



Marine
Management
Organisation

Consultation for a king scallop fishery closure in ICES area 7d & 7e in 2026 and 2027



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Summary

Marine Management Organisation (MMO) is 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.

MMO is seeking views on proposals to protect the king scallop (*Pectens maximus*) stocks in UK waters of International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) area 7d and 7e in summer of both 2026 and 2027.

In past years a closure has been implemented in ICES area 7d and Lyme Bay area of ICES area 7e which focused on providing increased protection for spawning stock, facilitating juvenile recruitment and supporting future viability and sustainability of the stock.

Due to concerns regarding stock health in the 7e offshore areas MMO is proposing an option to extend the extent of 2026 and 2027 management to support spawning scallop stocks in the entirety of ICES areas 7e and 7d.

Evidence from stakeholders, intelligence reports as well as observations of declining landings in the 7e offshore areas have informed the decision to consider a change in extent for 2026 and 2027 management. This change in approach has been further considered through discussions with key stakeholders prior to seeking wider views on the proposed management option.

Scientific Evidence

MMO is unable to present the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (Cefas) stock assessment published in 2024 to indicate stock biomass and exploitation levels as figures for 2022 onwards are currently being revised.

Cefas statement on the assessment: The Cefas King Scallop stock assessment in selected English waters includes a calculation of harvestable biomass, the biomass of King Scallops of landing size, within assigned beds. The bed outlines are assigned on five-year cycles and are based on analysis of VMS data of vessels >12meters (m). The beds are divided between six assessment areas, an assessment of exploitation is informed by using landings data for each assessment area and comparing this to a Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) proxy. The assessment is currently undergoing a quality check of the analysis, with the intention of publishing an updated time series in spring 2026. The current assessment indicates a notable decrease in harvestable biomass in the assessment area 7e Offshore.

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 15m, 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.

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 greatest benefit.

The benefits of an 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 a given year it would be difficult to separate management benefits from natural variability for a single event.

ICES area 7d

ICES area 7d was closed to all vessels over 10m for dredging scallops from 1 July to 30 September in 2023, 15 May to 30 September in 2024 and 1 July to 30 September in 2025.

Landings and exploitation are generally considered to have been stable in recent years.

Lyme Bay

Lyme Bay area of 7e (ICES rectangles 29E6, 29E7, 30E6 and 30E7) was closed to all vessels over 12m dredging for king scallops from 1 July to 30 September in 2023, 15 May to 30 September in 2024 and 1 July to 30 September in 2025.

Landings and exploitation are generally considered to have been stable in recent years.

ICES area 7e excluding Lyme Bay

King scallop landings in UK waters from UK and EU vessels in ICES area 7e excluding the Lyme Bay area during 2023 and 2024 had notable peaks from the UK over 15m fleet from June to September in both years (see figures 6 & 7). The increased landings in the summer months were observed across all fleet sectors in both 2023 and 2024 (see figures 6 & 7). 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. Furthermore, in previous years larger vessels have been more reliant upon the 7e offshore region during closure period of the 7d and Lyme bay area of 7e. This has resulted in increased landings, particularly by larger vessels (see figure 5). When comparing landings from previous years, landings from this area in 2025 have been especially low, with significantly lower landings across all vessel sizes.

Octopus Bloom – Southwest of England.

Recent scientific observations, MMO landing data, and stakeholder reports indicate an increase in the biomass of common octopus (*Octopus vulgaris*) in UK coastal waters, particularly in the western English Channel. It has also been reported that there has been a drop in scallop catches in the same area.

Though a more generalised decline in landings of shellfish stocks has been observed, concerns from industry have been received regarding the impact of the 2025 octopus bloom on shellfish stocks including scallops. Landings of octopus have largely been isolated to ICES area 7e, and octopus predation could be a contributing factor to decline in harvestable biomass of shellfish including scallop in the western English Channel, primarily 7e (see table 1 & figure 1).

Table 1: King scallop landings live weight tonnes (t) by UK vessels in ICES area 7d and 7e 2021 – 2025. *2025 up to 30th September 2025.

Year	7d Live Weight (t)	7e Live Weight (t)
2021	8403.33	8053.24
2022	9097.26	8175.42
2023	7699.93	7802.17
2024	9602.01	8638.85
2025*	8246.47	3351.87

MMO will continue to monitor the octopus landings and work with stakeholders to anticipate impacts to shellfish stocks, such as scallops, and inform management decisions.

Potential displacement

In 2025, the UK closure of 7d period covered 1 July to 30 September and the Lyme Bay area of 7e (ICES rectangles 29E6, 29E7, 30E6 and 30E7) for all UK and EU vessels over 12m in length from 1 July to 30 September 2025, if the considered change in management approach is enacted for 2026 and 2027 by extending to the whole areas of 7d and 7e due to concerns in stock health, this could potentially lead to displacement to other areas during the closure months including ICES Areas 4b, 4c (North Sea) 7f and 7g (Celtic Sea), and ICES Area 6a (Northwest Scotland). See Annex figures 9 & 10 for information of which alternative areas effort has been observed in during recent closure periods.

