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Riaghaltas na h-Alba



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Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Consultation on proposals for a king scallop fishery closure in ICES area 7d and Lyme Bay of area 7e in 2024

7 December 2023 – 14
February 2024



...ambitious for our seas and coasts

Version control

Version	Authors	Comments
V0.1	Louise Price, Sarah Bedingham, Chris Collins, Laura Lovett, Alexander Murphy	Wk 13/11/23 Draft document
V0.2	Callum Williams and Jessica Duffill Telsnig	17/11/23 quality assurance
V0.3	Tim Dixon	21/11/23 final quality check

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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 following consultation with all four UKFAs, is seeking views on proposals to close UK waters in the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) area 7d and Lyme Bay in ICES area 7e to the king scallop (*Pectens maximus*) dredge fishery in summer of 2024.

The proposed closures are to protect the stock during peak spawning in area 7d and 7e. The main spawning period for king scallops within area 7d and 7e is between May and October, with peak spawning typically in summer. Scientific evidence indicates that protection for stocks against fishing activity during the summer months is likely to deliver the most benefit.

The 2023 7d and 7e king scallop closure included mitigating potential displacement as a purpose of the closure. Due to insufficient data to verify displacement, the 2024 proposed closure is solely focused on protecting the spawning stocks.

ICES area 7d

The most recent Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (Cefas) stock assessment published in 2023 indicates that most stock units in the English

Channel, including ICES area 7d, are estimated to have been generally exploited at or marginally below the rate associated with maximum sustainable yield (MSY) over the last 6 years, with the exception of 2018 and 2021. In 2018, harvest rates were more than double MSY, this was due to lower estimates of harvestable biomass rather than a significant increase in landings. Harvest rate estimations also indicated exploitation above MSY in 2021. Initial findings in area 7d suggest the stock continues to look relatively healthy, despite stock abundance estimations having shown a continued decline from 2020 to 2022.

Lyme Bay, ICES area 7e

Scientific advice suggests the stock in Lyme Bay area of 7e has been highly exploited between 2017 and 2021, exceeding the MSY harvest rate each year, and showing a general increase in exploitation rate since 2019. The estimated harvest rate was more than three times MSY in 2018 and 2021 and more than double in 2020.

Estimated harvestable biomass in the Lyme Bay area of 7e has remained relatively stable since (and including 2018), following a decline in harvestable biomass of 51% from 2017 to 2018, therefore the closure of Lyme Bay would be a precautionary measure as based on Cefas advice given the current larval connectivity (larval import) estimated by the Cefas larval transport simulations. Simulations indicate management outside Lyme Bay may be as important as within Lyme Bay itself. However, as uncertainties exist about larval connectivity between the different assessment areas, local management measures in Lyme Bay remain important as it is unknown to what extent the stock is self-sustained.

Table 1 International landings over 12-months periods following an annual dredge survey in the stated years, and harvest rate estimates for the dredged parts of ICES divisions 27.7e,

	International Landings (tonnes)	Harvestable Biomass in Dredged Area (tonnes)	Harvest Rate on Dredged Portion of Stock (%)	Harvest Rate Range (%)	
2017	1450	4888	29.7	27.2	30.4
2018	2192	2381	92.1	85.2	98.9
2019	1284	3252	39.5	37.4	44.3
2020	2004	3632	55.2	50.8	61.7
2021	2004*	2500	80.2	70.6	81.5

Other areas in ICES area 7e

Harvest rates of 7e offshore and 7e inshore (not including Lyme Bay) were relatively low compared with MSY in 2017–21, suggesting the area may be able to support additional effort, through a proposed seasonal closure would further the likelihood of this by protecting the stocks during the peak spawning period. Analysis of landings data has indicated a spatial change in fishing activity in 2023, with increased landings observed southwest of Cornwall. However, the harvest rate continued to remain below MSY.

2023 closure

In 2022 the EU introduced a seasonal closure in EU waters of area 7d and some of 7e (North Finistère) to protect king scallop stocks, prohibiting UK and EU dredge vessels. The closures occurred from the 15 May to 30 September 2023 (extended to 15 October in the Baie de Seine area).

There were concerns of potential displacement from a 7d EU and UK closure. Potential scenarios were presented as part of the 2023 Call for Evidence document. It is at present difficult to identify displacement specifically due to the closure compared with annual variation in seasonal fishing patterns. However, a temporal shift in activity associated with increased landings in the months leading up to the closure in May for UK and EU vessels was identified.

2024 proposals

Scientific advice and landings data have been considered to support measures to protect spawning stock in 7d and 7e and as a precautionary approach as it's unknown how much longer the stock will be self-sufficient within the Lyme Bay area. Following this, MMO following consultation with UKFAs, wish to explore closure options to EU and UK vessels. This consultation runs from 7 December 2023 to 14 February 2024.

The options for proposed 7d king scallop dredge fishery closures are:

- 15 May to 30 September 2024 – a closure period that aligns with the EU closure of 7d to the king scallop dredge fishery.
- 1 July and 30 September 2024 – the same closure period as 2023.
- No closure within 7d within any time period.

The closure would apply to EU and UK scallop dredge vessels and will consider excluding the 10 m and under vessels from the closure due to an investigation into previous years landing revealed that the risk to the fishery could be balanced with potential adverse economic impact that the closure would have on the smaller vessel fleet. See annex for a map of ICES area 7d.

The proposed 7e king scallop dredge fishery closure is:

- A closure of Lyme Bay (ICES rectangles 30E6, 30E7, 29E6 and 29E7) aligning to the agreed closure length in ICES area 7d.
- No closure of Lyme Bay within any time period.

The closure would apply to EU and UK scallop dredge vessels and will consider excluding the 12 m and under vessels. See annex (

Figure 9) for a map of Lyme Bay and ICES area 7e.

As there has been a period of relative stability in king scallop stocks in ICES area 7d and to acknowledge the industry's need for consistency in future decisions, MMO is considering applying the proposed closure in ICES area 7d for 2024 and 2025. If a management option was to remain in place for two years, any closure would remain under review and the data and scientific evidence would be analysed in the same manner as in previous years. Should analysis indicate significant changes during that period re-consultation would be required.

Any decision made does not set a precedent for any potential future closures and best available evidence will be annually reviewed to make sure the current status remains. Future decisions will be made using best available scientific evidence, with input from a cross section of the scallop industry and alongside the development of the king scallop fisheries management plan.

