

MEDIA RELEASE

1st May 2025

Introduction of the Sussex IFCA

Hand Gathering (Restrictions and Permitting) Byelaw 2021

Promoting the sustainable management of sea fishery resources in Sussex

The Sussex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority are pleased to report that the exploitation of sea fisheries resources within the District will receive enhanced management by ensuring the long-term sustainability of shore gathering activities on marine organisms, in the Sussex IFCA District intertidal areas. The Hand Gathering (Restrictions and Permitting) Byelaw 2021 has been approved by the Secretary of State for the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs; Rt. Hon. Steve Reed MP.

The new Byelaw will enable the regulation and recording of hand gathering activities for a range of marine organisms, including shellfish, bait species and seaweeds. It introduces bag limits for various specified species, for anyone hand gathering within the Sussex IFCA district. From the 1st July 2025, anyone intending to gather any of the specified species above these limits will require a Hand Gathering Permit. It also introduces additional bespoke restrictions for relevant Marine Protected Areas sites, that will protect the designated features of these sites. This Byelaw will safeguard the most vulnerable and ecologically important intertidal areas, supporting the sustainable management of these fisheries within the Sussex IFCA district, and the ecosystem services they provide.

For those intending to gather specified species above the defined limits, permits can be purchased from the Authority and will last a period of one year from the date of issue. Permits may have associated conditions including areas in which collection can occur, limits on quantities that can be collected and the requirement to submit returns data. The use of permits and flexible permit conditions support adaptive management based on evidence derived from permit holders. The byelaw should be read in conjunction with the flexible permit conditions and byelaw guidance material.

Sussex IFCA have produced extensive guidance for stakeholders on the Hand Gathering (Restrictions and Permitting) Byelaw 2021, including specific guidance for permit holders, and for each of the six Marine Protected Area's covered by the Byelaw. The Byelaw in full and all guidance documents can be found on the Sussex IFCA web pages <https://www.sussex-ifca.gov.uk/regulations>.

Chief Fisheries & Conservation Officer for the Authority, Rob Pearson explains:

‘Whilst developing this Byelaw, the Authority spent considerable time consulting with Stakeholders to consider the impacts of the new management measures. The management maintains the ability of stakeholders to gather an appropriate amount of marine organisms for personal use, however, for those looking to gather levels considered at a commercial level, it introduces the requirement for a permit with additional permit conditions. This ensures the Authority can understand, monitor and manage the impact of hand gathering activities across the District. It also introduces additional management for the Districts most vulnerable Marine Protected Areas, reflecting the Authorities vision to champion a sustainable marine environment and inshore fisheries within the District.’

Further information about Sussex IFCA

The Sussex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (IFCA) was created in 2010. The Sussex IFCA is funded by East Sussex County Council, West Sussex County Council and Brighton and Hove City Council. The Sussex IFCA is tasked with the sustainable management of inshore sea fisheries resources within its District that extends 6 nautical miles seaward from the Sussex coastline.

Contact Details

If you would like to know more then please contact Sussex IFCA at admin@sussex-ifca.gov.uk, call 01273 454407 or visit our website www.sussex-ifca.gov.uk

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