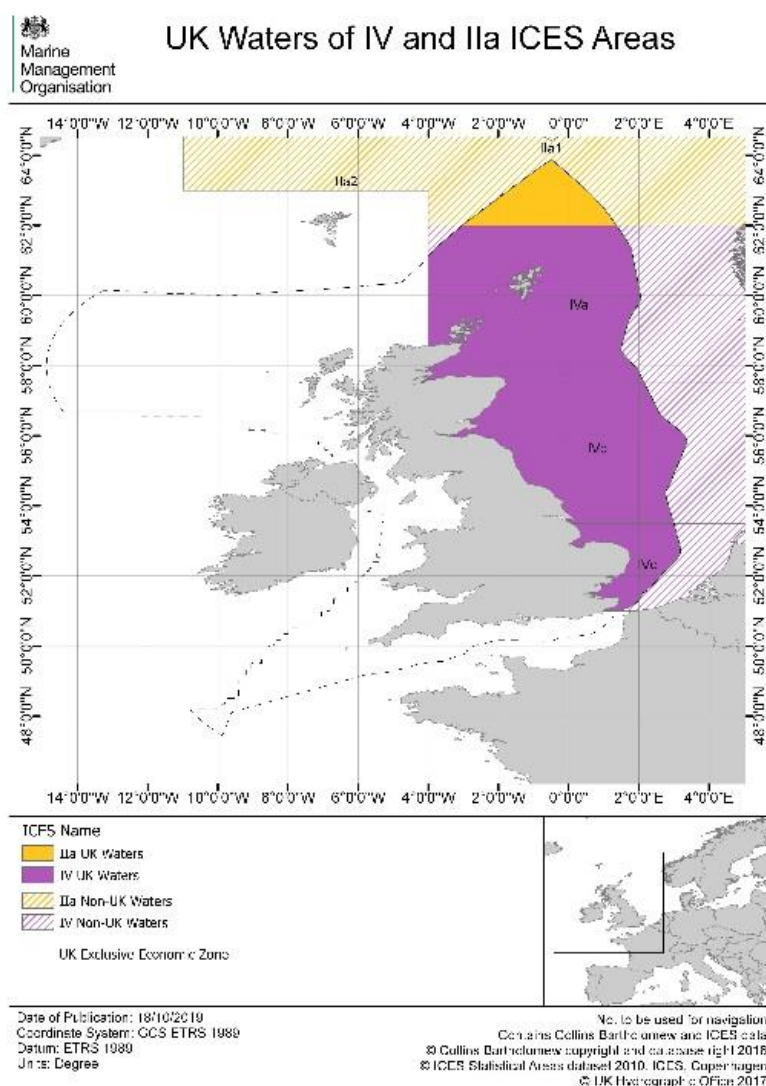




# Fishing gear requirements and Landing Obligation exemptions. Updated January 2025

**Applicable to the Nephrops fishery in UK  
waters of the North Sea**





## Introduction

To ensure you are accessing the latest guidance please check <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/fisheries-management-landing-obligation>

The guidance explains the technical rules to Nephrops Vessels in UK waters of the North Sea in ICES Areas IIa and IV and summarises which Landing Obligation exemptions are available to you.

This document needs to be read in conjunction with the Landing Obligation overview guidance document which explains the general rules.

When operating in EU waters please refer to the EC rules on discarding [https://ec.europa.eu/oceans-and-fisheries/fisheries/rules/discarding-fisheries\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/oceans-and-fisheries/fisheries/rules/discarding-fisheries_en)

## General fishing gear rules:

All mesh sizes given in this document are minimum sizes. You can choose to use a larger mesh than that stated.

