



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Proposed Fisheries Management Plan for Whelk in English Waters

Strategic Environmental Assessment: Environmental Report - Non-technical Summary

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Non-technical Summary

The draft Whelk Fisheries Management Plan (FMP) has been prepared to meet the requirements of the Fisheries Act 2020. It sets out the policies and proposed measures Defra will use to manage whelk fishing activity, so stocks are harvested within sustainable levels. Alongside these measures, the draft Whelk FMP also sets out management to help support wider social, economic, and environmental aspects of the fishery.

This Environmental Report (ER) has been produced in accordance with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (SEA Regulations 2004). The following issues (from Schedule 2 paragraph 6 of the SEA Regulations 2004) were scoped into the assessment: Biodiversity, Fauna, Flora, Geology and sediments (soil), Water, Climatic factors, Cultural heritage. This report assesses the likely significant effects of the draft Whelk FMP on these issues.

The assessment was conducted against a baseline that primarily used existing evidence on the state of the marine environment set out in [The updated UK Marine Strategy Part 1](#) published in 2019. Additional sources of evidence were used to establish the current status of the environment in relation to issues, such as climatic factors, not covered by the UK Marine Strategy (UK MS). The historical impact of fishing activity on the marine environment has been considered part of the baseline. Our assessment used the best available evidence at the present time to reach a judgement on the environmental effects of the draft Whelk FMP.

This report sets out those plans, programmes, and environmental protection objectives, both international and domestic that Defra consider relevant to the draft Whelk FMP.

This report considers and acknowledges the existing environmental effects of whelk fishing using pots and traps, on those issues scoped into this assessment, in relation to Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), the UK MS descriptors and the wider environment. The potential positive and negative environmental effects of the draft Whelk FMP's policies and proposed measures alone and in-combination have also been assessed.

This Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) concluded that current evidence shows the whelk fishery has a limited impact on the wider marine environment beyond the whelk population itself. No significant issues in relation to MPAs were identified. The contribution of fishing related litter and potential bycatch of non-target species were identified as the principal potential impacts associated with whelk fishing. The contribution of whelk fishing to climate change related issues and

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cultural heritage through entanglement of pot ropes for example, was also identified as a potential impact.

The draft Whelk FMP has considered these impacts and sets out proposals to monitor, and where required, introduce mitigation to address these impacts.

The environmental effects of implementing the Whelk FMP policies and measures will be monitored to identify unforeseen adverse effects at an early stage, ensuring appropriate remedial action can be undertaken.

This assessment recommends the draft Whelk FMP should consider the following additional points:

- Future iterations of the Whelk FMP should consider how they can develop the cultural heritage of each fishery and how fisheries management can contribute to reducing potential negative interactions with marine heritage assets.
- The draft Whelk FMP would benefit from providing more specific detail on how the FMP will interact with Marine Plans. Noting how the FMP could positively or negatively interact with this programme, would improve the in-combination assessment.