Consultation questions

Given the supporting evidence, MMO would like to seek your views on:

- 1) A proposed closure prohibiting UK and EU scallop dredge fishing for vessels over 10 m in length in UK waters of ICES area 7d, for the following time periods:
 - a) From 15 May to 30 September 2024
 - b) From 1 July to 30 September 2024
 - c) No closure within any time period
- 2) A proposed closure prohibiting UK and EU scallop dredge fishing for vessels over 12 m in length in Lyme Bay area of 7e (ICES rectangles 30E6, 30E7, 29E6 and 29E7) that aligns to the dates of the proposed 7d closure, or no closure of 7d within any time period.
- 3) How would these proposed closures of ICES area 7d and Lyme Bay area of 7e to scallop dredging impact you and your business?
- 4) Would you like to see the chosen management option for ICES area 7d remain in place for a period of two years?
- 5) Do you have any other comments?

- 6) If you are a vessel owner/vessel agent or skipper: in which length group is your vessel; 10 m and under, 10.01 m – 12 m, 12.01 m – 15 m and the over 15 m fleet?

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

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

By midnight on 14 February 2024

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

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 after this call for evidence unless you provide permission.

Next Steps

Once the consultation has closed, MMO will publish a summary of the responses and a decision on the scope of the proposed king scallop dredge fishery closure for 2024. MMO will detail when, where and which vessels will be affected. Any closure will be enacted by a licence variation.

Supporting information

Background to 7d and 7e king scallop closures

Prior to leaving the EU Common Fisheries Policy, closures to the king scallop fishery in all 7d waters were introduced annually to all vessels over 15 m, with each member state responsible for managing their fleet. As a result of a UK-France industry agreement the UK and French fishing authorities applied similar measures in their waters.

UK closures

Following the UK's exit from the EU, the UK-France industry agreement ceased. In 2021 and 2022 a similar call for evidence was undertaken by MMO, proposing a closure to all vessels. Based on the evidence received, and the need for UKFAs to introduce a balanced approach between stock protection and economic impacts, the king scallop dredge fishery was closed in UK waters of 7d from 16 August to 3 October in 2021, from 1 August to 30 September in 2022, and from 1 July to 30 September 2023. The closures applied to all UK and EU vessels in except the under 10 m fleet in UK waters.

The 10 m and under fleet were exempted after investigation into previous years landing data revealed that the risk to the fishery could be balanced with potential adverse economic impact that the closure would have on the smaller vessel fleet.

In 2023 the king scallop fishery was closed in Lyme Bay area of 7e (rectangles 29E6, 29E7, 30E6 and 30E7) in conjunction with the 7d closure from the 1 July to 30 September 2023. The closure applied to all UK and EU vessels in UK waters that were over 12 m in length.

EU closures

In 2022 the EU administered a seasonal closure through a new Regulation¹ that closes EU 7d and parts of 7e to protect king scallop mature stocks during the spawning season. These closures were first implemented in 2023, prohibiting fishing for king scallop with dredges for all vessels, including UK, in EU waters and mirror previous closures introduced via French legislation:

- In 7d from 15 May – 30 September
- In the North Finistère area in 7e from 15 May – 30 September
- In the Baie de Seine area in 7d from 15 May – 15 October

UK inshore closures and management measures

The inshore areas (0 – 6 nautical miles) are also subject to the Inshore Fisheries and Conversation Authorities (IFCA) regulation and control measures. Table 2 is a summary of the IFCA byelaws that restrict the scallop dredge fishery.

Table 2: King scallop dredge fishery closures in 7d and 7e exacted through IFCA byelaws

IFCA	District extent 0-6nm	ICES areas	Management measures	Closure timings	Number of months of a complete district closure
Cornwall	Cornwall county, the River Tamar to Marsland Mouth	7e & 7f	Gear restrictions All year round, diurnal closure 19:00 – 07:00	In 4 Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in the district all year around	0
Devon and Severn	Marsland Mouth to Gloucester weir. River Tamar to Lyme Regis	7e & 7f	Gear restrictions. All year round, diurnal closure 19:00 – 07:00	1 July - 1 October	3
Southern	Lyme Regis to Chichester Harbour	7e & 7d	Gear restrictions. All year round, diurnal closure 19:00 – 07:00 (except the Solent, diurnal closure 06:00 – 18:00).	1 April - 1 October	0
Sussex	Chichester Harbour to Rye	7d	Gear restrictions	0 – 3 nm all year round. 3 – 6nm 1 June to 31 October	12 inside 3 nm 5 outside 3 nm

¹ [EUR-Lex - 32022R1357 - EN - EUR-Lex \(europa.eu\)](#)

Kent and Essex	Rye to Harwich	7d & 4c	Gear restrictions	In former Sussex district 0 – 3 nm closed all year 3 – 6 nm 1 June to 31 October. In district MPAs	12- inside 3 nm 5- outside 3 nm
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Stock assessment

For the last seven years (2017-2023) the Centre for environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (Cefas) have undertaken king scallop dredge surveys in the English Channel (northern parts of ICES area 7d and 7e) to assess the biomass available to the dredge fishery and whether current fishing levels are considered sustainable². Data collected in 2022 is currently being processed and will be available in April 2024, therefore evidence provided below relates to the most recent stock assessment published in 2023² using data up to 2021.

ICES area 7d

Cefas estimate a harvest rate of 23.4% of the population in a given year would be compatible with delivering maximum sustainable yield (MSY) for the 7d North stock unit. Results of the stock assessment between 2017-2021 indicate that most stock units in area 7d are estimated to have been exploited at or below the 23.4% harvest rate associated with MSY since 2017 (Table 3). In 2018 the MSY harvest rate was exceeded by more than double. This was due to a low estimate of harvestable biomass rather than as a result of a large increase in landings. The assessment for 2021 has a provisional harvest rate estimate just above the MSY rate (24.1% vs 23.4%), however this is subject to change once full international landings data become available.

Table 3. Harvest rate estimates for area 7d North, with an MSY harvest rate of 23.4%². Orange shading represents harvest rates exceeding MSY rate. * Estimate from previous year, to be revised when 2022 international landings have been reported.

Year	Harvest Rate on Dredged Portion of Stock (%) Area 7d
2017	21.4
2018	53.1
2019	21.7
2020	20.2
2021*	24.1

Preliminary analysis from data collected in 2022 indicate that the stock in area 7d North continues to look relatively healthy, despite there being an indication of general decline in harvestable biomass between 2020-22. This may be reflected in the perception of fishing pressure status as the latest provisional harvest rate estimated for 2021 was just above the MSY rate (24.1% vs 23.4%).

