fishing effort (number of pots set) has decreased for crab and lobster over the years, and to a lesser extent for whelk potting, but is increasing for cuttlefish.

Graph B shows the months in which these pots are usually used. Potting effort peaks in Jan-Apr for whelks, May-Aug for crab and lobster, and Apr-Jun for cuttlefish.



Landings per unit effort (LPUE) measures how efficient fishing is, by calculating how many kilos of shellfish are caught per pot. It indicates whether stocks are stable, increasing or decreasing. Graph C shows that LPUE for edible crab has been decreasing steadily throughout Sussex, has remained relatively stable for whelks and cuttlefish, and recently increased following a previous decrease for lobster. Graph D shows how LPUE varies through the year.



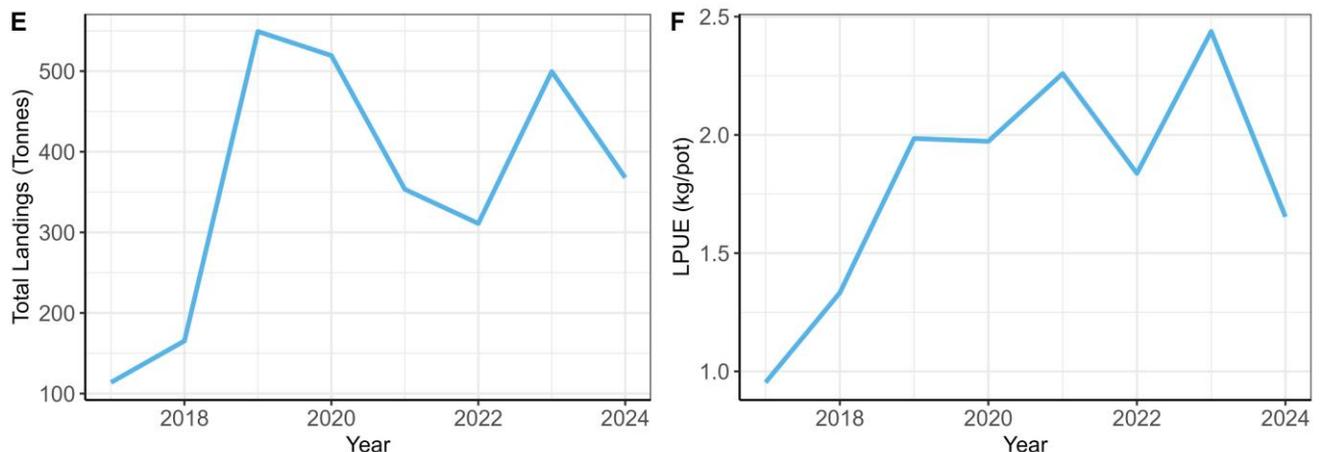
### Trends in ICES subsquare 30F0West, 2017-2024

We have produced reports for all subsquares in the Sussex IFCA District, to allow trends to be compared. The rest of this report will describe trends for the **30F0West** subsquare.



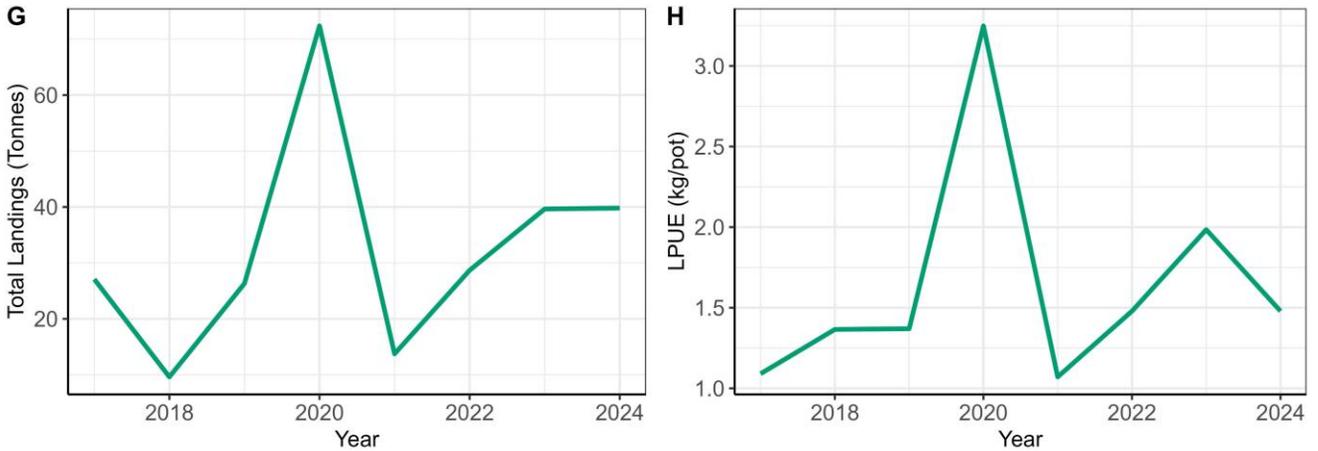
### Whelk landings and LPUE have increased

Total landings (Graph E) and landings per unit effort (LPUE, Graph F) decreased in 2024, but both have increased overall. 30F0West is different from the rest of the District in that both total landings and LPUE have increased since 2017.



