

Sussex IFCA Shellfish Permit Byelaw

Frequently Asked Questions

Why has Sussex IFCA introduced this byelaw?

Sussex IFCA's role is to manage fisheries in the Sussex District and to help those fisheries get to a sustainable status. The Authority has introduced a comprehensive suite of management measures for pot and trap shellfish fisheries. Previously, fishing control on all principal shellfish species caught in traps and pots inside the Sussex District was limited to size limits on crab, whelk and lobster and pot limitation for the lobster fishery. The restrictions introduced through the Shellfish Permit Byelaw will manage impacts of fishing activity on the District's shellfish populations, helping to achieve long term sustainability of shell fisheries and the stocks they depend on.

How do I apply for a Permit?

Applications can be made online from the permitting page of the Sussex IFCA website: <https://www.sussex-ifca.gov.uk/permits>

Who does the byelaw apply to?

If you want to commercially or recreationally fish for lobster, crab, whelk, cuttlefish and prawns using pots in Sussex District you will need a Permit. Anyone taking edible crab or lobster by other methods are also affected.

Where can I read the full byelaw and associated Permit conditions?

The full byelaw and Permit conditions can be found on our website www.sussex-ifca.gov.uk/regulations. Alternatively, call us on 01273 454407, and we can email or post paper copies to you.

What should I do if I don't understand the byelaw or any information?

In the first instance, refer to our web pages for information, at www.sussex-ifca.gov.uk. If you still require help, then call and speak to one of our enforcement officers on 01273 454407.

Which shellfish species are managed through the Shellfish Permit?

Whelk, lobster, crab, cuttlefish, spider crab, velvet swimming crab and prawn are now managed under the Byelaw.

Does it apply to recreational fishers?

Yes, a recreational fisher requires a permit if they fish using pots or traps, but will be limited to taking two lobsters and five edible crabs per day.



I do not use pots to catch shellfish; do I need a Permit?

You need a Permit if you are a commercial fisher using **any** method and wish to land more than 2 lobsters and 5 edible crabs in any one day.

You do not need a Permit to commercially fish from a boat if you **do not take more than** 2 lobsters and 5 edible crabs in any one day, using fishing gear other than pots or traps (e.g. nets or trawls).

You do not need a Permit to recreationally fish for shellfish if you gather shellfish by hand, including by diving, though the maximum number you can take in any day, from any one boat, is 2 lobsters and 5 edible crabs.

If you intend to collect shellfish by hand from the shore or intertidal zone, the maximum number you can take in any day is 2 lobsters and 5 edible crabs. Additional restrictions may apply in Marine Protected Areas (MPA's), and you should check guidance documents for each relevant MPA, provided for the Sussex IFCA Hand Gathering Permit Byelaw, here: <https://www.sussex-ifca.gov.uk/permits>

How much does it cost and how long does a Permit last for?

A 'Commercial Permit' costs £200 and lasts for two years from the date on which the Permit is issued. A charge is also made for the supply of the tags at 15p per tag, and there is an additional fixed admin fee of £7. A 'Recreational Permit' costs £15.50 and lasts for one year.

Why do Sussex IFCA charge for a Shellfish Permit?

Under the Shellfish Permit Byelaw, a provision enables the Authority to make a charge for a permit that contributes towards the cost of administering the permit scheme. Typical administration costs include staff time processing permit applications, renewals and catch returns, database costs, tag costs, bank charges and payment processing costs, and survey activities supporting the implementation of permits. Fees cannot be increased by more than 50% each year from the date the byelaw was introduced, and they can only be varied after consultation with permit holders. Fees have not been raised since the byelaw was introduced in 2016, meaning a real-world loss in value of income to the Authority towards administering the permitting scheme, as fees have not kept pace with inflation.

Does the Permit date commence from the time you receive my payment?

No, the Permit issue date will be as close as practicable to the time you receive the Permit and tags. The period for which the permit applies does not include the application and payment processing period.

Can I delay payment until I receive the Permit?

No, the Authority will not start processing the application unless it has received your payment.

How do I pay?

You can pay by direct bank transfer or WorldPay. Full payment details will be supplied when you apply for a Permit. **Do not** send cash or bring cash to the IFCA office to pay.

Who applies for the Permit?

Only owners of vessels can apply; this could be an individual or a body corporate, e.g. a company.

Can a boat have more than one Permit?

No, only one permit will be issued for each vessel.

Can a person or company have more than one Permit?

Yes, if the Permits relate to different boats.

How many pots or traps can I fish?

Type of pot or trap	Commercial fishers	Recreational fishers
Lobster/crab	300 out to IFCA 3 nautical miles limit, with a total of 600 within IFCA 6 nautical mile limit (IFCA seaward District)	5
Whelk	300 out to IFCA 3 nautical miles limit, with a total of 600 within IFCA 6 nautical mile limit (IFCA seaward District)	5
Prawn	No limits	5
Cuttlefish	300 within IFCA 6 nautical mile limit (IFCA seaward District)	2

When will I get the pot tags?

Sussex IFCA will issue pot tags to you after receipt of your Permit application and payment.

Where do I put the tags?

Sussex IFCA has produced a guide for fishers showing suggested places to locate the tags on the various types of pots available on the permitting page of the website here: <https://www.sussex-ifca.gov.uk/permits>

Can I get replacement tags if pots and traps with tags are lost or need replacing?

Yes, replacement tags will be available for Permit holders; a procedure for obtaining replacements will exist.

What sort of tags are used?

The tags look similar to very large cable ties and are marked with each specific Permit code; they are not interchangeable between permits or vessels.

What happens if my gear is not marked?

It is an offence to fish with unmarked gear; the Authority has enforcement powers to seize unmarked gear, and further sanctions may result.

Is the Permit transferable?

The Permits are not transferable, and they have no monetary value to others. If you change vessels during the period of the Permit, then contact us to discuss the matter.

How do I get escape hatches?

If you want to obtain bespoke escape hatches to fit to your lobster/crab pots, then they can be purchased from local marine fishery product suppliers. Contact us if you are having difficulty sourcing escape hatches.

What do returns forms look like?

We will keep our returns forms as simple as possible, so that they are quick and easy to complete. Returns forms are a vital part of shellfisheries management and will help us collect the evidence we need to make future management decisions. Catch return forms are available on the Permit Database: permits.sussex-ifca.gov.uk/Public/Permit/