



Marine
Management
Organisation



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot

marinescotland



Department of
Agriculture, Environment
and Rural Affairs
www.daera-ni.gov.uk



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

A call for evidence on a proposal for a king scallop fishery closure in ICES area 7d from 1 August to 30 September 2022

9 May – 6 June 2022



...ambitious for our seas and coasts

Contents

Summary	2
Background	3
Provisional harvest rates in UK waters	4
Spawning in ICES area 7d.....	4
Landings in UK waters.....	5
ICES area 7d.....	5
ICES area 4c.....	7
ICES area 7e.....	7
Call for evidence questions	8
Next Steps.....	8
Annex.....	9

Summary

The UK Fisheries Administrations (UKFAs) are committed to ensuring fisheries are managed to a level where stocks are healthy and fished sustainably, environmental damage is minimised, and economic return is maximised whilst ensuring sustainable harvesting.

The Marine Management Organisation (MMO), acting on behalf of all four UKFAs, is seeking views on a proposal to close the ICES area 7d king scallop (*Pectens maximus*) fishery between 1 August and 30 September 2022 to vessels of all lengths.

The most recent Cefas stock assessment published in 2022 indicates that most stock units in the English Channel, including in area 7d, are estimated to have been exploited above the rate associated with maximum sustainable yield (MSY) at some point over the last 5 years.

The assessments for 2020 have a provisional harvest rate estimate just below the MSY rate (21.4 vs 21.5). However, this may be subject to change once full international landings data become available and therefore the rate is quite uncertain currently. This strengthens the need for appropriate management to ensure scallop stocks are protected and the fishery is managed sustainably.

The spawning period for king scallops within ICES area 7d is between May and October, with peak spawning typically in summer. Although the exact pattern of spawning in any one year will vary depending on environmental conditions, scientific evidence indicates that protection for stocks against fishing activity during the summer months is likely to deliver the most benefit.

A proposal to close ICES area 7d to scallop dredging for two months has also been received from the Scallop Industry Consultation Group (SICG).

Following scientific advice, UKFAs wish to explore the option of a closure to EU and UK vessels of all lengths. This consultation runs from 9 May to 6 June 2022.

Background

Over the last five years, Cefas have undertaken king scallop dredge surveys in the English Channel (northern parts of ICES area 7d, and also 7e) to assess the biomass available to the dredge fishery and whether current fishing levels are considered sustainable. The results of the stock assessment published in 2022¹ indicate that most stock units are estimated to have been exploited above the rate associated with maximum sustainable yield (MSY) at some point over the last 5 years (Table 1).

Table 1: Harvest rate estimates for area 7d, with an MSY candidate harvest rate

Year	Harvest Rate on Dredged Portion of Stock (Dredge Survey Only, %)	Harvest Rate on Wider Stock (Incl. UWTV Survey, %)	MSY Candidate Harvest Rate (%)
2017	49.0	48.9	21.5
2018	56.1	56.0	21.5
2019*	24.4	24.3	21.5
2020*	19.5	19.5	21.5

* estimate from previous year, to be revised when 2021 international landings have been reported. Source: Assessment of king scallop stock status for selected waters around the English coast 2020/2021¹

Stock assessment data covering the last five years is considered adequate to produce sufficiently robust estimates of stock status. Therefore, available scientific evidence over this time period indicates that stocks are at risk of being overexploited. This strengthens the need for appropriate management to be maintained and increased to ensure scallop stocks are protected and the fishery is managed sustainably.

A closure of area 7d to scallop dredging between 1 August and 30 September 2022 would give protection to scallops during part of their spawning season and will safeguard some spawning potential. Measures to safeguard spawning potential are particularly crucial when exploitation levels are close to or above the MSY estimates.

The benefits of this closure in terms of stock protection are largely associated with reduced fishing pressure on stocks during the spawning season, which occurs between May and October. This allows the remaining stock a chance to spawn as well as increasing protection for juvenile scallops to grow to spawning size and reach minimum landing size before encountering scallop gear.

To provide a balanced approach between stock protection and economic factors, the UKFAs are proposing the closure to only be for two of the six months in which spawning occurs, targeted to coincide with peak spawning.

Prior to leaving the EU Common Fisheries Policy, closures to the scallop fishery were introduced to UK 15 m and over length vessels in 7d, with EU member states being responsible for managing their own fleets. This was the result of a UK-France industry agreement. In 2021 a similar call for evidence took place proposing a

¹ [Assessment of king scallop stock status for selected waters around the English coast 2020/2021 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/104444/assessment_of_king_scallop_stock_status_for_selected_waters_around_the_english_coast_2020_2021.pdf)

closure to all vessels. Following consultation, the UKFAs concluded that a closure would take place for two months, from 16 August to 4 October 2021, for UK and EU vessels over 10 m in length².