Vessels excluded from management

In previous years, MMO has determined to exclude smaller vessels from management, due to the reliance of smaller inshore vessels on the management areas. During recent consultation stakeholders have expressed concerns regarding the presence of vessels that fall within the under 10m and the 10m-12m vessel lengths with increased engine capacity being present in the fleet. Presence of such vessels in the fleet has so far not materialised during the previous closure period (see figures 3, 4 & 5).

MMO is proposing to continue to exclude vessels of u10m in 7d and under 12m in 7e but will monitor landings from such vessels to consider whether it introduces a significant risk to the aims of the closure.

Scientific advice

Once available should the 2025 Cefas scallop dredge stock survey report indicates a positive picture of stock health, MMO will consider 'rolling back' protection of its management decision, where there is scientific evidence to indicate it is safe to do so. This has been discussed in advance with stakeholders to understand that the chosen management options will be a worst-case scenario determined to provide certainty for business planning purposes and is understood to be necessary. MMO could determine to relax restrictions where scientific evidence indicates it is safe to do so, by reducing the duration of the closure within a specific area or areas.

Any change to allow additional effort will be done so with the understanding that this will be announced with short notice upon receipt and digestion of the amended scientific evidence.

Closure options

Scientific advice, anecdotal evidence and landings data have been considered when deciding which management to introduce to protect the king scallop spawning stock in 7d and 7e. MMO wish to explore seasonal closures which will apply to EU and UK vessels.

MMO consider it necessary to align duration of a closure period between 7d and 7e to ensure direct displacement of effort between principal fishing areas of concern does not occur.

MMO is proposing a closure for a 7d and 7e king scallop dredge fishery of:

- **From 1 July to 30 September 2026 and;**
- **From 1 July to 30 September 2027**

If scientific evidence is received which indicates a positive or negative trend has occurred in either or both ICES areas, MMO will re-consider its decision for 2026 and 2027. MMO may also need to reconsider its decision should there be short-term significant impacts to the fishery, as was observed this year with the octopus bloom.

The proposed management period of 1 July to 30 September will also be implemented in 2027 if updated scientific evidence doesn't indicate a significantly improved or negative trend or alternative management has not been implemented

through delivery of the King Scallop Fisheries Management Plan or alternative management has been delivered in the interim.

Consultation questions

MMO would like to seek your views on a proposed closure prohibiting UK and EU scallop dredge fishing for vessels in UK waters of ICES area 7d & 7e from 1 July to 30 September 2026 & 2027.

- 1) How would this proposed closure of ICES areas 7d and 7e to scallop dredging impact you and your business?
- 2) Do you consider your business to rely on scallop fishing all year round? If not, do you swap into another fishery for part of the year? If this is the case, which other fisheries do you fish? and for what proportion of your fishing activity?
- 3) If you are a vessel owner/vessel agent or skipper: in which length group is your vessel; under 10m, 10m – 12m, 12m – 15m and the over 15m fleet?
- 4) Would you consider any alternative areas to be at risk of displaced effort because of any proposed closure? Including, ICES rectangles other than those covered in the closure, or other areas such as the [mid-channel potting blocks](#).
- 5) Do you have any other comments?

Please complete our survey here: [king scallop dredge closure consultation survey](#)

Please email any additional information to your responses to FMP@marinemanagement.org.uk or write to:

Fisheries Management
MMO Tyneside House
Skinnerburn Road
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE4 7AR

By midnight on 30 November 2025

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.

The above options are those proposed at this time. Should another option arise during consultation that better meets the environmental, social and economic considerations, MMO may choose that as the preferred option.

Next Steps

Once the consultation has closed and responses have been considered, MMO will publish a summary of the responses and a decision on the proposed king scallop dredge fishery closure for 2026. MMO will detail when, where and which vessels will be affected. Any closure will be enacted by a licence variation.

Marine Management Organisation (MMO) – king scallop ICES area 7e and 7d dredge fishery closure 2026 survey privacy statement

Who we are

The Marine Management Organisation (MMO) is an executive non-departmental public body sponsored by the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra). We are responsible for licensing, regulating, and planning marine activities in the seas around England. We are the data controller for the personal data collected in this survey.

Purpose of the survey

MMO is seeking views on proposals to protect the king scallop (*Pectens maximus*) stocks in UK waters of International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) area 7d and 7e in summer of 2026 and 2027. Your responses will help MMO understand the impacts of various management measures for the 7e and 7d king scallop dredge fishery to help inform decisions on sustainable management.

