



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Management of under 15m scallop fleet

A call for evidence

Date: 19 July 2021

We are the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. We are responsible for improving and protecting the environment, growing the green economy, sustaining thriving rural communities and supporting our world-class food, farming and fishing industries.

We work closely with our 33 agencies and arm's length bodies on our ambition to make our air purer, our water cleaner, our land greener and our food more sustainable. Our mission is to restore and enhance the environment for the next generation, and to leave the environment in a better state than we found it.



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Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at

Scallopandshellfishconsultations@defra.gov.uk

www.gov.uk/defra

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Executive Summary

We are now an independent coastal State. We are committed to developing a world-class fisheries management system. It will embrace sustainable fishing and support a diverse, profitable and sustainable fleet which serves the needs of coastal communities and the UK economy.

One of our priorities in this ambitious agenda is to improve how we manage non-quota stocks such as shellfish, whelks, cuttlefish etc. We want these profitable but data-poor stocks to be healthy and abundant and managed sustainably, enriching the diversity of our marine environment and coastal communities. To achieve that aim, we in Defra are working with the Scallop Industry Consultation Group, the Shellfish Industry Advisory Group and its species-specific sub-groups, to develop a future management programme for non-quota species.

The scallop and shellfish industry/government management groups have identified two areas of work that require further consideration, namely **the management of the under 15m scallop fleet** and **latent capacity (unused licences and entitlements) within the over 10m scallop and shellfish fleet**. Two separate calls for evidence are being launched in parallel. They aim to identify the level of risk and impacts associated with the unrestricted fishing of the under 15m scallop fleet and existing latent capacity and consider whether action is needed in these areas.

In this call for evidence, we are asking for views which will help us to better understand whether there are issues arising from limits not applying to the under 15m fleet and, if so, what these issues are and how this could be alleviated. We will use the evidence gathered to inform whether new management measures are required and if so, what form of response we might consider, to ensure the sustainability of scallop and shellfish fisheries.

Background

The UK Western Waters effort regime sets maximum days at sea fishing limits for 15m and over vessels fishing for scallops in United Kingdom waters of subareas 5, 6 and 7 of FAO major fishing area 27 (Northeast Atlantic). Whilst these limits are not based on scientific information regarding stock status, but on historical fishing activity during the period 1998 – 2002, their existence has provided some prevention of increases in fishing effort in some sectors/ areas (compared to no limit whatsoever). In addition to the requirements set out under the Western Waters regulation that apply to 15m and over vessels, there is a requirement for activity of under 15m vessels to be monitored against an effort baseline, based on the same 1998-2002 track record period, and for action to be taken to prevent it from being exceeded.

Although monitoring of this fishing activity is carried out, limitations around the provision of historic activity data for under 15m vessels have resulted in difficulties in setting a realistic effort baseline for this sector. The effort of these vessels is therefore not being managed and this could be impacting on sustainability of the stocks and therefore the sustainability of the U15m sector.

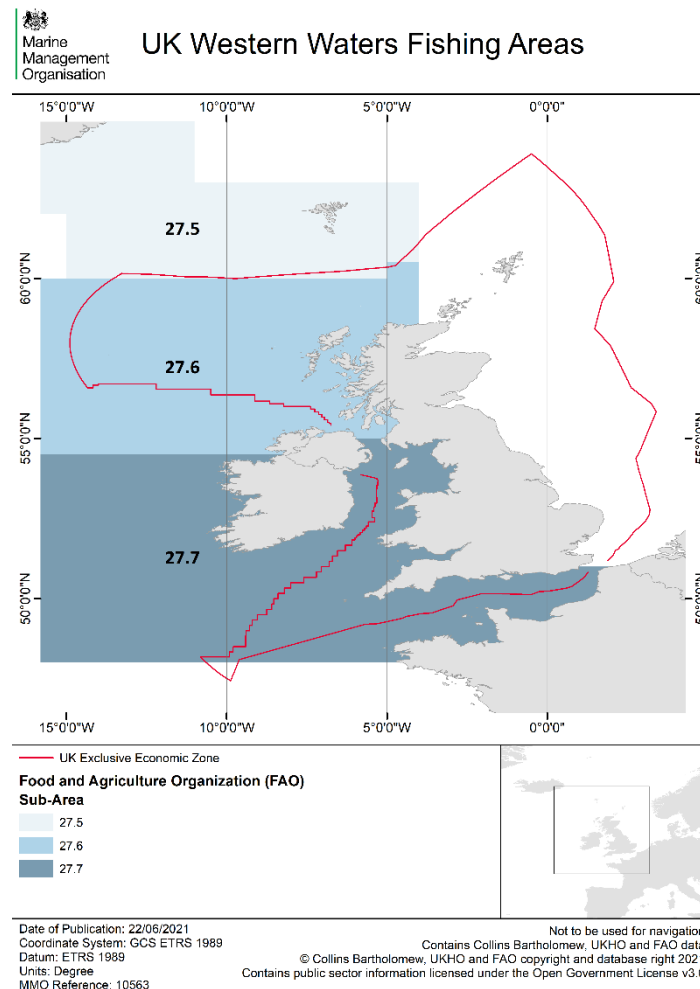


Figure 1. FAO subareas 5, 6, and 7 (V, VI and VII) for Western Waters fisheries (MMO, 2021).

