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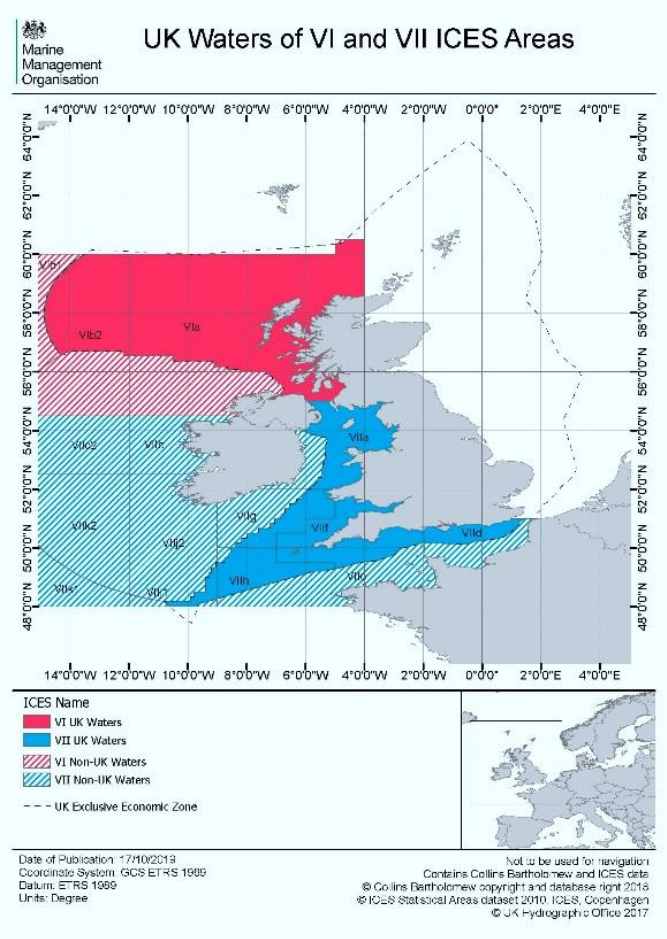
Marine Management Organisation

Fishing gear requirements and Landing Obligation exemptions. Updated January 2025

Applicable to Gill, Trammel and Drift net fishing in UK waters of North-Western Waters



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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

This document should be read in conjunction with the Landing Obligation overview guidance document which explains the general rules. This document provides guidance on the exemptions specific to specific to UK section of the North-Western Waters.

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.

- The baseline mesh size in this area is now a 120mm mesh
- If fishing for Anglerfish, a 220mm mesh must be used
- The baseline mesh size in this area is now a 120mm 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.

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Gear selectivity requirements

All mesh sizes specified are the minimum.

Table 1: Standard gears that you must use - (Further restrictions may apply in BSA or Celtic Sea Boxes)

Fishery	ICES Area	Mesh size
Pollack or Hake	VIId, VIIe	110mm mesh
Flatfish or non-TAC species	Whole area (excluding VIId)	100mm mesh
Flatfish or non-TAC species	VIId	90mm mesh
Whiting, dab and bass (subject to annual bass conservation measures)	Whole area (excluding VIId)	100mm mesh
Whiting, dab and bass (subject to annual bass conservation measures)	VIId	90mm mesh
Small pelagic	Whole area	50mm mesh**
Red mullet	Whole area	50mm mesh**

** 71—89 mm prohibited in some areas for UK vessels - SI 1284/1989

Pinger requirements

You must fit and use a device that meets the legal technical requirements and can be used by UK fishing vessels. If your vessel is 12 metres or over and use Bottom Set, Gill or Entangling nets please refer to the relevant guidance:
Reduce dolphin and porpoise by-catch - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

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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 (applicable to)
Skates and Rays	VI and VII	Survival	Gill, Trammel and Drift Nets
Plaice (PLE)	VIId to VIIg	Survival	Trammel Nets
Dover Sole (SOL)	VIId to VIIg	*De minimis*	Gill and Trammel Nets