Provisional harvest rates in UK waters

Stock assessment for the northern part of 7d between 2017-2019 indicate harvest rates above the level associated with MSY, suggesting stocks have a pattern of overexploitation. The assessment for 2020 has a provisional harvest rate estimate just below the MSY rate (21.4 vs 21.5), however this is subject to change once full international landings data become available.

Cefas estimate in their assessment published in 2022¹ that a harvest rate of 21.5% of the population in a given year would be compatible with delivering MSY for this stock unit. In the absence of the ability to make a direct measurement of MSY for this stock, Cefas are relying on the use of a widely accepted, robust proxy reference point: 35% SpR.

This means fishing at a level where 35% of virgin animals can reproduce. This reproductive potential has been demonstrated to be in line with MSY principles for a range of stocks and provides a safeguard against years when spawning success is lower (e.g. due to environmental fluctuations).

Spawning in ICES area 7d

The spawning period for ICES area 7d king scallops is between May and October and individuals may be found in spawning condition throughout this period. Peak spawning is typically summer, although spawning events occur from late spring through to October sometimes with multiple events within a year. The exact pattern of spawning in any one year will vary depending on environmental conditions but scientific evidence indicates that protection for stocks against fishing activity during the summer months is likely to deliver the most benefit.

Data collection for the 2022 stock assessments is in progress, therefore biological information is still being collected to investigate potential impacts of the 2021 closure. However, most stock benefits from spawning closures would be expected to materialise as an increase in the average level of future recruitments. Even if a higher than average recruitment were observed for 2021 (and the first signals won't be available until 2023), it would be difficult to separate management benefits from natural variability for a single event.

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/call-for-evidence-ices-area-7d-king-scallop-fishery-closure>

Landings in UK waters

ICES area 7d

Figure 1 indicates that across 2021, peak king scallop landings for over 15 m length UK vessels occurred from January to April and October to November, avoiding the closure which took place from August to October. Landings from EU vessels were generally lower, peaking during July and October.

Using data from 2006 to 2021, UK vessels between 10 and 15 m fishing in ICES area 7d during August and September have taken up to 12.4% of the total annual UK scallop landings, demonstrating the capacity to fish at a relatively high level (Table 2). This suggests the 10 - 15 m sector has the capacity to impact spawning potential. However, there is considerable interannual variation, with the average proportion much lower at just over 2%.

UK vessels between 10 and 15 m and under 10 m in length generally had the lowest amount of landings, although had the highest number of vessels compared to UK and EU over 15 m vessels (Table 3).

Activity for the under 10 m sector in 7d during both the 2021 closure and the full spawning period of 2021 was at their highest levels since 2013. It is therefore possible that fishing effort in locations where only the under 10 m fleet is able to operate may have increased.

Evidence from Southern IFCA also shows that more recently the scallop fishery in the Solent has expanded in the inshore area, being targeted by more vessels, lasting for longer periods and increasing the geographic extent of harvesting. The fishery provided an alternative focus for vessels who may have typically fished for native oysters or clams over the winter period but have found themselves unable to do so as a result of temporary closures or poor water quality impacting the classifications in some areas.

English vessels across all vessel length categories fished for scallops in 7d, whilst vessels over 15 m from Scotland and the EU, including Belgium, Ireland, France and the Netherlands also had landings from 7d (Table 3).

Figure 1 indicates a high level of compliance by all vessels of 10 m and over in length, during the spawning season and in particular the closure from 16 August to 4 October 2021. However, the 2021 closure did not result in a markedly reduced fishery compared to the recent years. The effort levels expended in August to September were, although relatively low, within the bounds of previous years. In addition, the 2021 closure was only for part of the full spawning period and the effort expended over the full spawning period was above average, driven by activity in the over 15 m sector.