ICES area 7e

² [Assessment of king scallop stock status for selected waters around the English coast 2021/2022 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

In area 7e there is a contrast between high exploitation levels above MSY in the inshore area (Lyme Bay) and lower exploitation rates in the offshore area (Table 44). Cefas estimate a harvest rate MSY reference point of 24.4% for the Lyme Bay 7e stock unit. Analysis of the landings data in Lyme Bay 7e between 2017-2021 have indicated that the stock has been estimated to be continually exploited above the 24.4% MSY harvest rate, with exceptionally high levels of exploitation observed in years 2018, 2020 and 2021 (Table 43). However, despite such high levels of exploitation scientific advice suggests that the harvestable biomass is relatively stable, although there has been a continued general decline observed from 2017-2021.

The offshore stock in area 7e has much lower exploitation rates below MSY and maybe in a better position to support increased fishing activity. However, there remains some uncertainty around the exploitation status in 7e offshore.

Table 4: Harvest rate estimates for area 7e Lyme Bay and offshore, with an MSY harvest rate 24.4% and 26.5% respectively. Orange shading represents harvest rates greater than MSY rate. * Estimate from previous year, to be revised when 2022 international landings have been reported

Year	Harvest Rate on Dredged Portion of Stock (%) Area 7e Lyme Bay	Harvest Rate on Dredged Portion of Stock (%) Area 7e offshore
2017	29.7	6.9
2018	92.1	15.2
2019	39.5	12.9
2020	55.2	7.6
2021*	80.2	18.5

Spawning in ICES area 7d and 7e

The main spawning period for ICES area 7d and 7e 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 protecting stocks against fishing activity during the summer months is likely to deliver the most rewarding benefits.

The benefits of area closure in terms of stock protection are largely associated with reducing fishing pressure on stocks during the spawning season. This allows the stock to be left undisturbed as mature individuals spend energy on spawning, as well as increasing protection for juvenile scallops to grow to spawning size/ minimum landing size before encountering scallop gear.

A closure period that included the early summer months would also be beneficial for the reduction of environmental impacts from dredging; in particular, the removal of benthic organisms (hydrozoans and bryozoans) that scallop larvae use to settle on during metamorphosis.

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, 2022 and 2023 it would be difficult to separate management benefits from natural variability for a single event.

King scallop landings in UK waters

ICES area 7d

In 2022 most landings occurred during spring and autumn, with reduced fishing activity from all vessels during the early summer months and in particular the closure from 1 August to 30 September 2023.

In 2023 area 7d saw an overall decline in landings thus far of 15%. There was also a temporal change in fishing activity, with increased landings during January and February (Figure 2). The closure between July to September saw greatly reduced fishing effort for all vessel sizes.

The increase in landings during January and February 2023 is driven by the UK fleet, with an increase in landings over 400 t compared to 2022. This increase in February is also seen in 7e, which is not usually the focus of scallop activity as the stock is inferior quality. From weather records there was high pressure and settled conditions and a low mean average wind speed may have allowed increased fishing activity.

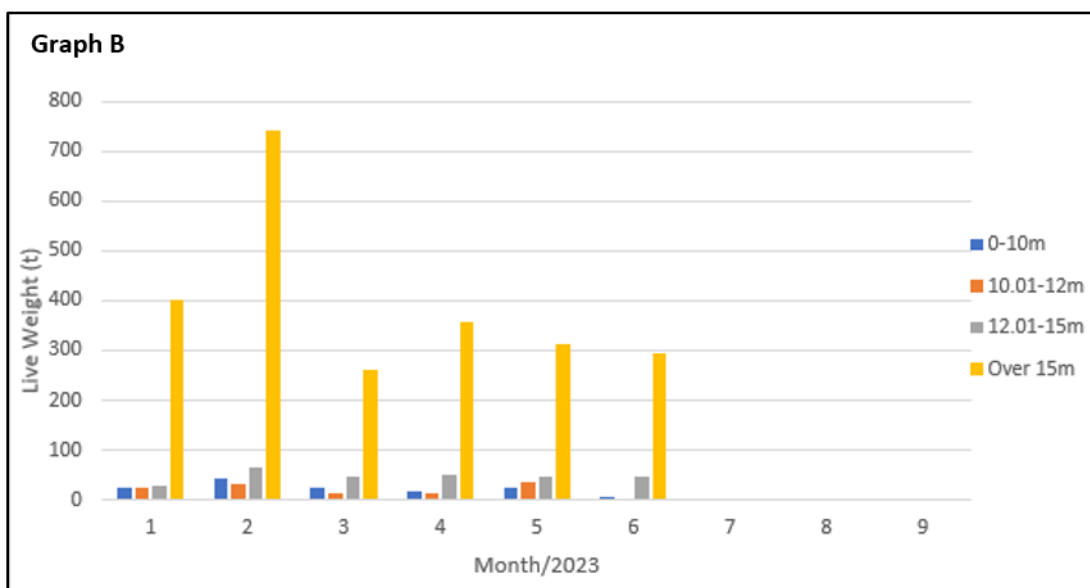
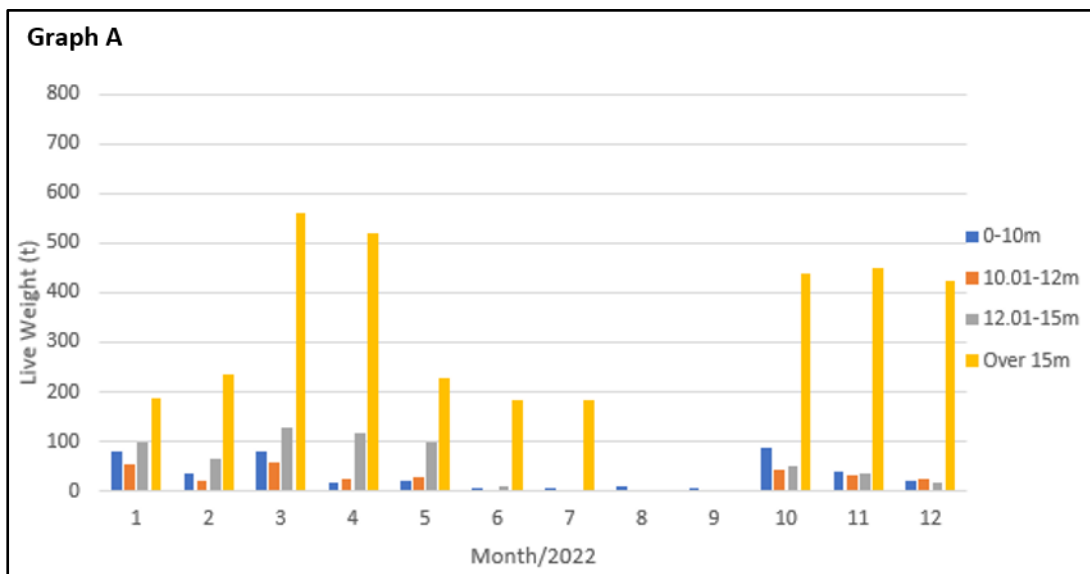