What personal data we collect and how it is used

MMO may collect the following types of information:

- Business contact details (e.g., name, job type, business or organisation name)
- Commercial activity information (e.g., type of activity, scale of activity, geographic area of operation)
- Professional opinions and feedback.
- Any additional information you voluntarily provide

Your data will be used to:

- Analyse industry perspectives and trends
- Inform policy development and regulatory improvements
- Engage with stakeholders more effectively
- Produce anonymised reports and summaries for internal and public use

Your responses may be shared with other relevant government bodies, but only in anonymised or aggregated form unless you have explicitly consented otherwise.

Lawful basis for processing

We process your personal data under Article 6(1)(e) of the UK GDPR – the processing is in order to deliver our public, regulatory and business services.

MMO is a registered data controller under the information Commissioners Office (ICO), our registration number is Z2205091. For more information about the MMO, please check the MMO Home page.

The statutory duties of the MMO are specified in the [Marine and Coastal Access Act of 2009](#), the [Fisheries Act of 2020](#) and other associated legislation as referred to in those Acts.

Data retention

We will retain your personal data only as long as necessary to fulfil the purposes of the survey and in accordance with our data retention policy. Anonymised data may be retained for statistical and research purposes.

Your rights

Find out about your [individual rights](#) under the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA 2018).

Complaints

You have the right to [make a complaint](#) to the Information Commissioner's Office at any time.

MMO's personal information charter

MMO's [personal information charter](#) explains more about your rights over your personal data.

Contact us

If you have any questions about this privacy notice or how your data is handled, please contact the MMO Data Protection Manager at:

Data Protection Manager,
Marine Management Organisation,
MMO Tyneside House,
Skinnerburn Road
Newcastle upon Tyne, NE4 7YH
Email: dataprotection@marinemanagement.org.uk

The contact details for the data controller's Data Protection Officer (DPO) are:

DPO
Defra
Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF
Email: DefraGroupDataProtectionOfficer@defra.gov.uk

Annex

King Scallop Landing data

ICES area 7e and 7d

The following graphs have been compiled from MMO data

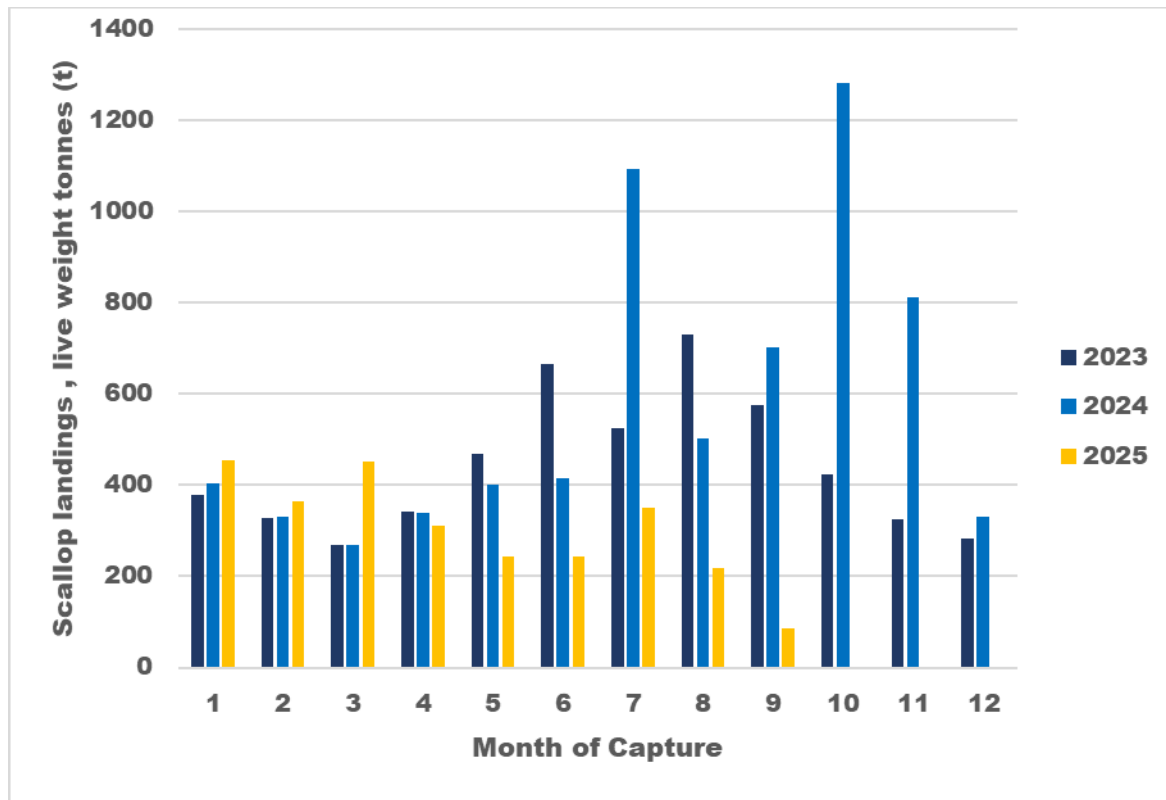


Figure 1: King scallop landings live weight tonnes (t), the UK fleet working in ICES area 7e (UK waters only) from 2023, 2024 and 2025.

