

# Regional Fisheries Groups NEWSLETTER

## 2023 Meetings:

NE 4b: 17 January 2023

NW 7a: 10 January 2023

S 7d: 12 January 2023

SE 4c: 19 January 2023

SW 7efg: 20 December 2022

## Introduction to the Regional Fisheries Groups (RFGs)

The RFGs are forums for industry, Defra, Cefas, MMO and IFCA to work together on a range of issues relevant to the region. They are divided into 5 regions:

[NE 4b](#) | [SE 4c](#) | [S 7d](#) | [SW 7efg](#) | [NW 7a](#)

### Who are the groups for?

Active commercial and recreational fishers that operate predominantly inside 12nm and/or are classed as Non-Sector vessels.

### What is the purpose?

To work together as a group to develop management options for the sustainable exploitation of fish stocks and highlight the priorities of stakeholders, to identify gaps in data, to develop collaborative science proposals and share knowledge.

## Grants Fisheries and Seafood Scheme (FaSS) match rates on Health & Safety funding

The NW RFG raised the disparity between the amount for grant funding available for bottom towed gear and other gear types.

Following discussions within Defra and with the HM Treasury, the change has been approved: match-funding rates for any vessel with a length of 12m or less will be raised to 80% for Health & Safety projects, regardless of the type of gear used.

## Lyme Bay Code of Conduct

At a recent steering group meeting, a Code of Conduct for sole fishing with gill nets in Lyme Bay (Beer Head to Portland) was agreed:

1. A minimum mesh size 5 inches (127mm) for gill nets targeting sole.
2. All fixed nets should be marked with a buoy showing the PLN of the vessel at both ends of the net.
3. Flags and radar reflectors are used where possible and practical to mark the location of nets.

## Additional Quota schemes in 2021 and 2022

In 2021 a small amount of the additional quota that England received from the Trade and Cooperation Agreement was provided, on application, to vessels with a capped licence. This enabled capped vessels to fish above their annual 350kg limit for quota stocks before 1 January 2022.

In 2022, on 1 August Defra temporarily lifted the 350kg quota cap from all capped vessels for the remainder of 2022. This was done to facilitate uptake of available quota and to test for any unexpected consequences of lifting the cap more permanently.

Simultaneously, the MMO opened a window for vessels with Category B & C licences to apply for access to additional quota. Over 10m vessels with Category B or C licences have a limited number of quota stocks for which they can fish.

Under this scheme, these vessels can apply for access to more opportunities for the remainder of 2022. These initiatives were inspired by requests made by the South 7d, and South East 4c RFG members.

## Regional Updates and ongoing actions: **YOU SAID**

## Regional Updates and ongoing actions: **WE DID**

### North-East (NE) 4b

- Industry in the NE were extremely concerned about the potential impact of HPMA's
  - Industry questioned the legislation for coverless trawls and lack of clarity on need for HLP
  - Industry asked for more information about MMO offshore inspections and enforcement
- ➔ At the August RFG we facilitated a conversation with the Defra HPMA team through regional hubs
  - ➔ This is still being looked at by Defra, we will keep members informed on the progress of this
  - ➔ We will be having a presentation on this at the next RFG meeting in January

### North-West (NW) 7a

- Industry raised the serious issues faced by industry in the NW - infrastructure, transportation, prices, access to markets
  - Industry raised the issues around the plaice LO
- ➔ NW initiative - Seafish, MMO & NFFO commissioned a report to investigate and make recommendations, these are currently being put into place
  - ➔ This is currently being looked at by Defra & MMO

### South-East (SE) 4c

- Industry reported seeing less sole on the ground and asked government to investigate
  - Spurdog fishery - fisherman report seeing a lot on the ground but it remains a prohibited species
  - Industry asked for in person port visits
- ➔ We commissioned an inshore survey targeting sole in 4c: 2 surveys were carried out in Aug-Sept 2022
  - ➔ We will keep industry up to date on any changes in management, as Defra make them
  - ➔ We came to visit 9 ports over 4 days, we listened & took away loads of actions we are still working through

### South (S) 7d

- Industry raised the issue and impacts of fly seining in the Channel
  - Industry raised problems with the introduction of new MCA U15 regulations
- ➔ Defra launched a consultation to gather evidence on the impact of flyseining in English waters to support sustainable fishing and reduce pressure on fish stocks
  - ➔ We invited the MCA to an RGF meeting to answer questions

### South-West (SW) 7e, f and g

- Industry in Lyme Bay raised concerns about the impact of the uplift in sole 7e quota
  - Industry questioned the reasoning behind the non retention policy of Small eyed ray in 7e - the reasons for this is political not ecological
  - Industry raised the decline in brown crab
- ➔ We ran an investigation to look into the environmental, economic and social impacts of the uplift
  - ➔ We commissioned a stock study, which found the stock was doing well & Defra are taking this to negotiations with the EU to try and get quota
  - ➔ We raised with Defra & are discussing if this can be managed from the FMP or special measures

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