Figure 1: Total weight tonnes (t) of landings of king scallops by UK vessels in ICES area 7d (UK waters only) during 2022 (Graph A) and 2023 (Graph B) by month. The different colours display UK vessel length fleet sectors.

For both years the majority of landings were dominated by the over 15 m vessels. During 2023 vessels under 12 m reported the lowest landings for every month (so far). The largest reductions in landings by vessel fleet sector was seen in the 10 m and under fleet, with landings just over 700 t in 2022 and 434 t in 2023. In both years the sector was exempt from the closure, although landed quantities in the summer months were very low, with 14 t landed in the 2022 closure period and 0.2 t landed in the 2023 closure period.

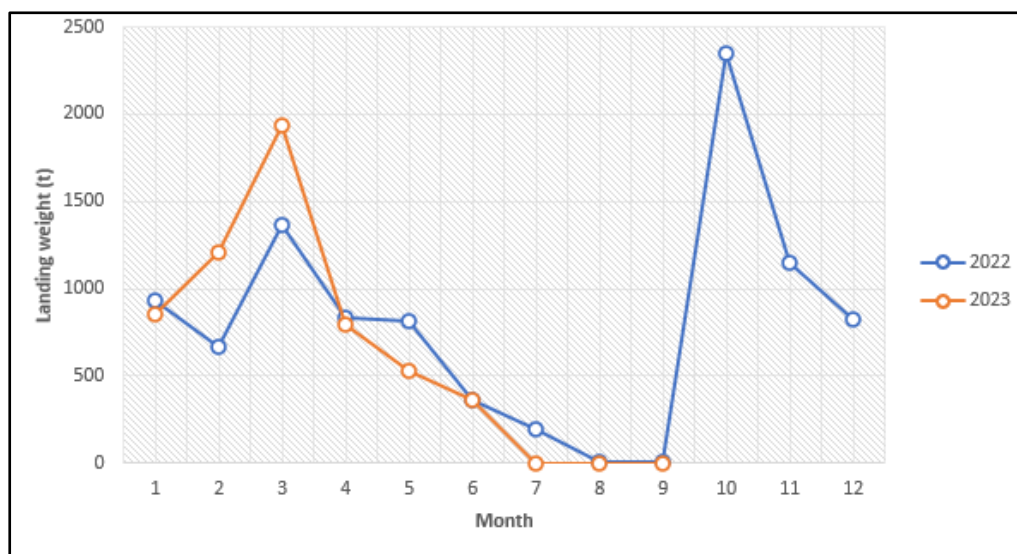


Figure 2: Total king scallop landings (t) in ICES area 7d from the UK and EU fleet in 2022 and 2023

Table 5: The number of vessel trips landing king scallops (vessel numbers in brackets) using all gear types, in 7d waters from January to June 2022 and 2023

7d, Jan - Jun	GBE, GBW & CI		GBS		EU	
	2022	2023	2022	2023	2022	2023
Fleet size						
10m and under	110 (42)	105 (44)	0	0	0	0
10.01-12m	20 (5)	23 (5)	5 (1)	0	0	0
12.01-15m	64 (10)	28 (6)	0	0	0	1 (1)
15m +	59 (7)	93 (9)	118 (12)	159 (15)	425 (43)	422 (46)

Table 6: The number of vessel trips landing king scallops (vessel numbers in brackets) using all gear types, in 7d waters from July to October 2022 and 2023. Please note that the 7d king scallop closure in 2022 was from 1 August to 30 September.

7d Jul - Oct	GBE, GBW & CI		GBS		EU	
	2022	2023	2022	2023	2022	2023
Fleet size						
10m and under	32 (25)	14 (9)	0	0	0	0
10.01-12m	6 (2)	7 (2)	0	0	0	0
12.01-15m	2 (2)	5 (2)	0	0	0	0

15m +	5 (3)	0 (0)	10 (5)	0 (0)	39 (15)	49 (19)
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Table 6 shows the number of vessels working in 7d remained relatively stable during the first six months across 2022 and 2023. The 10 m and under English, Welsh and crown dependencies and over 15 m Scottish and EU vessels generally conducted the greatest number of trips.

During July to October 2022 and 2023, there is an expected decrease in number of trips and vessels working in the area (Table 6). Please note both tables include data from vessels that are not directly targeting king scallop but catching as a bycatch.

There was one EU 15m + vessel that targeted scallops in UK 7d after the EU closure in 2023 and landed 31 t. The vessel in question worked in 7d UK and 7d EU before the EU closure period in 2022 and 2023.

ICES area 7e

Table 7 and Table 8 shows the number of vessels involved in fishing activity in 7e remained generally consistent over the two years. The number of trips in July – October 2023 generally decreased across the sectors compared to 2022, however it is unsure whether this is related to the closure or other factors such as weather.

Table 7: The number of 7e vessel trips landing king scallops (vessel numbers in brackets), all gear types, all waters, January to June 2022 and 2023

7e Jan- Jun	GBE, GBW & CI		GBS		EU	
Fleet size	2022	2023	2022	2023	2022	2023
u10	194 (56)	204 (66)	0	0	0	0
10.01-12m	126 (24)	110 (20)	7 (1)	0	0	0
12.01-15m	202 (28)	238 (30)	0	0	0	0
15m +	511 (43)	599 (51)	54 (12)	35 (10)	134 (23)	133 (28)

Table 8: The number of 7e vessel trips landing king scallops (vessel numbers in brackets), all gear types, all waters, July to October 2022 and 2023. Please note that there was no Lyme Bay 7e king scallop closure in 2022.