In 2025, King scallop landings in ICES area 7e are generally below those seen in previous years per month, except for January and March (see figure 1). From May to September King Scallop landings show a noticeable decrease when compared to previous years. This is likely due to the increased predation resulting from the 7e octopus bloom.

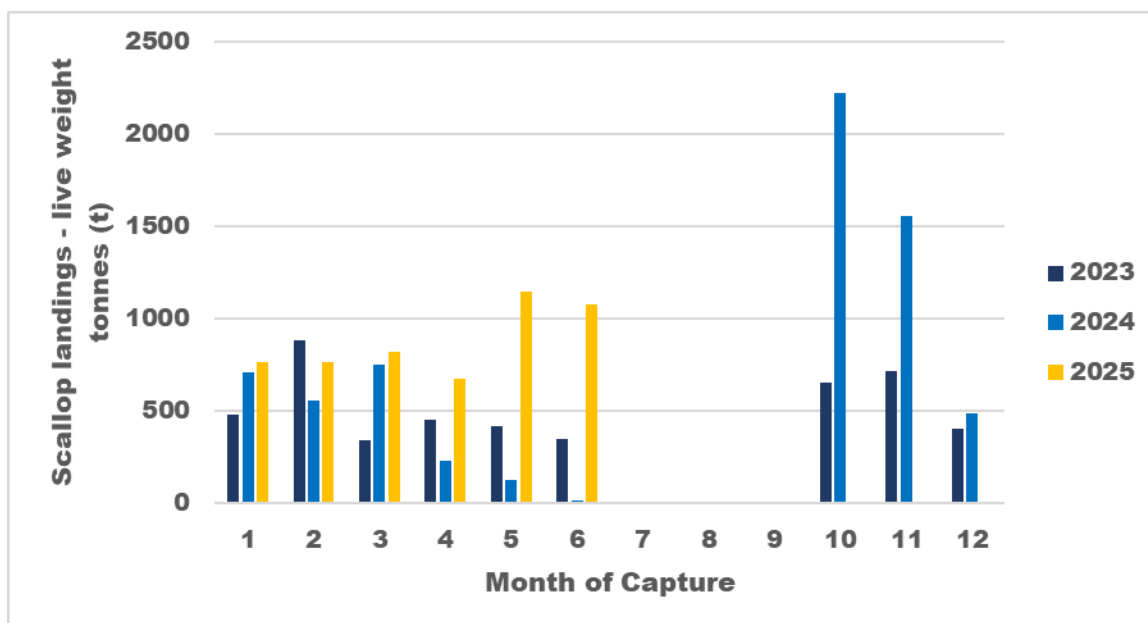


Figure 2: King scallop landings live weight tonnes (t), the UK fleet working in ICES area 7d (UK waters only) from 2023, 2024 and 2025.

2025 saw comparable and increased landings in ICES area 7d when referenced to 2023 and 2024 (see figure 2). Landings in March, April, May and June are considerably greater than both previous years.

Landings in 2024 were generally comparable or higher than 2023 from January to March but generally fell below 2023 levels (except for July) from May to August (see figure 2). From August to December 2024 had increased landings when compared to 2023 (see figure 3).

