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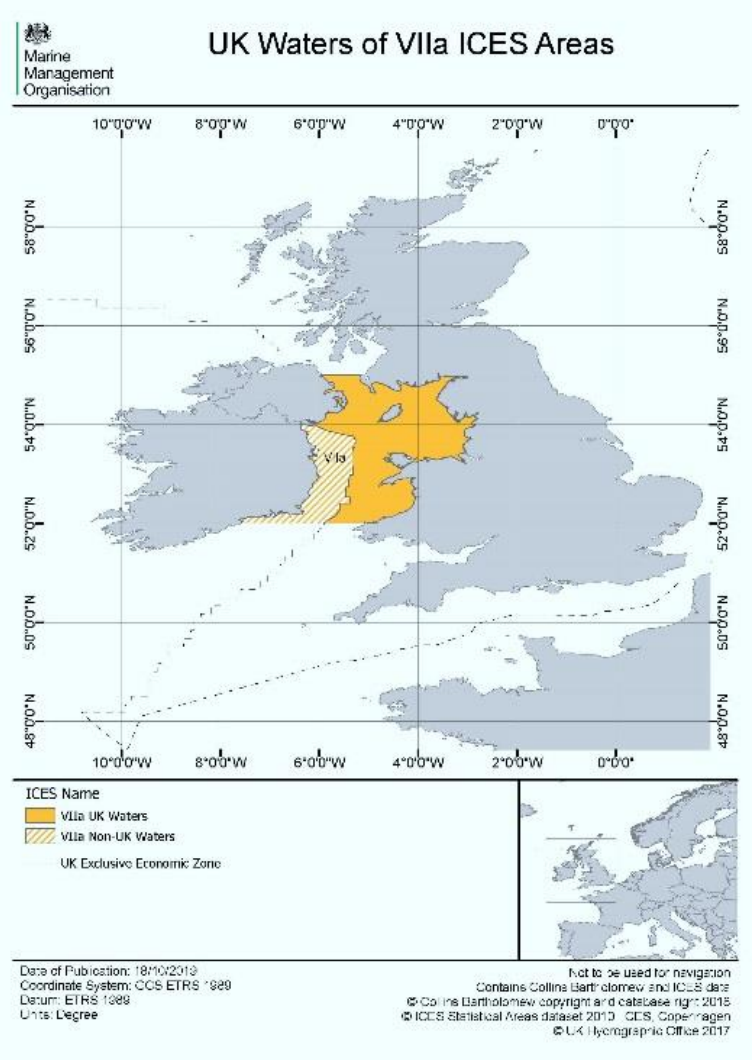
Marine Management Organisation

Fishing gear requirements and Landing Obligation exemptions. Updated January 2025

Applicable to the Nephrops Fishery in the UK Irish Sea



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Introduction

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

The guidance explains rules on which fishing gear you should be using in the Irish Sea and summarises which Landing Obligation exemptions are available to you.

This guidance is for all sizes of fishing vessel (including those under 10 metres). It does not cover IFCA byelaws – please consult your local IFCA for further information.

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

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.

Gear selectivity requirements under bycatch thresholds

All mesh sizes specified are the minimum.

Table 1: Standard gears that you must use

Fishery	Fishing Gear Options
Fisheries where catches of Nephrops exceed 5% of the total catch weight.	**You must use one of the gear options listed below** 1) 70mm cod-end (single rig) or 80mm (multiple rig) and SELTRA Panel**. 2) 70mm cod-end (single rig) or 80mm (multiple rig) and sorting grid with 35mm bar spacing or 80mm (multiple rig) and CEFAS Netgrid** 3) 70mm cod-end (single rig) or 80mm (multiple rig) and Flip-flap trawl that meets the defined specification. 4) 70mm cod-end (single rig) or 80mm* (multiple rig) **and a** 300mm square mesh panel (for fishing vessels of 12m or more LOA). **Or** 200mm square mesh panel (for fishing vessels under 12m LOA). 5) Dual cod-end with uppermost cod-end constructed with T90 mesh of at least 90mm and fitted with a separation panel with a maximum mesh size of 300mm

** See Terminology on pages 5-7

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UK 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	VI and VII	Survival	No Conditions
Nephrops	VII	Survival	Cod-end mesh size equal to or greater than 70mm
Megrim – below MCRS	VII	*De Minimis*	Cod-end mesh size of 70-99mm

See gear design terminology on pages 5 to 7.

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Terminology

The Seltra Panel[1] means a selectivity device which:

- consists of a top panel of at least 270mm mesh size (diamond mesh) placed in a four-panel section and mounted with a joining ratio of three meshes of 90mm to one mesh of 270mm, or of a top panel of at least 140mm mesh size (square mesh)
- is at least 3 metres long and is positioned no more than 4 metres from the cod line
- is the full width of the top sheet of the trawl (i.e., from selvedge to selvedge)

CEFAS Net Grid (Illustration on page 6)

Defined as a Net Grid selectivity device developed by The Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science for catches of Nephrops (*Nephrops norvegicus*) in the Irish Sea.