7e, Jul - Oct	GBE, GBW & CI		GBS		EU	
Fleet size	2022	2023	2022	2023	2022	2023
u10	120(53)	102 (48)	0	0	0	0
10.01-12m	61 (16)	45 (14)	4 (1)	0	0	0
12.01-15m	141 (26)	102 (26)	0	0	0	0
15m +	302 (44)	238 (48)	167 (20)	99 (14)	72 (19)	50 (18)

Lyme Bay

Figure 3 and Figure 4 show king scallop landings in the Lyme Bay area (ICES rectangles 29E6, 29E7, 30E6 and 30E7) across 2022 and 2023. During 2022 there was a peak in landings from the over 15 m fleet during June to September. This was

not reflected as much by other fleet sectors, with peaks in landings for 10 – 15 m vessels occurring during January, October and November, and landings for under 10 m vessels being relatively consistent across the year.

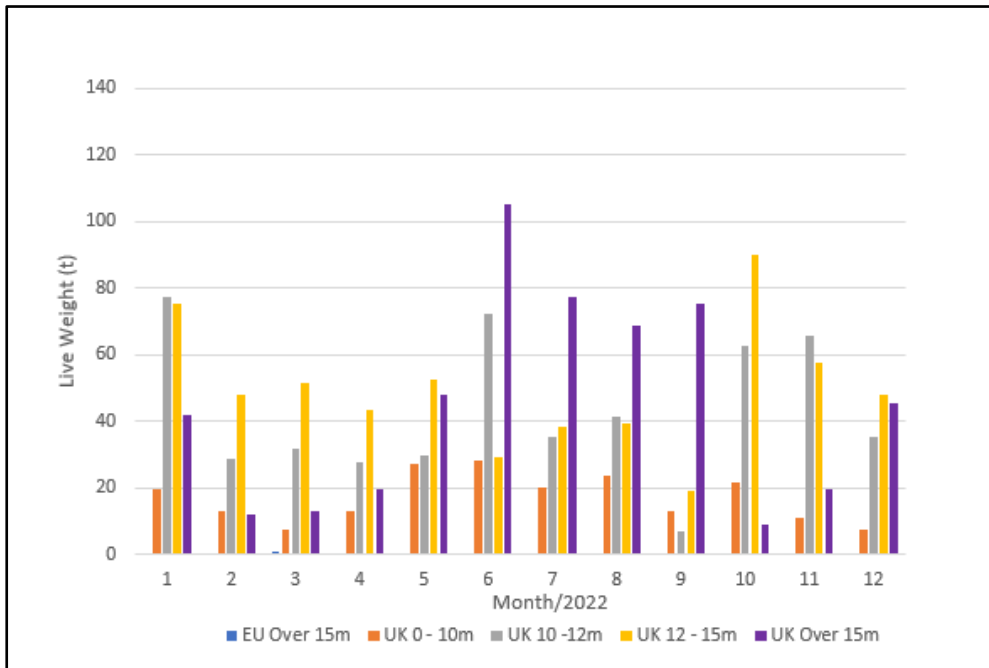


Figure 3: King scallop landings (t) in Lyme Bay area of 7e (ICES rectangles 29E6, 29E7, 30E6 and 30E7) during 2022. Please note there was no Lyme Bay scallop closure in 2022

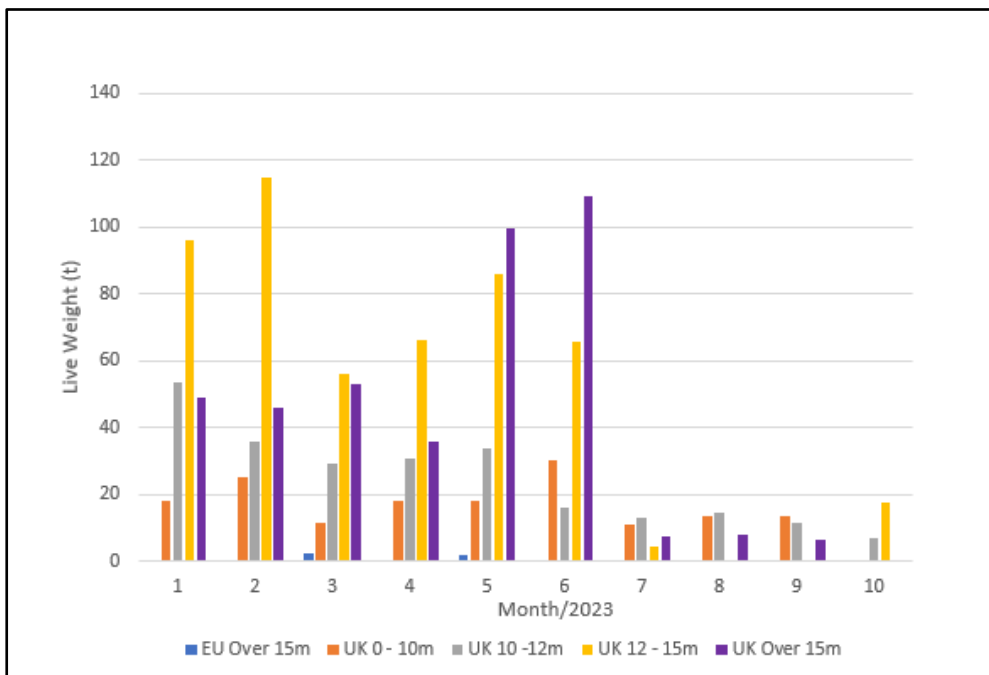


Figure 4: King scallop landings (t) in Lyme Bay area of 7e (ICES rectangles 29E6, 29E7, 30E6 and 30E7) during 2023