Landings from 7d by vessel size

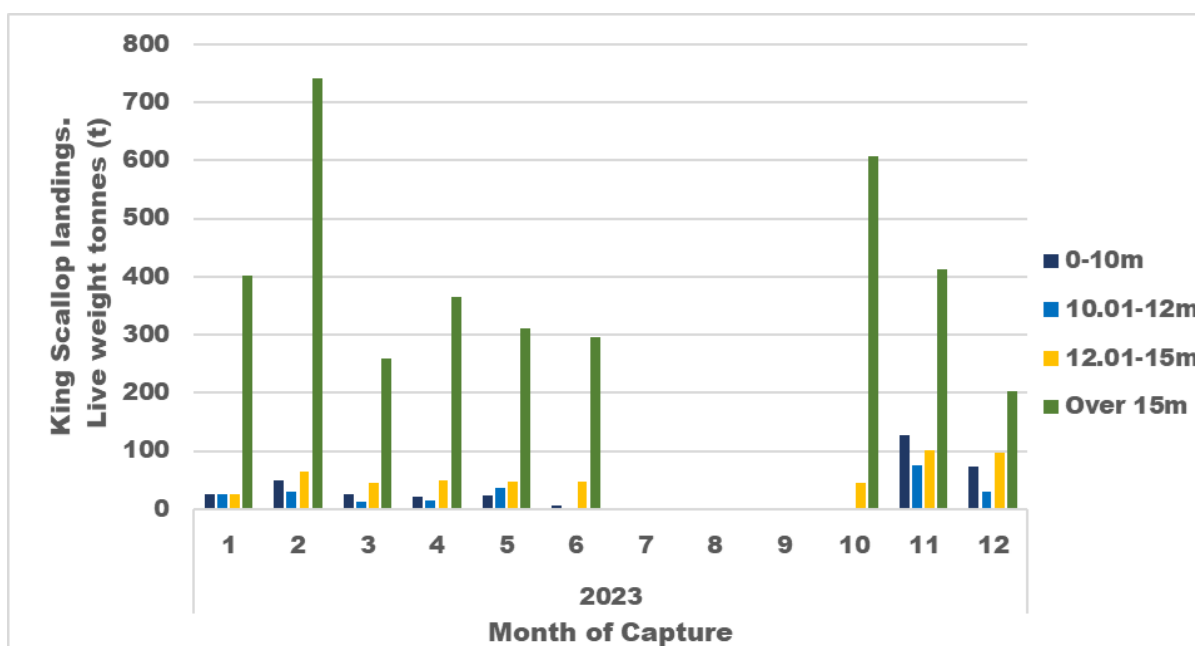


Figure 3 A (2023): Total weight tonnes (t) of landings of king scallops by UK vessels in ICES area 7d (UK waters only) during 2023 (Graph A) by month.

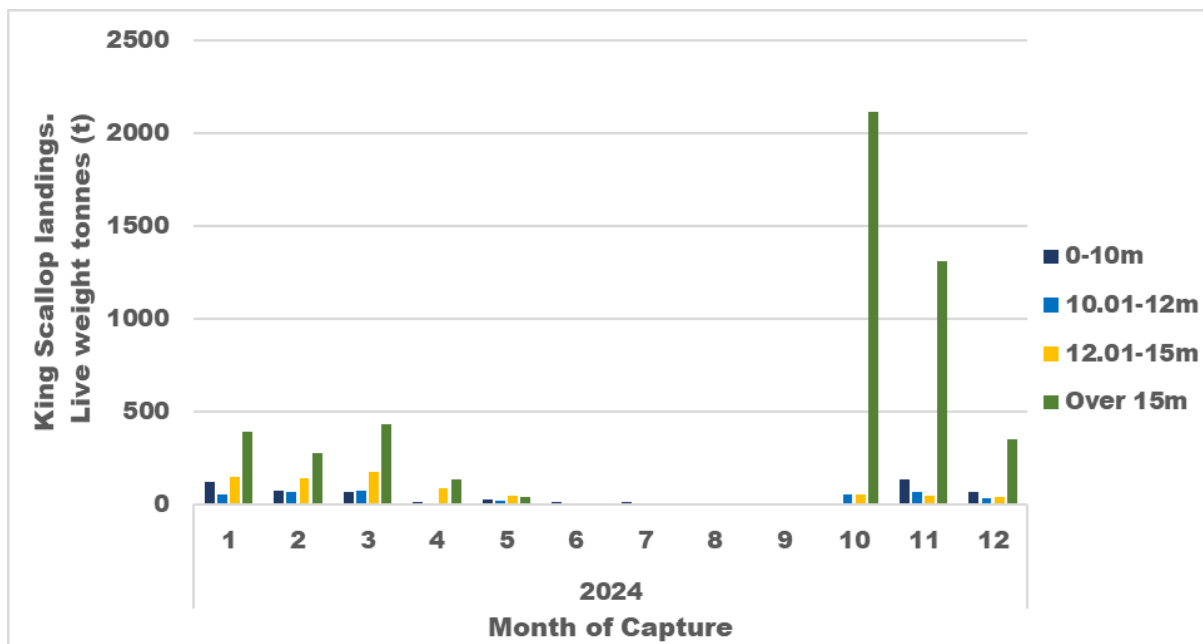


Figure 3 B (2024): Total weight tonnes (t) of landings of king scallops by UK vessels from ICES area 7d (UK waters only) during 2024 by month.