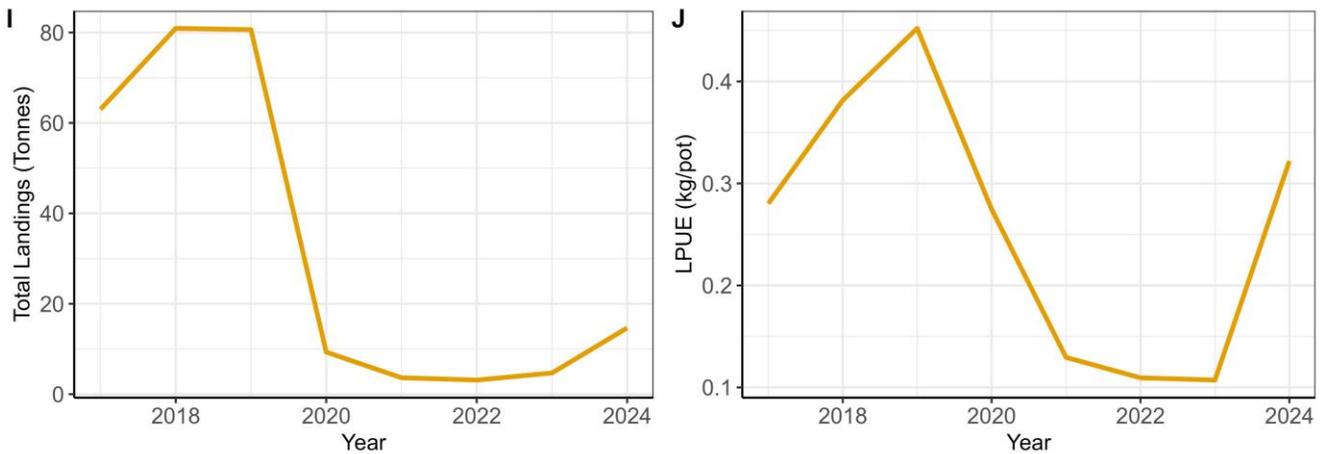
### Cuttle trapping in 30F0West peaked in 2020

Total landings (Graph G) and LPUE (Graph H) of cuttlefish have fluctuated since 2017 with large peaks in 2020, however both landings and LPUE and have increased overall.



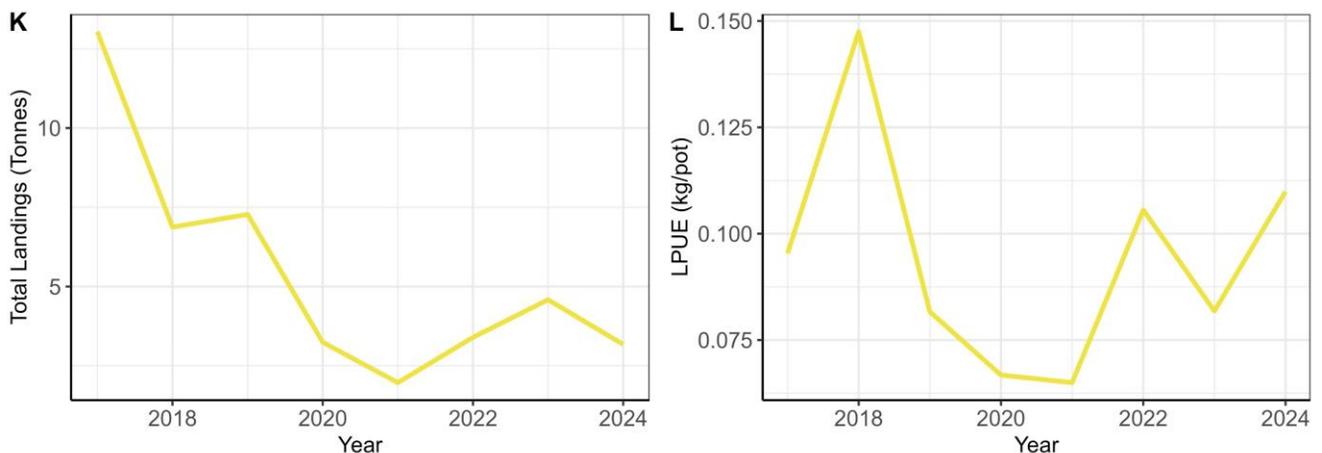
### Crab landings have declined sharply in 30F0West

Landings of edible crab have decreased sharply since 2017 (Graph I). LPUE has increased recently (Graph J), although trends across the District (Graph C) suggest edible crab stocks are in decline overall. There are many factors that could be contributing to this decline.



### Lobster LPUE has increased recently, but total landings are still low

Graph L shows that LPUE declined 2018-2021, but then increased above 2017 levels by 2024, similar to crab. However, the total landings (Graph K) and effort (Graph A) have sharply declined, so it is difficult to tell if the stock is stable overall.





The Sussex IFCA Conservation and Research team are now reviewing the Shellfish Permit Byelaw.

As a first step, we are having conversations with local fishers to co-design any proposed changes.

If you would like to take part in these conversations and influence the process, please contact:  
[Research@sussex-ifca.gov.uk](mailto:Research@sussex-ifca.gov.uk)

We would really appreciate your input and expertise!