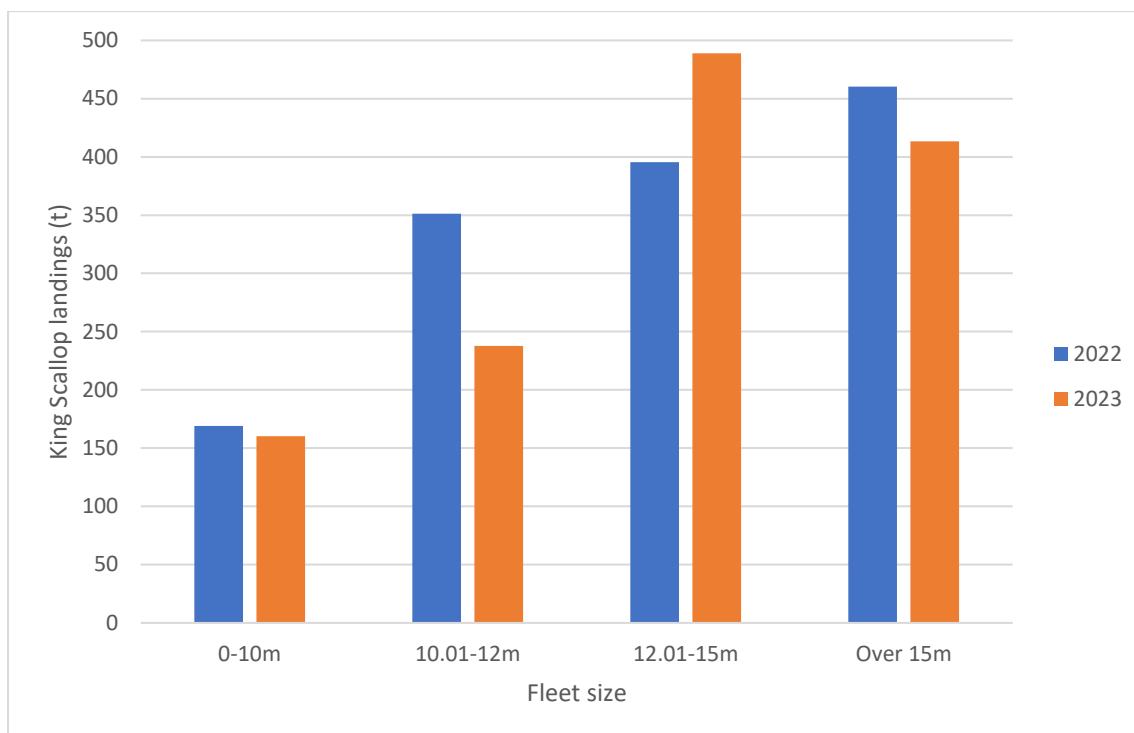


Figure 5: A comparison of the Lyme Bay king scallop landings (t) from 2022 and 2023 (January to October) by fleet size

During 2023 Lyme Bay area was closed from 1 July to 30 September 2023 to all vessels over 12 m dredging for king scallops. There is shift in behaviour with 12 – 15 m vessels generally having increased landings during the first six months of the year and was generally concentrated into the first three months of 2023. The increase in landings from the 12 – 15 m fleet can be partially explained by an increase in fleet size of 28% in 7e and 50% in Lyme Bay for this fleet sector. February also had strong landings throughout 7e and may be partially due to the good weather in that month in the South of England. A shift in behaviour was also shown by the over 15 m vessels, with landings peaking during May and June in the two offshore ICES rectangle in Lyme Bay.

Figure 5 shows the overall quantity of removals from Lyme Bay in 2022 and 2023 were comparable and the closure had a nominal effect on overall effort or quantities landed during the first nine months of the year. The Lyme Bay closure had a nominal effect on the nomadic fleet as they tend to use fishing grounds away from the area. Four nomadic vessels took approximately 6t of king scallop from Lyme Bay ICES rectangles 29E6 and 29E7 in July and August 2022.

There were minimal landings from the EU fleet in Lyme Bay area, with 4 t in 2023 and 0.6 t during the closure, by EU beam trawl and otter trawl fleet as a bycatch.

ICES area 7e excluding Lyme Bay

Figure 6 and Figure 7 shows king scallop landings in UK waters from UK and EU vessels in ICES area 7e excluding Lyme Bay area during 2022 and 2023. There were notable peaks of king scallop landings from the UK over 15 m fleet from June to September in both years. The increased landings in the summer months were observed across all fleet sectors in both 2022 and 2023. This trend of increased

summer landings naturally occurs as 7e and the Channel Islands scallop fisheries produce high yields in the summer and offer good scallop fishing opportunities for all fleets. There is an overall reduction in landings in ICES area 7e which is also comparable to 7d.

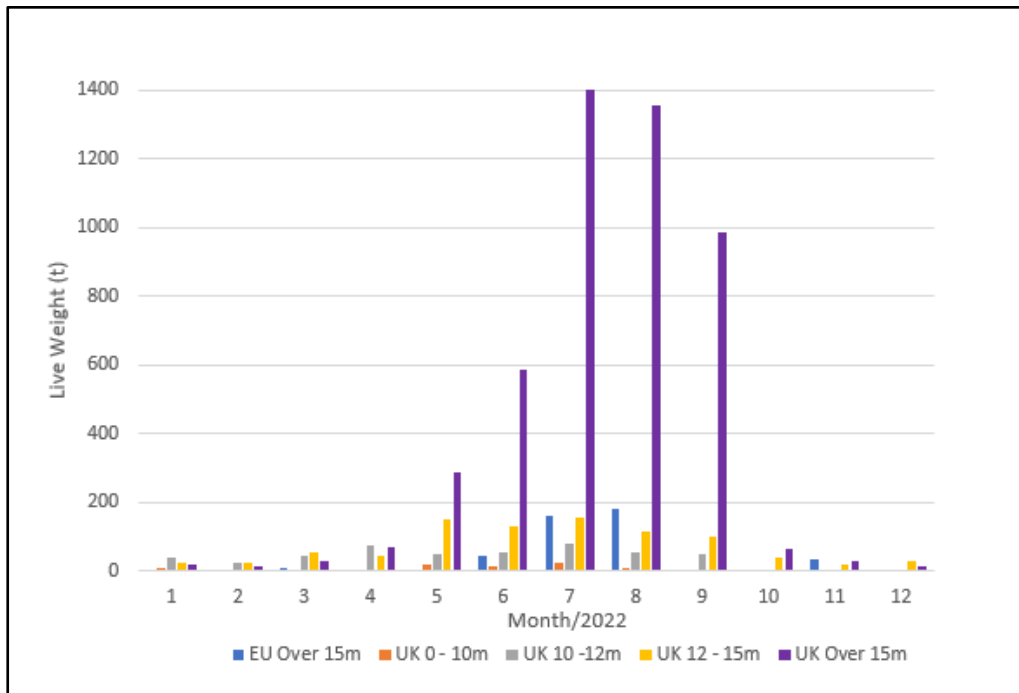


Figure 6: King scallop landings (t) in ICES area 7e excluding Lyme Bay (ICES rectangle 29E6, 29E7, 30E6 and 30E7) in 2022 by vessel sector and month