Current situation

Data gathered by UK Fisheries administrations shows, excluding Scottish vessels, that most UK scallop vessels fishing in the Western Waters area have been under 15m vessels, with 82% of the fleet being under 15m in 2020. The number of under 15m scallop vessels varies annually with a high of 187 vessels in 2013 and a low of 114 vessels in 2020. England represented 79 of these vessels (69%), Northern Ireland represented 28 (25%) and Wales represented 7 (6%) in 2020.

Excluding Scottish vessels, the UK over 15m fleet fishing in the Western Waters area (averaging across areas 5 - 7) has decreased in size annually from a high of 46 vessels in 2015 to a low of 20 vessels in 2020. England represented 11 of these vessels (55%),

Northern Ireland represented 9 (45%) and Wales represented none in 2020. For comparison, Scotland had 51 active scallop vessels of 15 m or over in 2020.

Landings of king and queen scallops by UK vessels, excluding Scottish vessels, in Western Waters areas 5, 6 and 7 has decreased significantly from a peak of 18,216 tonnes in 2012 to a low of 5,411 tonnes in 2020 (see figure 2). Conversely over the period the share of landings by under 15 m vessels has increased from 51% in 2012 to 73% in 2020. Since 2016 the group of vessels with the largest tonnage landed annual has been the 10-15 m group, overtaking the 15 m and over group.

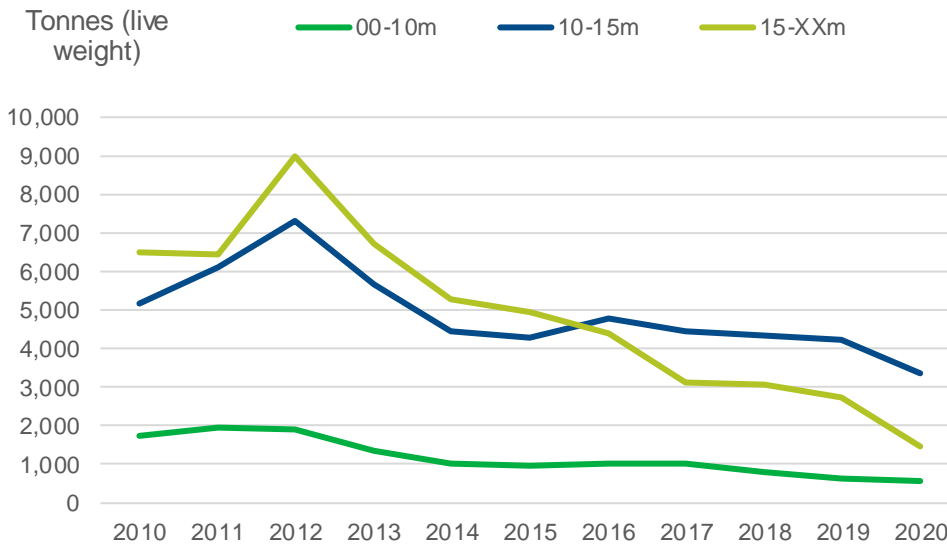


Figure 2. Landings per year by UK vessels (excluding Scotland) in WW areas (MMO, 2021)

For effort, a similar pattern has been observed (see figure 3), with 10 – 15m vessels accounting for 71% of all effort deployed by over 10 m vessels in 2020. While effort has been falling for all length groups since 2016, the fall has not been as steep for under 15 m vessels.

