



Why is additional management needed for the Lyme Bay sole fishery?

Quota for Dover sole (*Solea solea*) has doubled in ICES area 7e between 2015 to 2022, leading to increased fishing effort in Lyme Bay (Figure 1).

Concerns were raised by stakeholders about the effects of this increased effort on the sole population, wider marine environment, and local communities including gear conflict.

What has MMO done?

MMO reviewed the Lyme Bay sole fishery from an environmental, social and economic perspective. This included analysis of landings and at sea observer data, a consultation and workshop with stakeholders to discuss potential new management measures for the fishery.

What is the outcome?

Increase in minimum landing size: There was wide support for this. However, before implementing this MMO need more information to understand the impact this change would have on the sole population, landings and fishers. MMO aims to commission this evidence, present findings and discuss next steps with industry.

Separate catch limits for different gear types: Concern was raised about the potential environmental impact caused by increased effort from dredges catching sole. To promote using more selective gear, MMO will set a reduced sole catch limit for non-sector vessels fishing with dredges in 7.e from November 2023 and will hold discussions with producer organisations about ways members can reduce sole bycatch when fishing with dredges.

Measures to alleviate gear conflict: Many recognised there was conflict between fishers, often linked to difficulty in seeing the location and direction of fixed gear. Communication between fishers was also key. MMO will facilitate a meeting in early 2024 to discuss potentially separating areas for different fishing activities. MMO will also create a new fishing vessel licence condition requiring enhanced visibility and identification of passive gear, to be in force from November 2023. MMO has also created an anonymous form to report lost gear to better understand the frequency of these events.

Gear modifications: Many were supportive of increases in mesh size for fixed nets, otter and beam trawls and gear modification of scallop dredges. More evidence is required to determine the benefit of these changes, this will be in part gathered through the FMP programme.

Further information

Please see [MMO RFG SW webpage](#) or contact us at FMC@marinemanagement.org.uk.