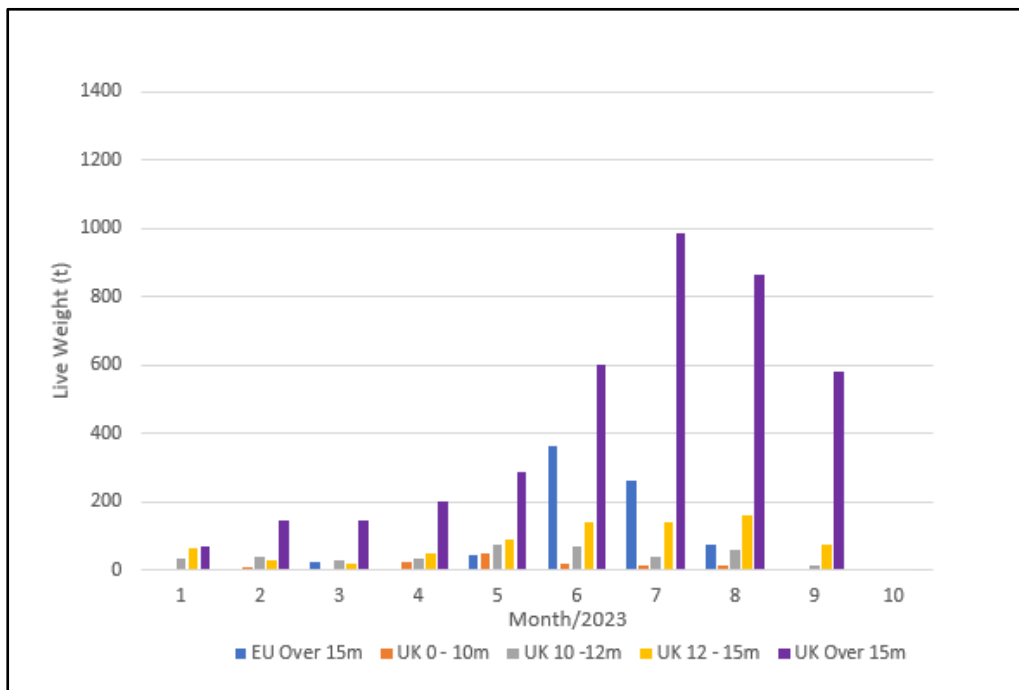


Figure 7: King scallop landings (t) in ICES area 7e excluding Lyme Bay (ICES rectangle 29E6, 29E7, 30E6 and 30E7) in 2023 by vessel sector and month

Potential displacement

In [2023 Call for Evidence](#) document there was a modelled scenario for displacement for the suggested closure periods. The modelling was based on a worst-case scenario and suggested that 7d UK water would experience a 4.8% increase in effort from 7d EU and 7e would experience a 15% increase in effort from the closure 1 July – 30 September.

At present there is insufficient data to verify the displacement from the 7d closure. Landing and effort data indicates that there has been a temporal shift in activity associated with increased landings in the months before the closure, with increases from both UK and EU fleets in their own waters before the EU closure in May.

During the 2023 consultation there were concerns raised regarding the change of effort and fishing activity that would be caused by the closures. There were concerns that fishing effort would be forced westward along the south coast of Cornwall and around the Channel Islands.

Channel Islands

The main fishing grounds in the Channel Islands are ICES rectangle 28E6 and 28E7, it should be noted that the mid channel potting boxes occupy both rectangles, the mid channel potting boxes are a voluntary agreement to exclude bottom towed gear from those areas in the summer months as the grounds have been identified as a favoured summer site for the female edible crabs.

The Channel Islands landings data has shown the largest decrease in landings from 2022 to 2023 and fundamentally underpins the downward landing trend of the entire 7e area.

In ICES rectangles 28E6 and 28E7 there is comparable levels of effort over the two years. The yield in 28E6 in 2022 was 0.88 t landed for each day of fishing activity, this fell to 0.62 t in 2023. However, effort and yield in the neighbouring 28E7 were comparable.

South coast of Cornwall

One of the concerns raised during the 2022 consultation was that vessel activity would move westwards in ICES rectangles 28e3, 28e4, and 28e5. There has been a small increase in overall effort for those three rectangles from 1473 days in 2022 to 1665 days in 2023. However, the yield per days fishing has increase from 0.34 t / fishing day to 0.6t landed for each fishing day.

Mid Channel potting boxes

During the 2023 closure concerns were raised by the static gear crab fleet that the closure might result in displacement of effort to the western Channel (7e), which contains 'mid-Channel blocks' where a voluntary agreement prohibits the use of mobile gear (Annex Figure 10). Displacement to these productive crab grounds could potentially result in gear conflict between mobile and static fishers. However, electronic monitoring data from 2023 suggests that these 'mid-Channel blocks' were generally avoided by displaced vessels and the voluntary gear agreement was thus

upheld. It should be noted that local vessels displaced from Lyme Bay were observed fishing at the edges of these 'mid-Channel blocks'.

