



BY EMAIL ONLY

28 March 2023

Dear stakeholder,

Formal Consultation, Lyme Bay, Potential Management Measures for Sole Fishery.

The Marine Management Organisation (MMO) is consulting on potential new management measures for the sole fishery in Lyme Bay. The consultation also asks for your view on the environmental, social, and economic sustainability of the sole fishery.

When referring to Lyme Bay, the MMO intends that to be defined by the ICES rectangles 30E6 and 30E7, west of Portland, 2° 27" West, inside 12 nautical miles (nm). A map (figure 1) showing the location of the area is provided at the end of this letter.

Formal consultation will run from 29 March 2023 to 28 May 2023.

This letter provides a background to the potential management measures and information on how to respond to the formal consultation and what to expect next.

This consultation has been developed in partnership with a steering group of fishers, scientists, government policy makers and managers. The consultation and all related documents can be accessed here: <https://consult.defra.gov.uk/fisheries-management-team/formal-consultation-lyme-bay-potential-management>.

Background

The total available quota for sole in Area 7.e has more than doubled since 2015. This allowed the MMO to increase the monthly catch limits for the non-sector, under-10m and over-10m fleets from 30kg in some months in 2015 up to 3t for some months in 2019 and 2.8t maximum in 2022. The increase in quota availability has led to increased uptake and an increase in the total value earned from sole by those fleets.

The MMO, has however, received reports that the increased availability of quota has resulted in increased fishing activity and a competition for space in Lyme Bay. Some fishers report knock-on effects in terms of gear conflict and a decrease in the number and size of sole caught, and state that this makes it harder for young fishers to enter the fishery.



To investigate these points raised, the MMO took a variety of approaches to gather data on different aspects of the fishery in partnership with the Southern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities (IFCA), Cefas and fisheries stakeholders. These approaches were:

1. Cefas conducted additional fisheries observer trips onboard fixed net vessels in Lyme Bay.
2. Cefas used landings and observer data to analyse the quantity, catch per unit effort and size of sole caught in Lyme Bay and the wider Area 7.e from all gear types going back to 2020. The report can be found on the South West Regional Fisheries Group web-page: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/regional-fisheries-groups-south-west-7efg> and is attached to this consultation.
3. Southern IFCA and the MMO carried out patrols in Lyme Bay to look for evidence of gear conflict and examine the catches and gear being used in the sole fishery.
4. The MMO conducted a survey of fishers on the social and economic aspects of the fishery. The report can be found on the South West Regional Fisheries Group web-page: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/regional-fisheries-groups-south-west-7efg> and is attached to this consultation.

Following an analysis of these data gathered, the MMO concludes that there is sufficient evidence to suggest that, in line with the precautionary principal potential management measures in Lyme Bay must be considered.

Summary of management measures for consideration:

- Make no change to management in Lyme Bay.
- Set a bespoke catch limit for Lyme Bay.
- Spatial and / or temporal separation of gear types.
- Require enhanced visibility of net markers e.g., the use of colour coded buoys and flags.
- Gear restrictions:
 - a limit on the quantity and/or length of fixed net that can be set within Lyme Bay or
 - an increase to the mesh size that can be used in trawls or fixed nets, or
 - restrictions on the specification or use of scallop dredges.



Balancing the environmental, social, and economic factors.

Under the Fisheries Act 2020, (Section 25), the MMO as a National Fisheries Authority for England, is required to balance environmental, social, and economic factors when distributing fishing quotas. This requirement is developed in the Joint Fisheries Statement (section 2.1.2 – 2.1.4) which states that: “short-term socio-economic decisions should not significantly compromise the long-term health of the marine environment...” and “This will need to be delivered in a manner that is sensitive to the needs of fishing interests, including coastal communities...”.

Increased access to quota for sole in 7.e has led to an increase in sole caught from Lyme Bay which it is assumed has an associated economic and social benefit to the fishers who catch it and their wider community. The increased activity has however also displaced some local fishers to the point where they are choosing not to fish for sole anymore for fear of losing nets or because their catch is reduced, and younger fishers are deterred from entering the fishery because it is not financially viable. These are some of the negative economic and social impacts that the MMO is aware of. Some fishers and Environmental Non-Governmental Organisations have also expressed that increased fishing effort is negatively impacting on the fish populations in Lyme Bay.

The MMO needs to understand and balance, as best as possible, the needs and priorities of the different fishers and stakeholders of Lyme Bay whilst also ensuring environmental sustainability. To do this, this consultation will gather your views on the environmental, social, and economic sustainability of the fishery as well as potential management measures that could be implemented.

After the Consultation Closes

After the consultation closes the MMO will hold a meeting with stakeholders to present the analysed results and discuss next steps. An assessment of the different gear types used in the sole fishery in terms of their interaction with the habitats and species in Lyme Bay will also be presented for consideration.

After discussion with industry management measures may or may not be introduced and if they are introduced, they may be introduced this year or next depending on the type and complexity of measure.

The MMO looks forward to receiving your response to this consultation and working with industry collaboratively to enhance the fishing in Lyme Bay.