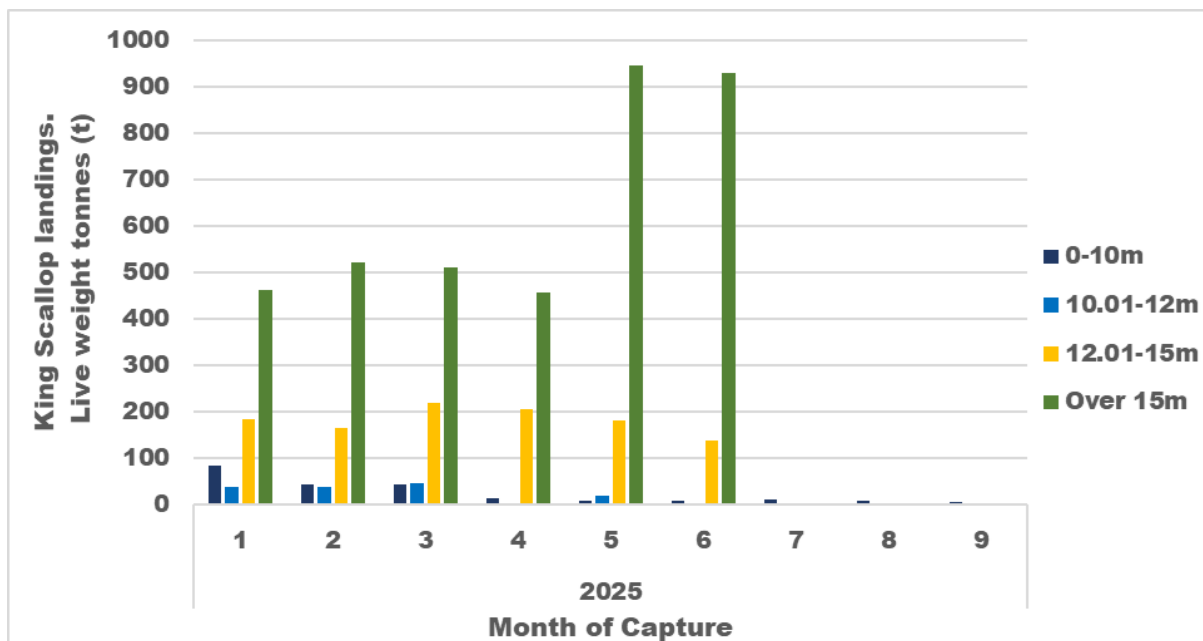


Figure 3C (2025): Total weight tonnes (t) of landings of king scallops by UK vessels in ICES area 7d (UK waters only) during 2025 by month.

For all three years landings have been dominated by the over 15-meter vessels (see figures 3A, 3B & 3C).

When 2023 and 2024 are compared the figures show increased landings from all fleet sector of between 30% and 40%.

The outputs from the longer closure in 2024 are clearly visible in the landing figures. The 10m and under fleet are exempted from the closure and despite being able to fish during the closure period landed quantities in the summer months were very low (see figures 3a, b and c).

7e Lyme Bay Area landings by fleet size

In 2023, 12-15m+ vessels responded to the closure by focussing effort in the months leading up to the closure and in the month of October after the closure ended. The changes in the dominant fleet sector reflects the Brixham larger fleet character, as they tend to move from scallop dredging to beam trawling according to opportunity. Landings were also particularly high in October from the 12m – 15m fleet and in December for 15m+ vessels (figure 4a).

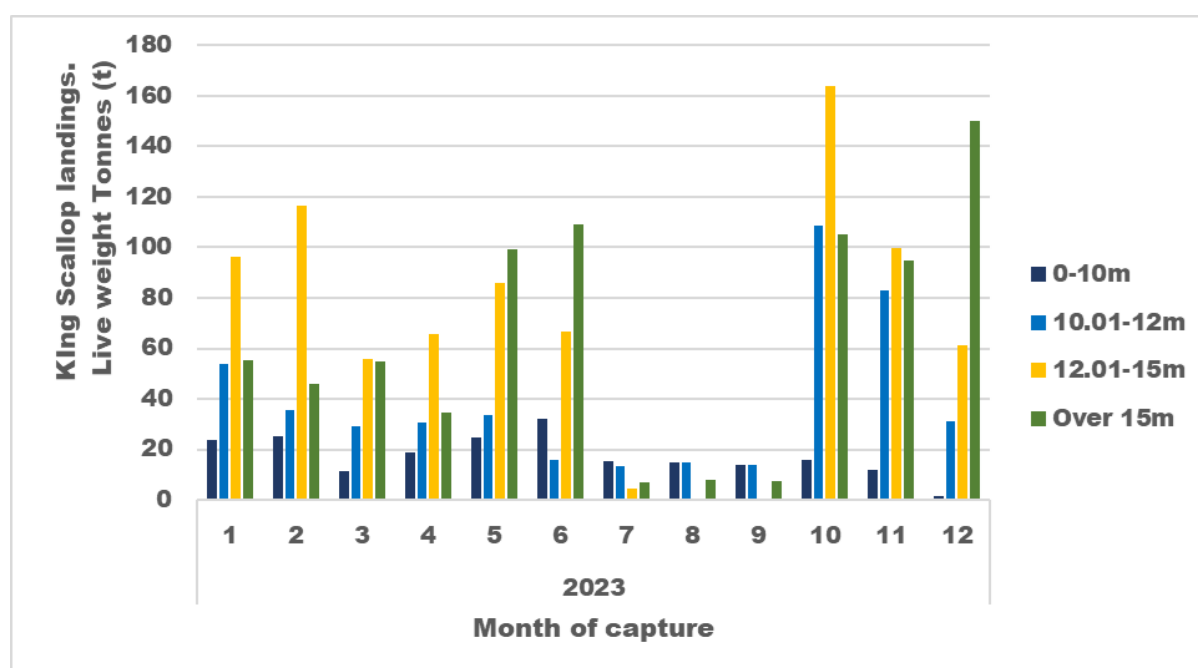


Figure 4A (2023): King scallop landings (t) in Lyme Bay area of 7e (ICES rectangles 29E6, 29E7, 30E6 and 30E7 during 2023).