Annex

Figure 8: Map of ICES area 7d

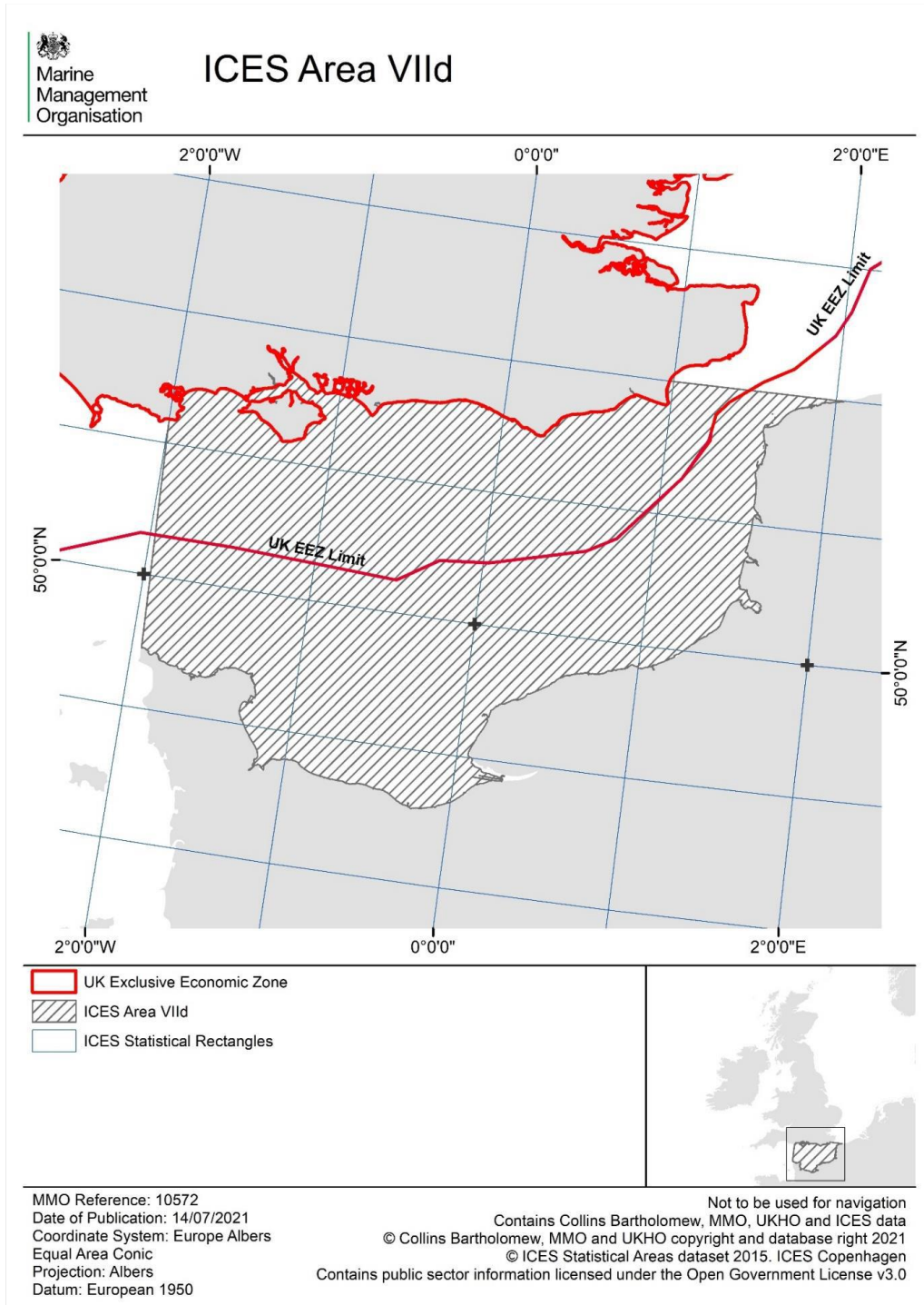


Figure 9: Map of Lyme Bay in ICES area 7e (defined in this context as sub-rectangles 30E6, 30E7, 29E6 and 29E7)

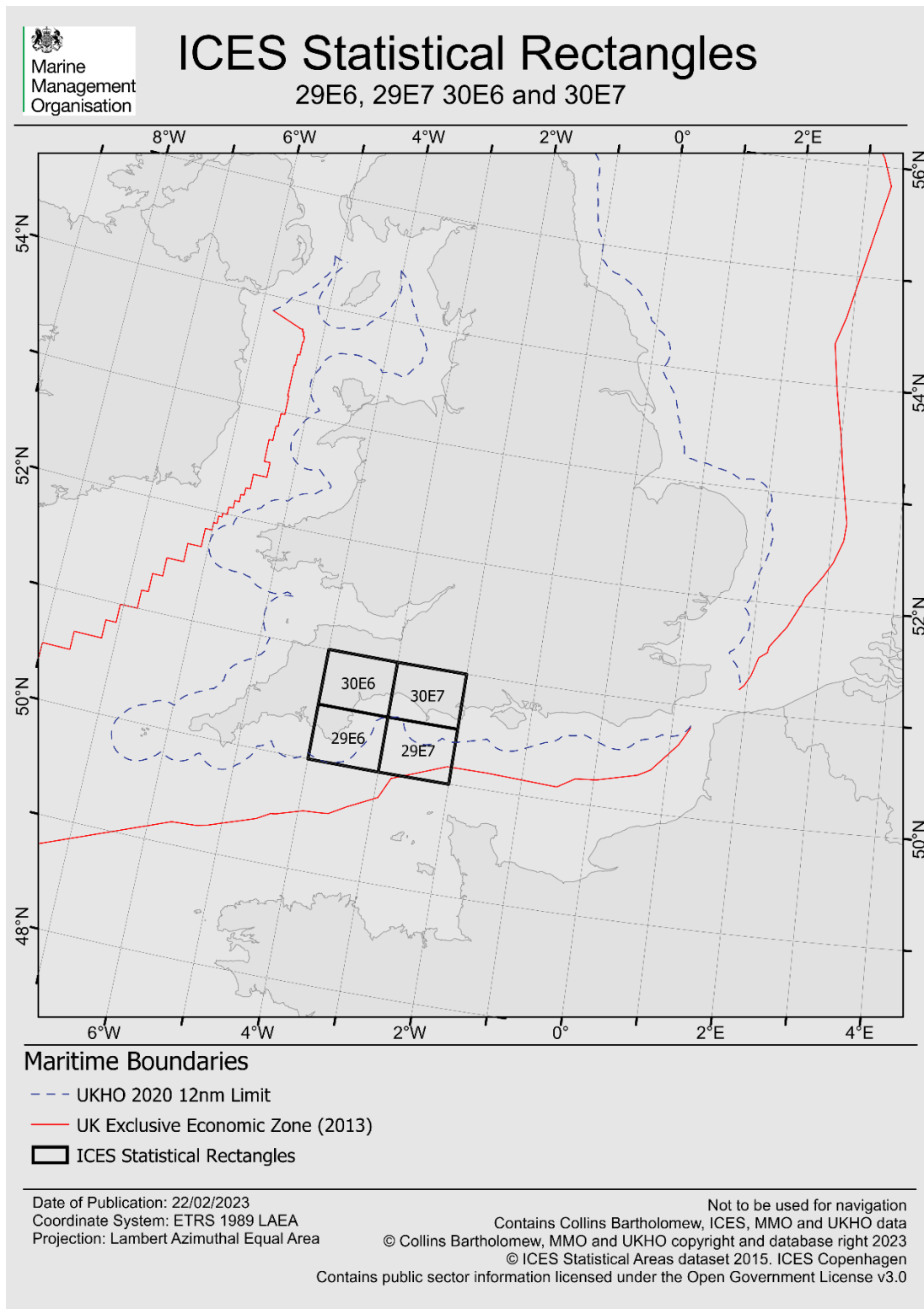


Figure 10: Midchannel potting agreement chart A and B for 2023