How to respond

Please respond no later than **28 May 2023**. You can respond by completing our online survey by visiting: <https://consult.defra.gov.uk/fisheries-management-team/formal-consultation-lyme-bay-potential-management>

If you are not able to access the above survey, you can respond by telephone on 07917552479 or 0208 026 9060

In writing:

Lyme Bay Potential Management Measures
Fisheries Management Team
Marine Management Organisation
Lancaster House
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE4 7YH

Yours faithfully,

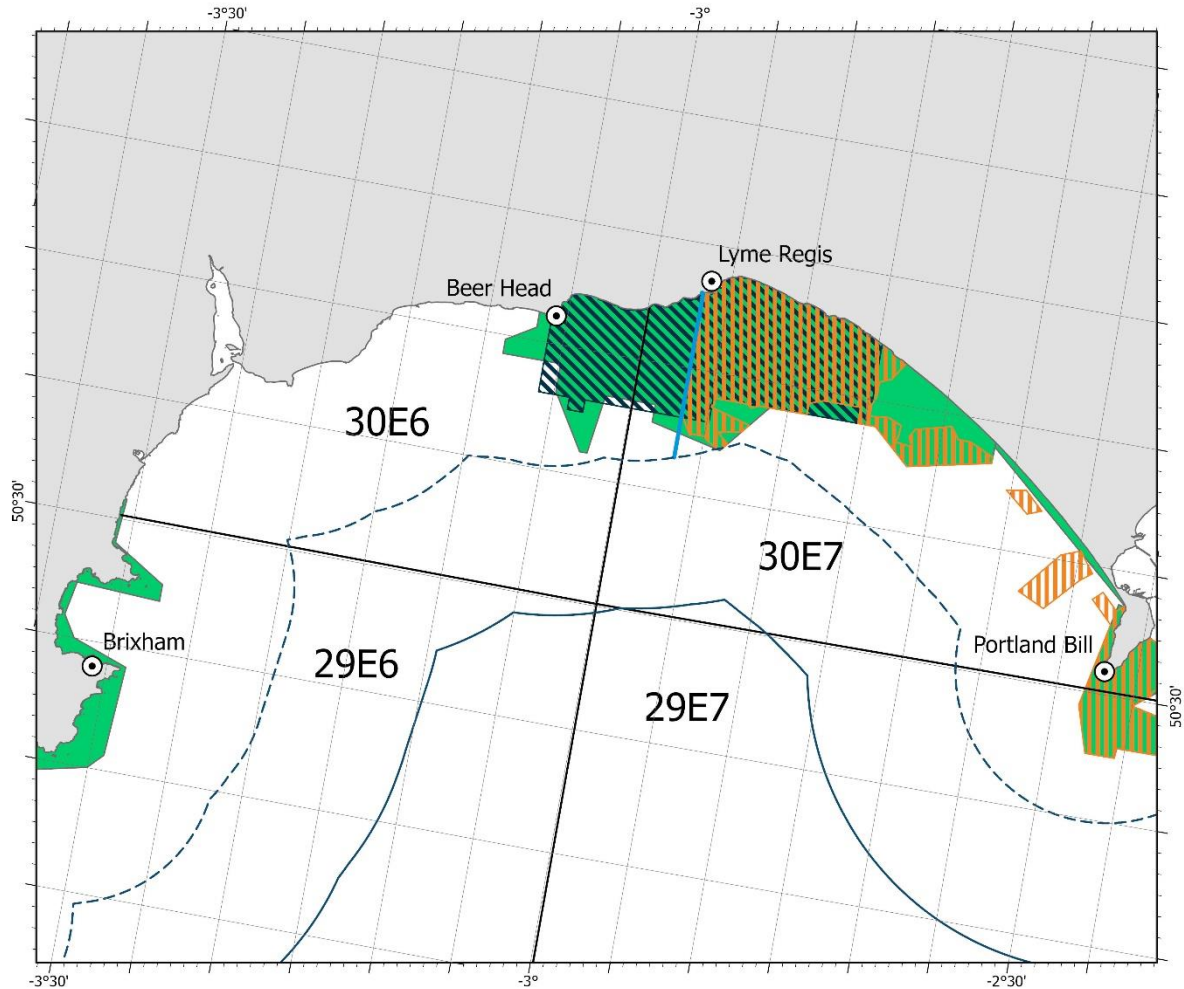


Tim Dixon,
Head of Fisheries Management Team

Fisheries Management Team
Marine Management Organisation
Lancaster House
NE4 7YH





Figure 1 Lyme Bay Statistical Rectangles and Existing Management Areas

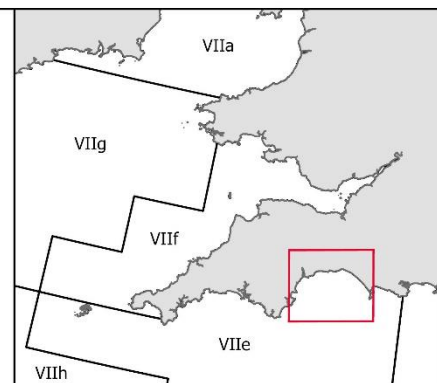


Administrative Boundaries

-  Boundary Between Devon & Severn IFCA and Southern IFCA
-  Relevant Southern IFCA Bottom Towed Fishing Gear Byelaw Area
-  Lyme Bay Statutory Instrument Area
-  Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)
-  ICES Statistical Rectangles

Maritime Limits

-  6 Nautical Mile Limit (1983 Baseline)
-  12 Nautical Mile Limit (2020 Baseline)



Date of Publication: 23/03/2023
 Coordinate System: ETRS1989 LAEA
 Projection: Lambert Azimuthal Equal Area
 MMO Reference: 10708

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