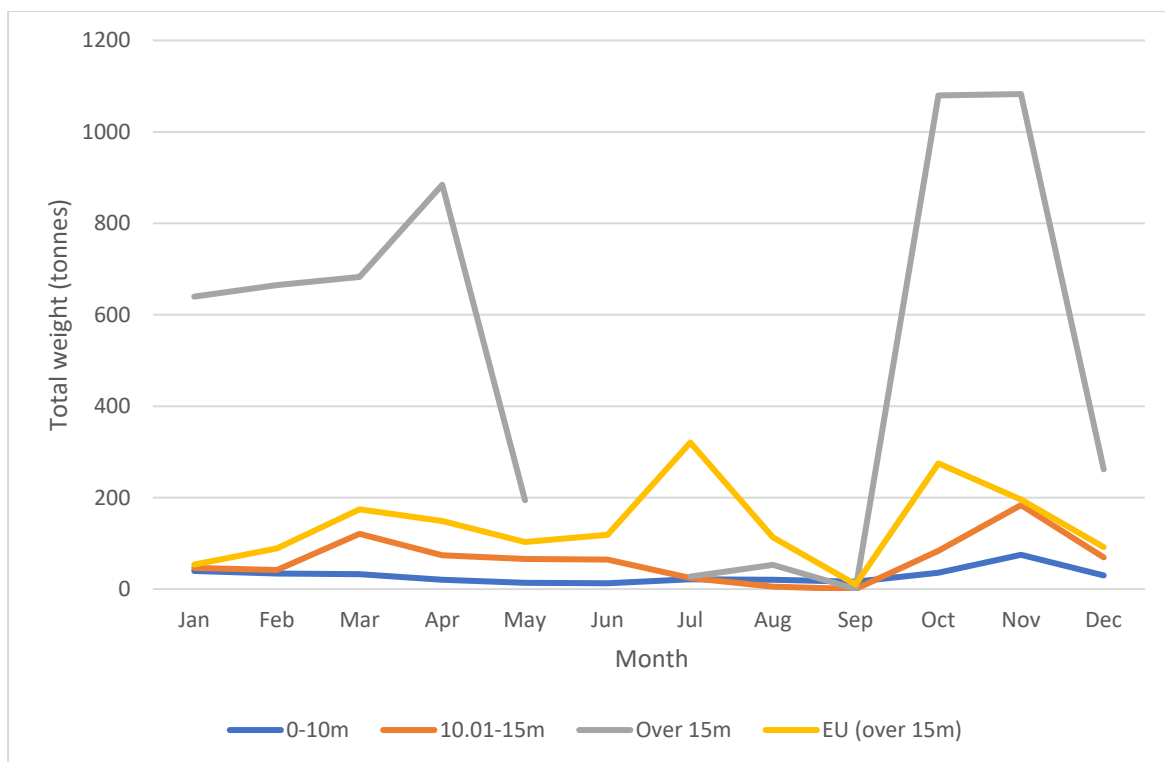


Figure 1: Total weight (tonnes) of landings of king scallops by vessels in ICES area 7d during 2021 (UK waters only). The different colours display UK vessel lengths including under 10 m vessels, 10- 15 m vessels and over 15 m vessels. EU vessels only had landings for over 15 m vessels.

Table 2: King scallop landings from August and September as a percentage of annual UK landings from ICES area 7d from 2006-2021

	Under 10 m (%)	10 – 15 m (%)	Over 15 m (%)
Average	0.16	2.2	18.2
Range	0.00 - 0.41	0.00 - 12.4	0.09 - 37.8*

* Values taken only from 2006-2012 due to closures starting in 2013

Table 3: Number of times vessels landed king scallops from ICES area 7d during 2021 (UK waters only). The number of unique vessels with landings from 7d is shown in brackets ³

Vessel length	GBE	GBS	BEL	FRA	IRL	NLD
0 - 10 m	966 (63)	-	-	-	-	-
10 - 15 m	313 (15)	-	-	-	-	-
Over 15 m	112 (7)	471 (24)	372 (42)	5 (2)	100 (4)	1 (1)

During the 2021 call for evidence, respondents raised concerns of potential displacement to the neighbouring ICES areas during the closure in 7d (see the

³ This table has been amended on 11/05/2022 to provide clarification following a stakeholder query during the call for evidence that vessel numbers seemed too high.

annex for a map of the relevant ICES areas). Therefore, landings data from the neighbouring ICES areas 7e and 4c have also been included below.

ICES area 4c

In UK waters during 2021, there were UK vessel landings of king scallops only in ICES rectangles 31F1 and 35F0. 35F0 is in the north of 4c therefore displacement from 7d is less likely (see the annex for map of the area). Landings from 31F1 are only from vessels under 10 m which were not impacted by the closure in 2021 and therefore is unlikely to be caused by displacement.

There were limited landings from EU vessels (over 15 m) in 4c. In 31F1 there were 0.02 tonnes of king scallop landings in October 2021 and in 31F2, 0.2 tonnes were landed in September 2021.