In 2024, landings at the start of the year were comparable with 2023 (see figures 4a and 4b). However, unlike 2023, the 15m fleet were the continued dominant fleet throughout the year. The landings following the closure increased by over 200% when October and November 2024 were compared with the same period in 2023. Landings returning to 2024 levels in December.

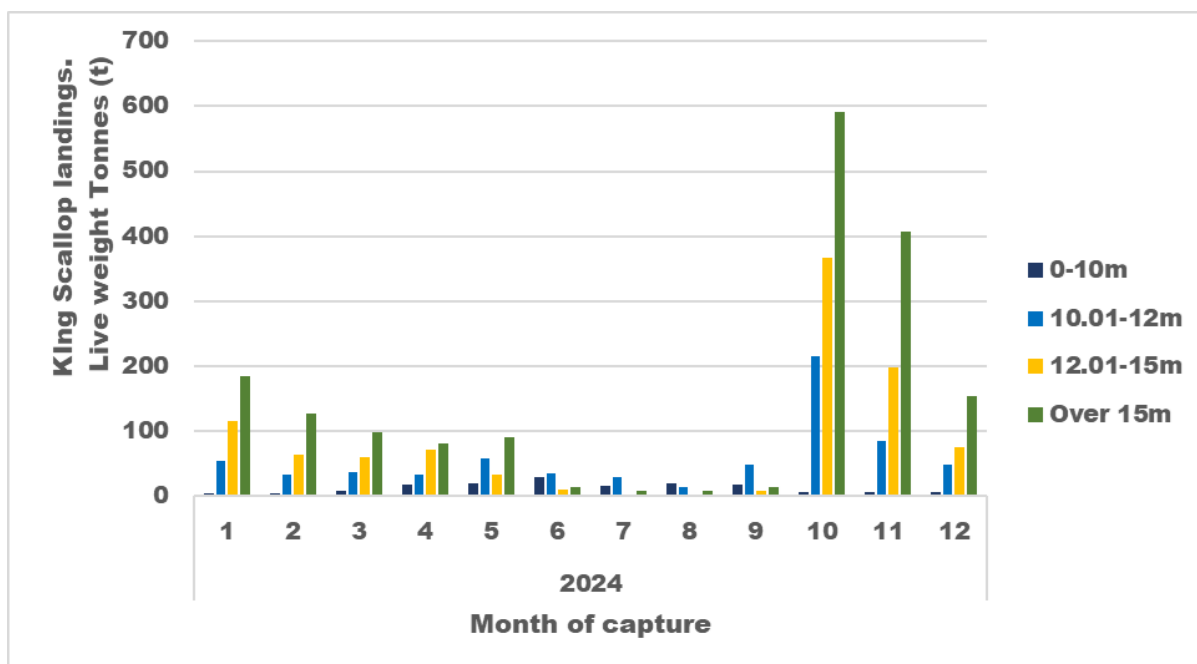


Figure 4B (2024): King scallop landings (t) in Lyme Bay area of 7e (ICES rectangles 29E6, 29E7, 30E6 and 30E7 during 2024).

2025 landings up to May were comparable with 2024, the largest fleet sector are still the dominant section in 2025.

