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Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

# A call for evidence on a proposal for a king scallop fishery closure in ICES area VIId from mid- August to mid - October 2021



...ambitious for our seas and coasts

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## Summary

The Marine Management Organisation (MMO), acting on behalf of all four UK Fisheries Administrations (UKFAs), is seeking views on a proposal to close the ICES area VIIId king scallop (*Pectens maximus*) fishery between mid-August and mid-October 2021 to vessels of all lengths.

UK Fisheries Administrations 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 exploitation.

Stock assessments for 2017-2019 indicate harvest rates above the level associated with Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY), suggesting stocks have a pattern of overexploitation. 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 the rate is therefore quite uncertain currently. This strengthens the need for appropriate management to be increased to ensure scallop stocks are protected and the fisheries managed sustainably.

A proposal to close ICES Area VIIId to scallop dredging has also been received from the Scallop Industry Consultation Group (SICG).

Following scientific advice UKFAs wish to explore the option of a closure to all vessels regardless of length.

This consultation will run from 26 July 2021 to 8 August 2021 and is on behalf of the four UKFAs.

## Background

Over the last four years, Cefas have undertaken king scallop dredge surveys in the English Channel (Northern parts of Area 27.7d, and also 27.7e) to assess the biomass available to the dredge fishery and whether current fishing levels are considered sustainable. The data provided by the stock assessments indicate that Area VIId stocks and some stocks in VIIe (ICES Rectangles 29E6, 29E7, 30E6, 30E7) have in recent years been exploited at a rate higher than that associated with Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY).

A closure of area of VIId to scallop dredging between mid-August and mid-October 2021 would give protection to animals during part of their spawning season and should safeguard some spawning potential. Measures to safeguard spawning potential are particularly crucial when exploitation levels are close to or above the MSY estimates. The closure would therefore apply to all vessels.

The benefits of this closure in terms of stock protection are largely associated with reducing fishing pressure on stocks during the spawning season, which occurs between May – October, allowing the remaining stock a chance to spawn as well as increasing protection for juvenile scallops to grow to spawning size/ Minimum Landing Size before encountering scallop gear.

### Stock assessment data- Provisional Harvest Rates

#### *UK waters*

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Scientists estimate that a harvest rate of around 21.5% 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).

When fishing at this 35%SpR exploitation rate, each young animal has 35% of the potential produce offspring compared to an unfished situation. 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 – whole Area VIId

The spawning period for Area VIId king scallops is between May and October and individuals may be found in spawning condition throughout this period. Peak spawning is typically mid-summer, although spawning events may 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.

## 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 VIId from mid-August to mid-October 2021 to all vessels.
- 2) Do you think a closure in ICES area VIId would lead to displacement of fishing for scallops into other areas? If so, which areas?
- 3) How a closure of ICES area VIId to scallop dredging would impact you and your business, and other fisheries?
- 4) If you are a vessel owner/vessel agent or skipper: is your vessel over or under 15 metre in overall length?
- 5) Do you have any other comments?

Please email your responses to [effort@marinemanagement.org.uk](mailto:effort@marinemanagement.org.uk) by midnight on 8 August 2021.

In your response please state whether you are replying on behalf of an organisation or as a member of the public.

If you are replying on behalf of an organisation or organisations:

