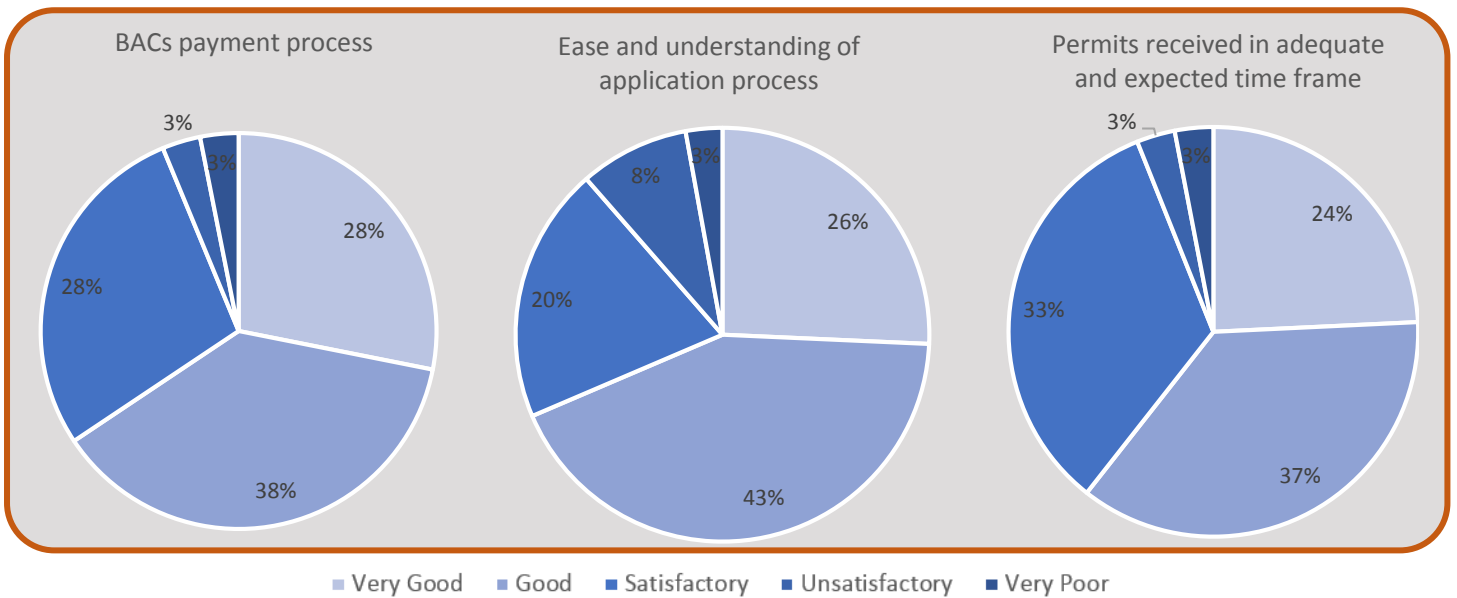


**Introduction**

In 2016 the Authority introduced the new Shellfish Permit Byelaw. Following the initial issue of recreational and commercial permits, many recreational have already been renewed and we are now planning for a significant renewal of commercial permits in October 2018. On approach to the first renewal period and acquirement of one year’s catch return data, the Authority sent out a short survey to all permit holders for valuable feedback. Responses were received from 22% of the permit holders.

**Permit Application Process**

From the responses received, 89% found that the permit application process and accompanying guidance was easy to complete and understand, whilst 94% found that their permits were received within an adequate and expected time frame. 94% found that the process of payment through cheque or BACs was satisfactory to very good. As we approach commercial renewal dates, it is worth noting that payment through online banking will speed up the application process by over a week.

