

IMPORTANT INFORMATION REGARDING THE CHICHESTER HARBOUR OYSTER FISHERY

Indefinite Closure of the Chichester Harbour Oyster Fishery

1st November 2024

The Sussex IFCA Oyster Permit Byelaw establishes a permit-based system for the commercial exploitation of native oyster (*Ostrea edulis*) stocks by dredging, within Chichester Harbour. The Byelaw was introduced in response to declining native oyster numbers, to provide responsive, adaptive management of the oyster fishery with the aim to support the development of sustainable fisheries through permit conditions.

Despite the best intentions of the Byelaw, which was introduced to attempt to stem the population decline and safeguard the fishery, the oyster population within Chichester Harbour has continued to reflect the national decline in native oyster populations; oyster populations within the Harbour have not achieved the threshold density, as outlined within the Byelaw permit conditions, since 2018. Therefore, no permits have been issued since that time.

In 2023, Sussex IFCA were notified that Chichester District Council had de-classified the oyster fishery, due to lack of stock and difficulty in obtaining samples. There are currently no classified native oyster harvesting areas within the Harbour.

Due to the continued low density of native oyster stocks, and subsequent de-classification of the harvesting beds preventing the commercial harvesting of oyster within the Harbour, Sussex IFCA have currently stopped the annual population sampling of the Chichester Harbour oyster fishery, and effectively consider the fishery closed until further notice.

Sussex IFCA continues to work with stakeholders to promote the recovery of the native oyster population in Chichester Harbour.

If you would like more information, please contact us at;

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