ICES area 7e

In ICES area 7e, 28E7, 29E7 and 30E7 are the ICES rectangles adjacent to 7d and therefore may be likely to receive displacement from vessels during a scallop closure in 7d. Figure 2 displays king scallop landings in UK waters from both UK and EU vessels which are over 10 m in length for the adjacent ICES rectangles. During August to October 2021 when the scallop closure was in place in 7d there was a rise in landings in 30E7, whilst landings in 28E7 and 29E7 were falling or stable.

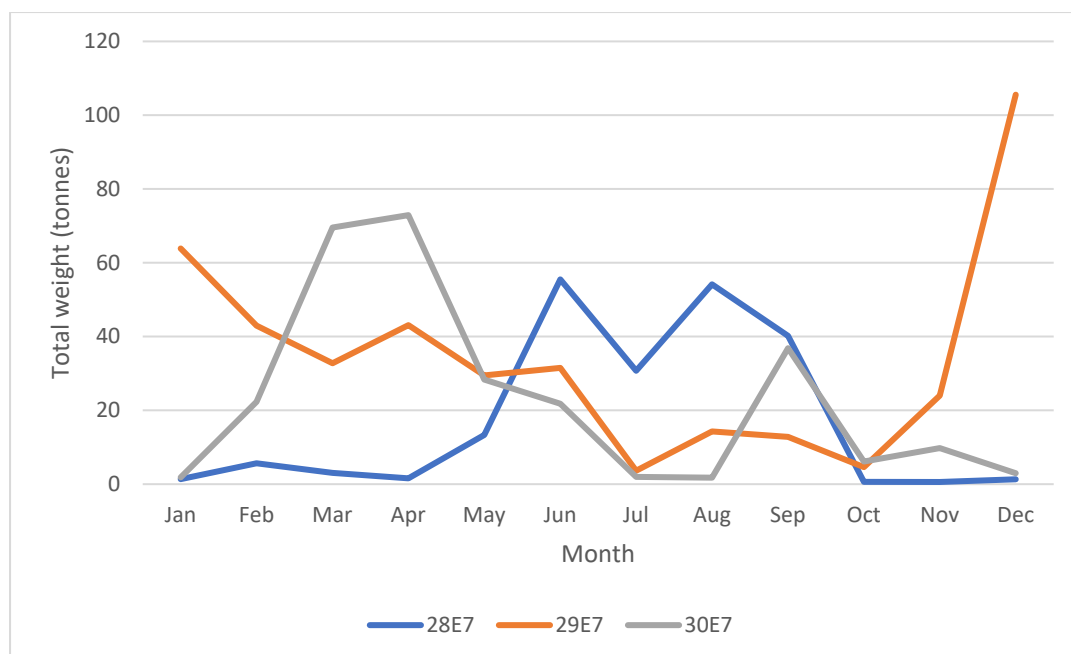


Figure 2: Landings from UK & EU vessels of king scallops in ICES area 7e during 2021 for vessels greater than 10 m in length. The different colours show landings in the ICES rectangles adjacent to ICES area 7d.

Call for evidence questions

Given the evidence above, the four UKFAs would like to seek your views on:

- 1) A closure to scallop dredging in ICES area 7d from 1 August to 30 September 2022 to all vessels.
- 2) How a closure of ICES area 7d to scallop dredging would impact you and your business, and other fisheries.
- 3) Do you think a closure in ICES area 7d would lead to displacement of fishing for scallops into other areas? If so, which areas?
- 4) Any reasoning as to why under 10 m length vessels should be exempt from the closure.
- 5) If you are a vessel owner/vessel agent or skipper: in which length group is your vessel: over 15 metres, between 10 to 15 metres, under 10 metres?
- 6) Do you have any other comments?

Please email your responses to effort@marinemanagement.org.uk or write to:

Effort Management
MMO
Lancaster House
Hampshire Court
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE4 7YH

by midnight on 6 June 2022.

In your response, please state whether you are replying on behalf of an organisation or as an individual and if you wish your response to remain confidential.

If you are replying on behalf of an organisation, please include:

- Which organisation(s)?
- What is your name and position?
- What is your email address?

We may wish to contact you about your response for further details. If you are happy for us to do this, please let us know in your response, setting out the best method (e.g. email, telephone, post) and time. We will not contact you to follow up on this call for evidence unless you provide permission. We will not share your contact details with third parties and responses made will not be shared.