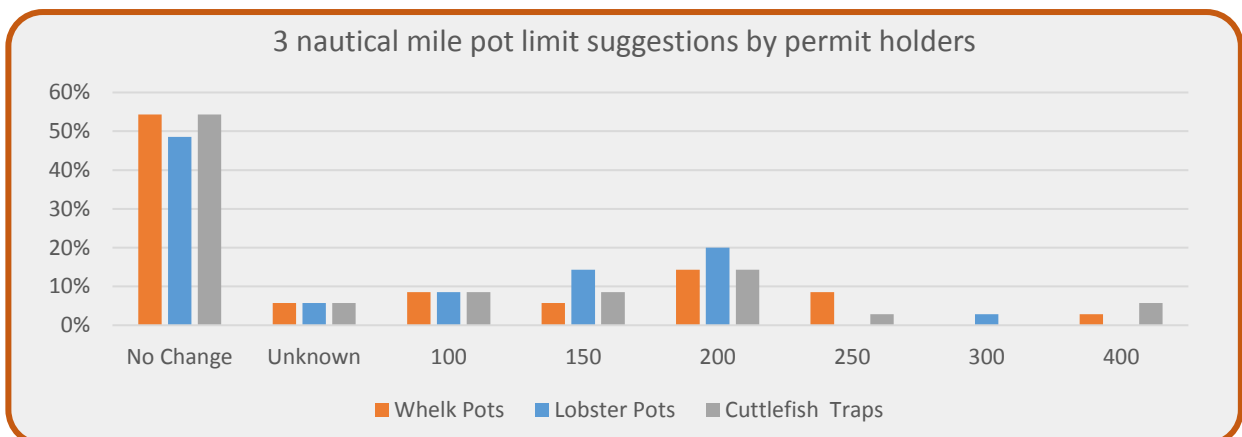


**Permit Tags**

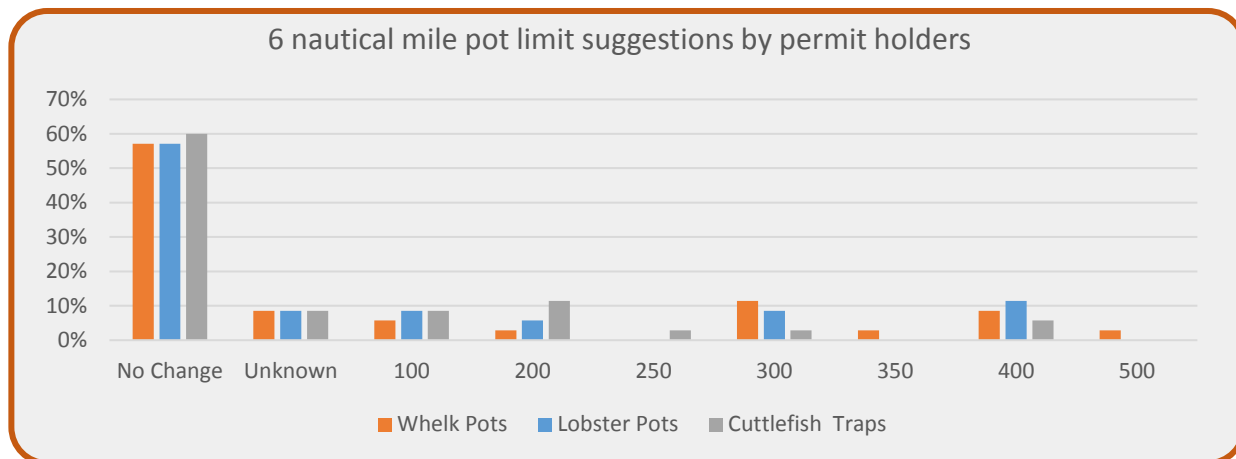
91% of responses stated the tags were either adequate or good to use. More than half of the responses however, suggested that the tags should be made of thicker and stronger material.

**Pot Limits**

46% indicated that current pot limits inside the 3 nautical mile limit was about right and no changes should be made. 45% however felt that the limits were either too high or far too high.

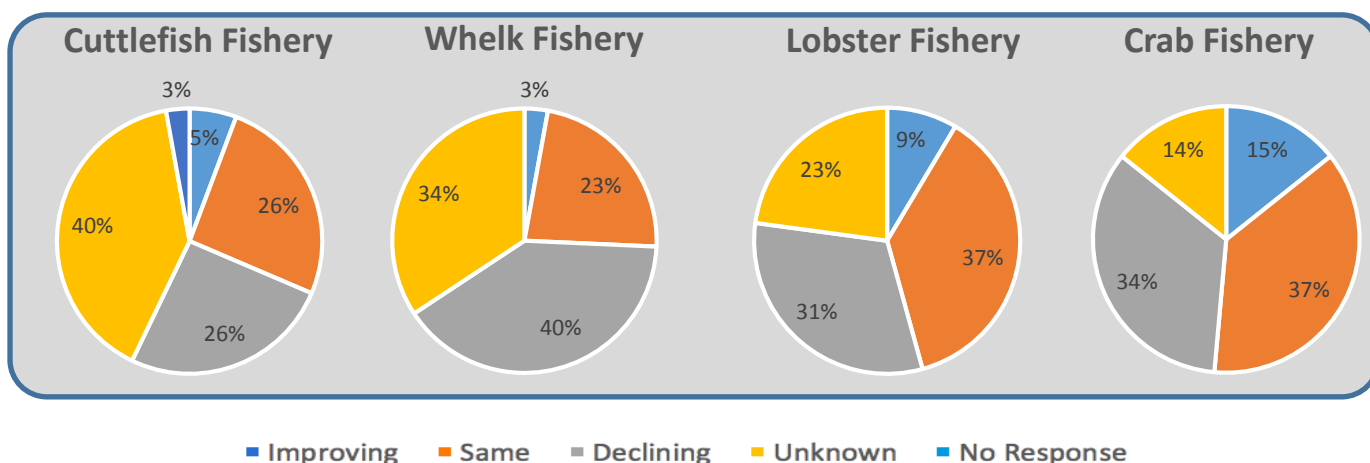


Inside the 6 nautical mile boundary, as was found with the 3 nautical mile boundary, 51% stated the pot limits were about right and no changes should be made. 40% stated the limits were too high or far too high.



### State of fisheries

The questionnaire responses painted a less than positive picture of the state of the whelk fishery, with 40% being of the opinion that stocks have been in decline over the last 2 years. 51% believe the state of the crab fishery is either the same or improving and this is a similar case with the lobster fishery (46%). 26% have stated that the cuttlefish fishery is declining, however 40% were unsure of the state of the fishery.



### Catch Returns

As part of the permit conditions there is a requirement to submit catch returns. 50% stated that they would definitely not or be unlikely to log in and utilise an online permit account if made available. In addition, 73% stated that they would definitely not or be unlikely to use a smart phone app for submitting catch returns. Over half the responses also stated that a web-based system to display personal catch information would not be of interest to them.

The catch return system is an important part of the Byelaw and we appreciate the efforts made to provide accurate information. The data is a vital part of shellfisheries' management and will help the IFCA to gather the evidence needed to make future management decisions within the Sussex District.

As expected, the data (October 2016 – September 2017) confirm and illustrate the importance and value of the shellfish fishery to the local fleet and community. Within this period, a total of 1,276 tonne of shellfish, caught within the Sussex District, was landed and reported on catch returns. The four-main species landed were whelk (70%), edible crab (14%), cuttlefish (12%) and lobster (3%).

A more detailed summary of the data received is available on our website at <http://www.sussex-ifca.gov.uk/research-and-science>.