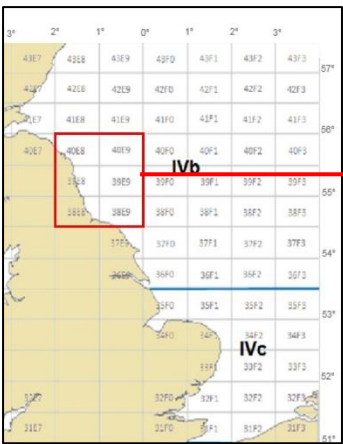
- 8mm maximum for single twine cod-ends. (Further single twine restrictions apply in Farne Deep (5mm))
- 5mm maximum for double twine thickness
- The baseline mesh size in this area is now a 120mm cod-end and this must be used where catches exceed 20% of cod haddock and saithe combined.
- If you have a landed catch of less than 20% of cod, haddock and saithe combined, then you may use a mesh size below 120mm as specified below in Table 1:
- 80-119mm cod-ends must have the square mesh panel fully fitted within 18m of cod-line.
- Cod ends must be sewn into net
- Equal number of meshes in top and bottom panels
- ≥80mm cod-ends stretched length of cod-end and extension piece ≤36m



## Gear selectivity requirements

All mesh sizes specified are the minimum. **You may use a separator trawl with the mesh size combination.**

**Table 1:** Standard gears that you must use

ICES Area	Standard gears
 <p>Farne Deep: ICES rectangles: 38E8, 38E9, 39E8, 39E9, 40E8 and 40E9</p>	<p>Single rig trawls – 90mm cod-end (using single twine of 5mm). Twin rig trawls – 95mm cod-end (fishing inside 12nm prohibited) <b>and</b> one of:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>120mm square mesh panel</li> <li>Sorting grid with maximum bar spacing of 35mm</li> </ol> <p><b>See licence condition for full details.</b></p>
<p>Outside the Farne Deep restriction area.</p>	<p>80mm cod-end <b>and</b> one of:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>120mm square mesh panel</li> <li>Sorting grid with maximum bar spacing of 35mm</li> </ol> <p><b>Fishing Vessels</b> working North of 53°N using a cod-end of less than 95mm can only use single rig</p>

## Landing Obligation exemptions

In the table below is a brief summary of exemptions from the Landing Obligation for these fisheries which allow you to discard fish. All quantities of fish discarded under the Landing Obligation must be recorded in your logbook but will not come off your quota.

You must ensure that the following rules are complied with:

- All catches of quota species must be kept on board, landed and counted against quota, except where the exemptions listed below apply.
- All catches and discards must be recorded in your logbook.
- Any fish returned to the sea under the exemptions described below must be kept in good condition in order to maximise their survival chances. This includes keeping them wet, handling them carefully and releasing them promptly.

**Survival exemptions** - allow you to discard fish under certain conditions based on the likelihood of a fish being able to survive being caught and returned to the sea. You are permitted to discard certain species of fish provided you comply with the conditions specified in the table below.



**De minimis exemptions** - allows a small percentage of the total catch of certain species to be discarded because it is difficult to completely avoid unwanted catches. It is important that discards are recorded in your logbook. *De minimis* exemptions may be withdrawn where discard levels are too high.

Species you can discard	UK ICES Area	Exemption Type	Conditions
Skates and Rays	Ila and IV	Survival	No Conditions
Nephrops	Ila and IV	De Minimis	Cod-end mesh size of 80mm to 99mm.
Whiting below the minimum size of 27cm	IV	<i>De Minimis</i>	Cod-end mesh size of 80mm to 99mm.
Cod below the minimum size of 35cm	IVc	<i>De Minimis</i>	Cod-end mesh size of 80mm to 99mm.
Plaice below the minimum size of 27cm	IV	<i>De Minimis</i>	Cod-end mesh size of 80mm to 99mm. Use of Separator Trawl (SepNep*) mandatory. ( <i>Note IVb derogation below</i> )
Sprat, Sandeel, Norway pout and Blue whiting	IV	<i>De Minimis</i>	Minimum cod-end mesh size of 80mm. Otter trawls, Pair trawls and Seines

\* 'SepNep' means an Otter Trawl where:

- the net is separated horizontally by a panel which separates the trawl into two cod-ends. The mesh size of the separation panel must be 105mm or less.
- the upper cod-end has a minimum mesh size of 120mm and is fitted with a separation panel
- the lower cod-end has a mesh size in the range 80mm to 99mm
- an optional selection grid with a bar spacing of 17mm or larger may be added. However, it must be constructed so as to allow small Nephrops (*Nephrops norvegicus*) to escape.
- **IVb SepNep derogation** - In United Kingdom waters of ICES division IVb the uppermost cod-end may be constructed with square meshes of at least 80mm