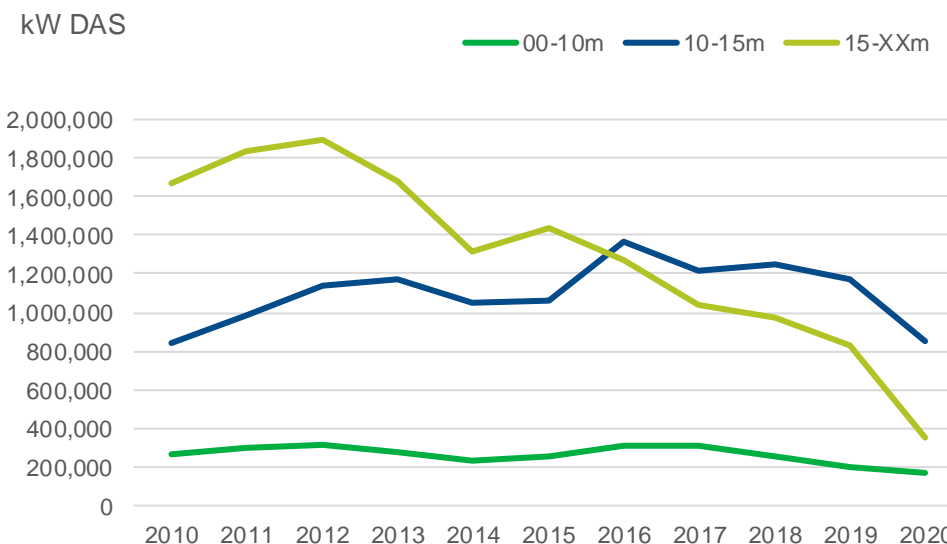


Figure 3. Effort (kW DAS) per year by UK vessels (excluding Scotland) in WW areas (MMO, 2021)

In 2020, the English, Welsh and Northern Irish under 15m fleet's landings were valued at approximately £7.5 million (England 83%, Northern Ireland 12%, Wales 5%). In the same year, solely for England and Northern Ireland the over 15m fleet's landings were valued at £2.8 million (England 89%, Northern Ireland 11%). It is worth noting that 2020 was an unusually low year across all measures owing to the impact of COVID19 on market demand for fisheries products.

Scope

Fisheries policy and management is devolved, but the UK Western Waters effort regime applies days at sea limits to UK vessels fishing for scallops in FAO subareas 5, 6 and 7. This Call for Evidence is a joint initiative between Defra, DAERA and the Welsh Government exclusively, but results of the call will be shared with all Devolved Administrations. Its findings may also be used to inform future scallop policy development in respective Administrations.

Questions

We are looking for views and expert advice on the following three key areas:

- Impacts of unrestricted fishing;
- Impacts of introducing restrictions; and
- Future management.

We also welcome any additional evidence you have that you feel does not fit under the questions asked in this call for evidence. This might, but not exclusively, include the impacts on biodiversity, environmental, social and economic sustainability, impacts on small businesses and any unintended consequences across the UK. Evidence can come in many forms, including quantitative data, case studies, scientific data, literature reviews, personal experiences, or reports and documents, whether new or historic. Please provide full references for any documentation discussed.

Questions about you

Question 1: What is your name?

Question 2: What is your email address?

Question 3: What is your organisation?

If you're replying as an individual, please type 'individual'.

Representative groups are asked to give a summary of the people and organisations they represent and, where relevant, who else they have consulted in formulating their responses.

Question 4: Would you like your response to be confidential? (a response is required).

Please read the important section on confidentiality and data protection at the end of the document.

Questions about the current fleet and management

Whilst data exists regarding the current scallop fleet, we would like to better understand the impact management measures have on the fleet (economic, social and environmental). This can include the fleet itself, businesses, individuals, groups or communities.

Question 5: Please provide any evidence you have to assist our understanding about the scale and value of the current fleet (and wider sector).

We are looking for evidence related to the current fleet in context of its size, economic impact, and general influence.

Question 6: Please provide any evidence you have on the impact of the under 15m scallop fleet on scallop stocks.

We would like to understand whether scallops are being fished sustainably under the current system without further restrictions. For example, please indicate whether you have noticed changes in catch/ health of stocks etc. Furthermore, we would like to understand whether continued unrestricted fishing amongst the 15m fleet in this area could contribute to scallop fisheries being fished beyond the maximum sustainable yield. Is profitability and economic sustainability being affected?

Question 7: Please provide any evidence of the impact of the lack of restrictions on the under 15m scallop fleet in the wider fleet context.

For example, we would like to better understand how the general scallop fleet is affected by the lack of restrictions that the under 15m fleet experience. We are looking for evidence related to any social or economic impacts on scallop/ related businesses have as a result of the unrestricted limits that the under 15m fleet face. Would some sized vessels, businesses, individuals, groups or communities be more affected than others?

Questions about the impact of different management measures for under 15m scallopers

Introducing different management measures for under 15m scallop fleets in the UK Western Waters area might help prevent increased pressure on stocks. However, if

limiting fishing activity occurs within this area only, there might be a risk of displacement of under 15m fishing vessels to areas which fall outside of the scope of areas covered by the Western Waters regime e.g. area IV.

