

# **FACTSHEET: Whelk Fisheries Management Plan (FMP)**

## **Why an FMP for whelk?**

Whelk has been prioritised due to the vulnerability of these stocks to over-exploitation, the economic value of the fisheries, and a lack of evidence to assess and monitor properly the state of the stocks.

Whelk fisheries contribute culturally, socially, and economically to coastal communities through employment and recreational fishing interests.

Improved management action is therefore needed to protect these stocks and secure their future and the future of the industry that depend on them.

## **What does the FMP do?**

The Whelk FMP was developed by Seafish (the Sea Fish Industry Authority) in partnership with Defra and in collaboration with the shellfish industry's Whelk Management Group.

It collates evidence to assess the status of whelk stocks and whelk fisheries around England, identifies existing management measures, and sets out short- and long-term actions for the sustainable management of English whelk fisheries.

## **Summary -----**

### **Current Management**

Whelk is a non-quota species (NQS) meaning that fishing for this species is not subject to catch limits. A national minimum landing size of 45mm applies. Within 0-6 nautical miles whelk fishing is regulated by Inshore Conservation Authorities (IFCAs). Several IFCAs enforce additional whelk specific measures including larger MLS, permitting schemes, flexible byelaws with conditions, and pot limits.

### **Goals for the FMP**

To have appropriate regional or local based management, together with better species and fishery data to ensure the long-term sustainability of these important fisheries.

### **Proposed Actions in the FMP**

- Improve the evidence base by highlighting where knowledge and evidence gaps exist and what is required to fill those gaps. These evidence gaps include the development of data collection programmes, defining stock boundaries, and developing stock assessments so that management is driven by a consistent, ongoing data collection and research programme.
- Introduce a permit scheme or licence entitlement with conditions. The purpose will be to allow adaptive management to reflect the local characteristics of the whelk stocks and fleets. Explore options around seasonal closures to protect spawning stocks.

- Long term measures will focus on minimum landing size variations, pot, and catch limits, and gear design measures. These will be explored as both the evidence base, and monitoring of management effectiveness improves.

### **Environmental Impacts of whelk fisheries**

All FMPs are subject to legal obligations for environmental protection arising from legislation. The Whelk FMP identifies two potential environmental risks- bycatch and marine litter. Both risks are currently considered low.

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### **What does this consultation mean for me?**

This is an opportunity for you to have your say in the future of whelk management in English waters.

Defra recognise that we cannot do this alone; we want to receive your input and views throughout the consultation and beyond.

### **Give us your views**

Find the consultation online at:

<https://consult.defra.gov.uk/fisheries-management-plans-1/whelk-fmp-consultation/>

or scan the QR code to visit the page.

The consultation is open to 23:59 on 1 October 2023.



### **What happens next?**

Your feedback will be analysed and considered as part of the consultation process. Following this the plans will be updated as required.

The aim is to have the final plan published by the end of 2023.