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

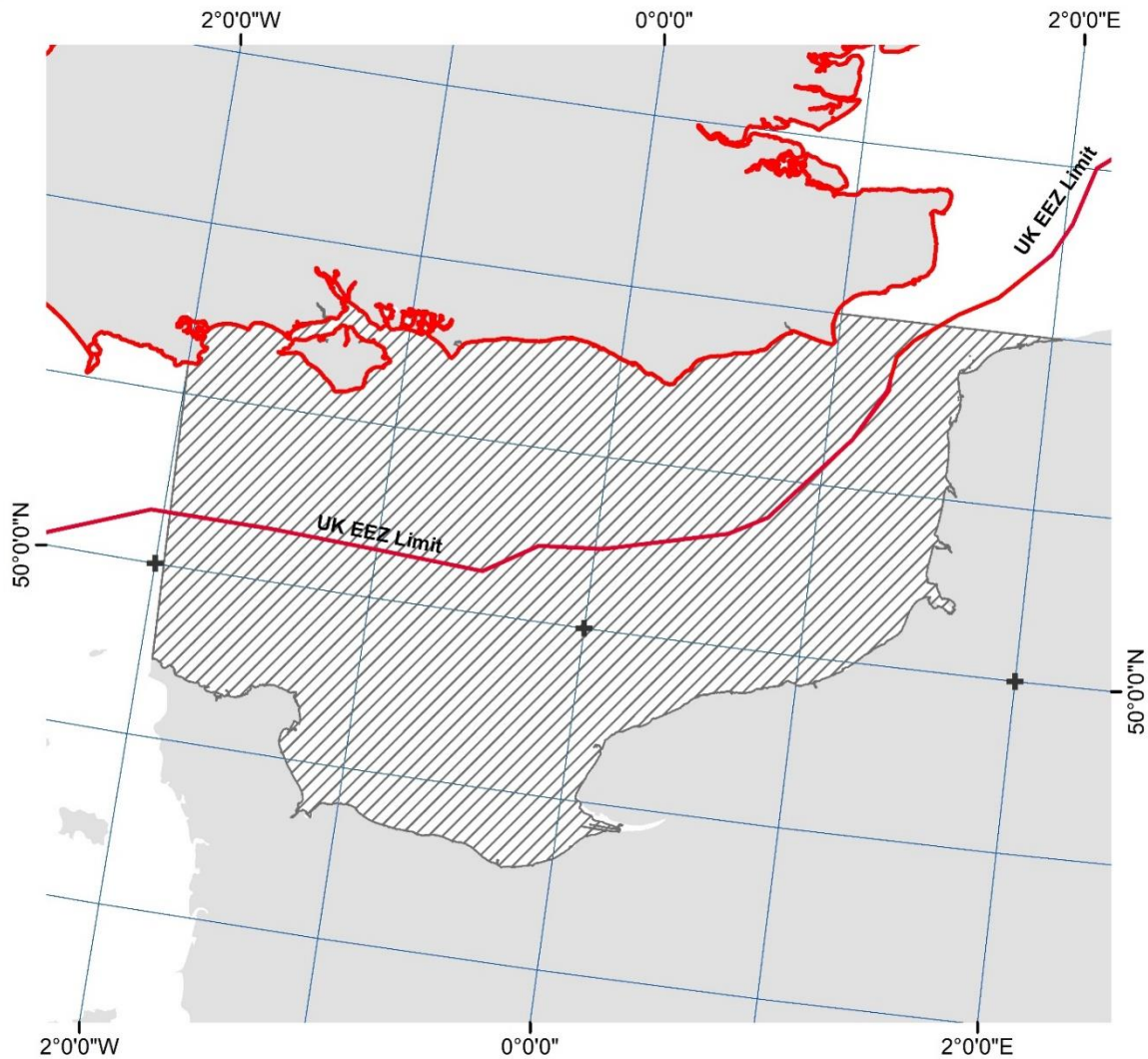
We may wish to contact you about your submission for further details. If you are happy for us to do this please let us know in your submission, setting out the best method (e.g. email, telephone, post) and time to do this. We will not contact you to follow up on this call for evidence unless you provide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



# Annex 1: Chart of ICES area VIId



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## ICES Area VIId



-  UK Exclusive Economic Zone
-  ICES Area VIId
-  ICES Statistical Rectangles



MMO Reference: 10572  
 Date of Publication: 14/07/2021  
 Coordinate System: Europe Albers  
 Equal Area Conic  
 Projection: Albers  
 Datum: European 1950

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