Question 8: Please explain whether you consider the proposed area scope, i.e. the Western Waters area, appropriate. Please provide any additional evidence you may have to support your view.

We want to understand whether limiting fishing activity occurs within this area only might increase the risk of displacement of under 15m fishing vessels to areas which fall outside of the scope of areas covered by the Western Waters regime e.g. area IV.

Question 9: Please explain what type of management measures (if any) could be introduced. Please provide any additional evidence you may have to support your view.

We want to understand whether a days at sea effort-based limit, similar to limits that are currently applied to the 15m and over fleet, could be also appropriate for the under 15m fleet. Could a recalculated effort baseline for an alternative track record be applied to the under 15m? Or could a catch-based limit be an appropriate measure, in line with the newly introduced tonnage limits which now apply to all UK vessels fishing for scallops in EU waters?

Would an effort limit have to be alongside other measures, such as sufficient technical measures, to ensure that any effort limits will not be exceeded. Are there other management measures that should be put in place to limit potential changes in behaviour?

Question 10: Please provide evidence you may have to show the possible impact of greater management measures on the under 15m fleet would have on business.

We are interested in whether different management measures could potentially impact the viability of businesses and communities. We are also interested in the potential magnitude of impacts and types of businesses affected.

Questions about other fishery management measures

Defra is working with the Scallop Industry Consultation Group to develop future management proposals in the scallop and shellfish sectors. Addressing the lack of restrictions for the under 15m fleet is being considered as part of a wider programme of work undertaken by this group. The aim is to enhance our understanding and evidence needed to consider future fishery management measures.

For example, this may include your personal experience as a fisher of how the lack of restrictions for the under 15m fleet has been affecting your scallop or shellfish catches, the general health of the stocks, etc.

Question 11: Please provide any evidence you may have to support the view that introducing greater management measures to the under 15m fleet should be addressed as a priority. Which ones should be prioritised?

We would like to know which specific measures you think would contribute to the good management of scallop stocks. Please tell us if these measures should be addressed as a priority or alongside other measures.

Further evidence

We welcome any additional evidence you have that you feel does not fit under any of the previous questions, please submit in response to the question below.

Question 12: Please provide any other relevant evidence you would like to include in relation to scallop fleet management measures in the UK.

Additional evidence may, but not exclusively, include the impacts on biodiversity, environmental, social and economic sustainability, impacts on small businesses and any unintended consequences in England or across the UK. Evidence can come in many forms, including numerical data, case studies, literature reviews, personal experiences, or reports and documents, whether new or historic. Please provide full references for any documentation discussed.

How to respond

We ask that any responses be sent by 30 August in one of the following ways:

Online using the Citizen Space Call for Evidence at

<https://consult.defra.gov.uk/shellfish-and-crown-dependencies-domestic-fisheries-and-reform/management-of-under-15m-scallop-fleet>

Or by email: scallopandshellfishconsultations@defra.gov.uk

Or in writing to:

Under 15m Call for Evidence

Consultation Coordinator

Defra 2nd Floor

Foss House

Kings Pool

1-2 Peasholme Green

York

YO1 7PX

Please note, any responses sent by post much have arrived at the above address by the closing date of the Call for Evidence (30 August 2021) to be counted. Unfortunately, any responses received after this date will not be analysed. To ensure your response is included in the analysis, please consider responding online via Citizen Space.

Important - Confidentiality and data protection

Please find the Consultations Privacy Notice uploaded alongside this call for evidence, which will apply to any personal data that you provide with your response.

This call for evidence document and process have been planned to adhere to the Consultation Principles issued by the Cabinet Office which can be found at:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/consultationprinciplesguidance

Representative groups are asked to give a summary of the people and organisations they represent and where relevant who else they have consulted in reaching their conclusions when they respond.

Information provided in response to this call for evidence, including personal data, may be published or disclosed in accordance with access to information laws. These are primarily the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIRs), the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) and the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA).

We have obligations, mainly under the EIRs, FOIA and DPA, to disclose information to particular recipients or to the public in certain circumstances. If you want the information that you provide to be treated as confidential, please be aware that, as a public authority, the Department is bound by the EIRs, FOIA and DPA and may therefore be obliged to disclose all or some of the information you provide. In view of this it would be helpful if you could explain to us why you regard the information you have provided as confidential.

If we receive a request for disclosure of the information, we will take full account of your explanation, but we cannot give an assurance that confidentiality can be maintained in all circumstances.

An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the Department.

If you have any comments or complaints about the call for evidence process, please address them to:

Under 15m Call for Evidence

Consultation Coordinator

2nd floor

Foss House

Kings Pool

1-2 Peasholme Green

York

YO1 7PX

Or email: consultation.coordinator@defra.gov.uk