Next Steps

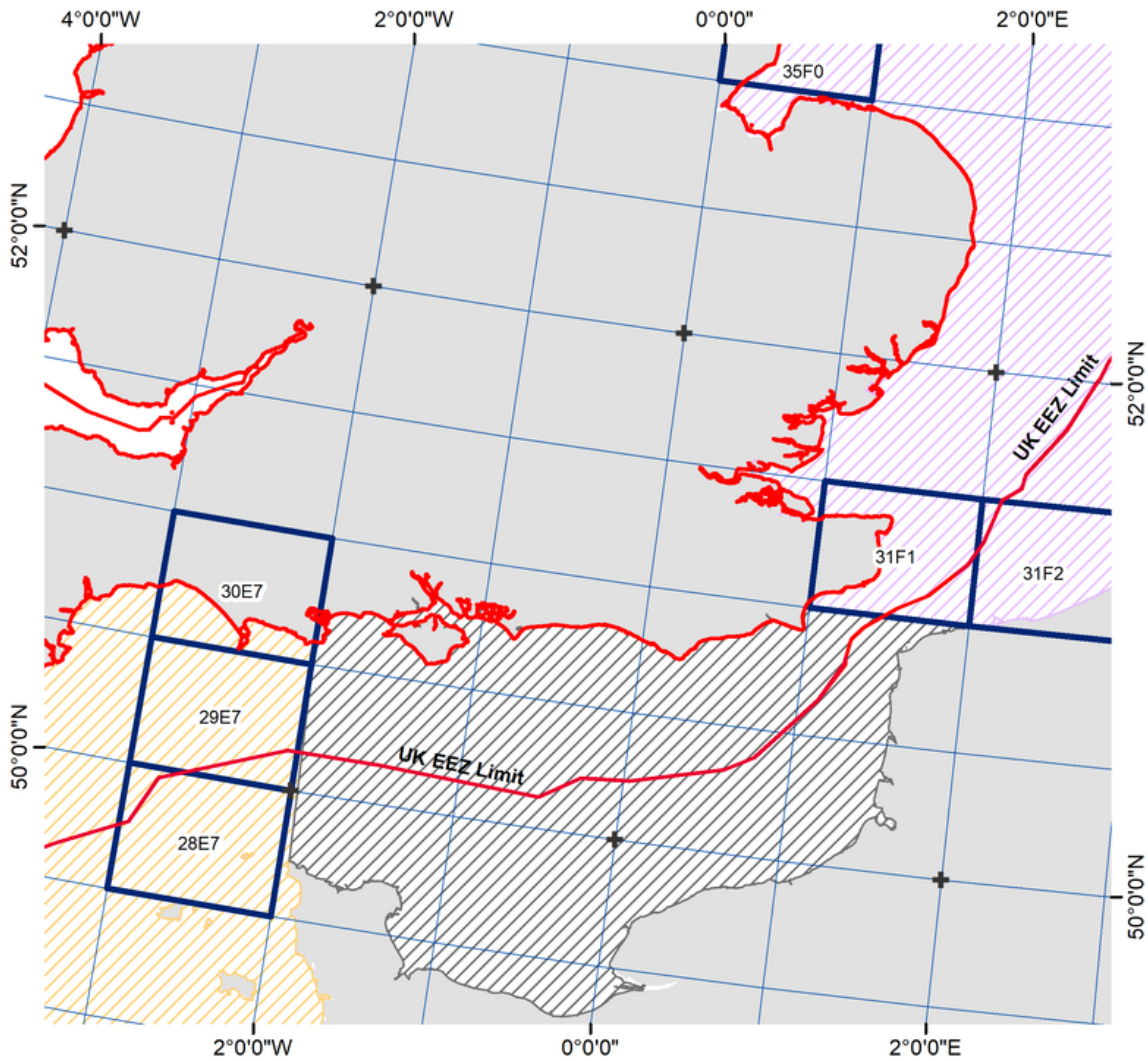
Once the consultation has closed, we will publish a summary of the responses and a decision on whether to close the king scallop fishery. If a closure will take place we will detail when and which vessels will be affected. Any closure will be enacted by a licence variation.

Annex



Marine Management Organisation

ICES Area 7d and Surrounding ICES Areas



- UK Exclusive Economic Zone
- ICES Statistical Rectangles
- ICES Area 7d
- ICES Area 7e
- ICES Area 4c



MMO Reference: 10572
 Date of Publication: 05/05/2022
 Coordinate System: ETRS 1989 LAEA
 Projection: Lambert Azimuthal Equal Area
 Datum: ETRS 1989

Not to be used for navigation
 Contains Collins Bartholomew, MMO, UKHO and ICES data
 © Collins Bartholomew, MMO and UKHO copyright and database right 2021
 © ICES Statistical Areas dataset 2015. ICES Copenhagen
 Contains public sector information licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0