The Net Grid comprises a wall of netting within the trawl that creates a physical barrier to whitefish while allowing the passage of Nephrops through to the cod end.

Specification:

1. The net grid must be situated between the cod end and the existing square mesh panel.
2. The net grid must be fixed within a four-panel box section (“the box section”), which must be inserted into the two-panel trawl.
3. The net grid must be positioned at an incline, at the upper end of which, on the top of the box section, there must be a triangular fish escape hole, the base of which must be 28 meshes wide and formed by cutting along the bar from the outer ends till the sides meet.
4. The netting barrier must be laced to the top and both sides of the box section.
5. The lower end of the netting barrier must be laced to the bottom of the box section for 300mm from the relevant selvedge (each bottom outside corner) towards the centre.
6. The net grid must be constructed of not more than 99mm mesh of twisted twine and attached in a square mesh orientation in parallel with the box section.
7. The escape hole is a triangular opening with a flat apex cut in the top sheet of the trawl which allows the escape of fish too large to through the net grid.

[1] Refer to: COMMISSION DELEGATED REGULATION (EU) 2018/2034

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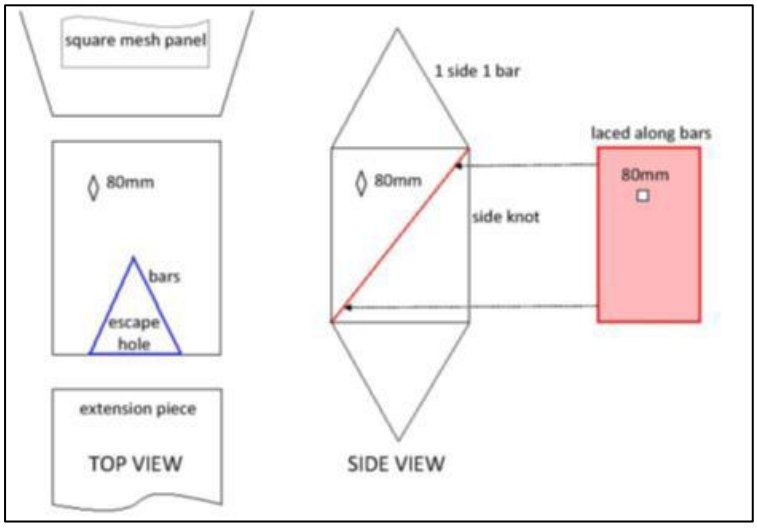
8. The escape hole is cut 12 meshes from each corner where the net grid is joined to the top panel of the box section (all bar cut) and extends along the top sheet towards the headline into a triangle, leaving five meshes across at its apex.
9. The escape hole should then be strengthened with nylon twine, pulled tight to form a triangle.



CEFAS Net Grid

Flip Flap Trawl

The Flip-Flap trawl comprises a trawl with large mesh sections to provide for whitefish escape along with a flexible grid that is intended to create a physical barrier to whitefish, especially cod, whilst allowing the passage of Nephrops through to the cod end.

Specifications:

1) All top wing netting must be made of diamond mesh netting of at least 160mm mesh size.

2) The top sheet netting panel must be made of diamond mesh netting of at least 160mm mesh size. It must extend across the full width of the trawl and extend towards the rear of the net for at least 8 metres (stretched length).

3) The internal Flip-Flap ‘netting’ Grid (FFG):
   - must be made from square mesh netting of no more than 200mm mesh size and must be positioned no more than 500mm from the rearmost meshes of

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the end tapered section has a twine thickness (in the flip flap netting and in attachment to the main body of the net) of no less than 4mm single strand.
- must be no less than 8 open mesh bars across by 10 open mesh bars deep
- must have the top half 8 x 5 bar meshes attached to the top netting section between selvedges length for length
- may have the bottom half 8 x 5 bar meshes left unattached across the trawls lower netting section but must have lead-line (or similar) of weight no less than 1 kg/m attached around the edges of its full length (selectivity can be increased by attaching the bottom half as well and in that case weights are not required)
- must have an unblocked fish outlet (with clean meshes all the way around) cut out of the trawls top sheet netting immediately ahead of the FFG
- must have an opening width of the posterior side of the fish outlet no less than 26mm x 80mm diamond meshes (or equivalent) across and cut out to a tip in the forward direction along mesh bars

4) In addition, a top sheet square mesh panel (SMP) made from square mesh netting of at least 200mm mesh size must be placed within the end tapered section:
   - the SMP must be no less than 3 metres long
   - the SMP must have no less than 12 open mesh bars across its width
   - the rearmost meshes of the SMP must be no more than 0.5 metres from the forward tip of the unblocked fish outlet