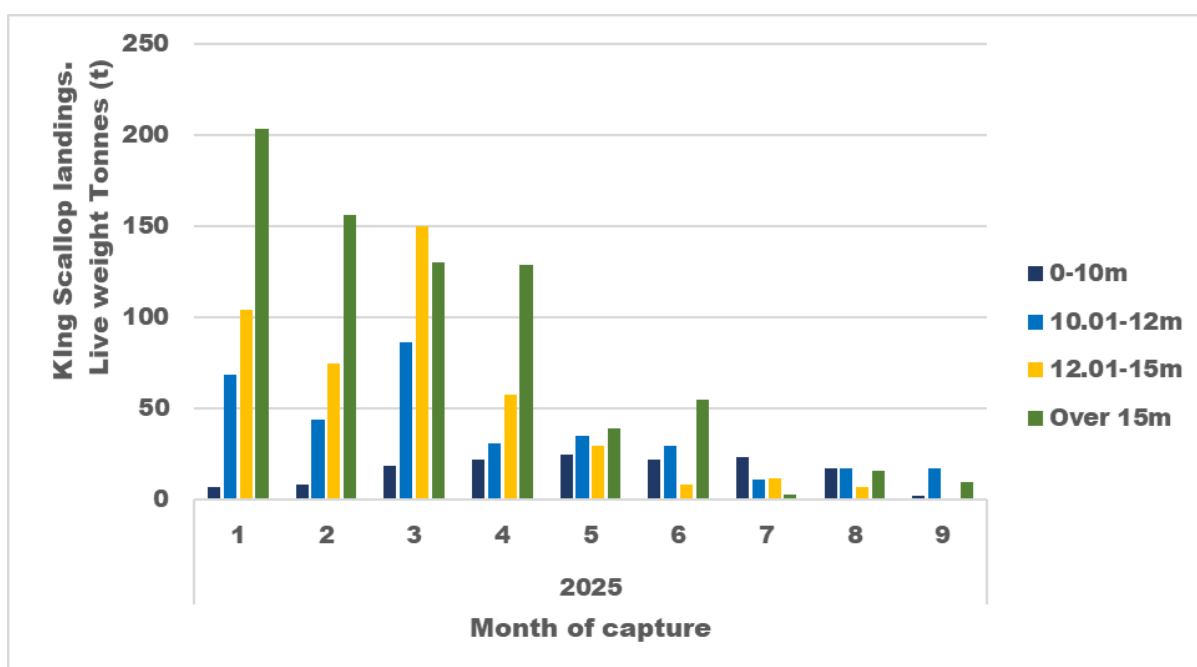


Figure 4C (2025): King scallop landings (t) in Lyme Bay area of 7e (ICES rectangles 29E6, 29E7, 30E6 and 30E7 during 2025).

ICES area 7e excluding Lyme Bay

Other areas of 7e excluding Lyme Bay saw a noticeable increase in landings, especially by vessels 12.01 -15m and 15m + vessels in 2023 and 2024 particularly during months were 7d and Lyme Bay area of 7e were closed to protect spawning stocks.

2025 saw a noticeable reduction in landings from areas of 7e excluding Lyme Bay from January – September, especially in the summer months. This reduction in landings is most noticeable in the over 12m fleet (see figure 5).

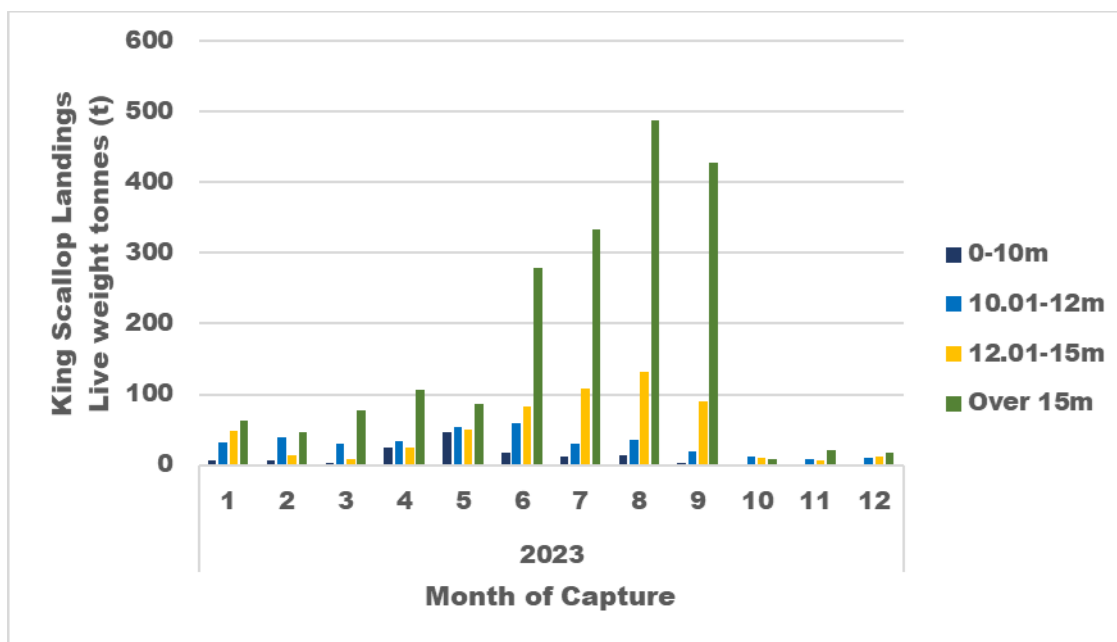


Figure 5A (2023): King scallop landings (t) in ICES area 7e (UK waters only) excluding Lyme Bay (ICES rectangle 29E6, 29E7, 30E6 and 30E7) in 2023 by vessel sector and month.

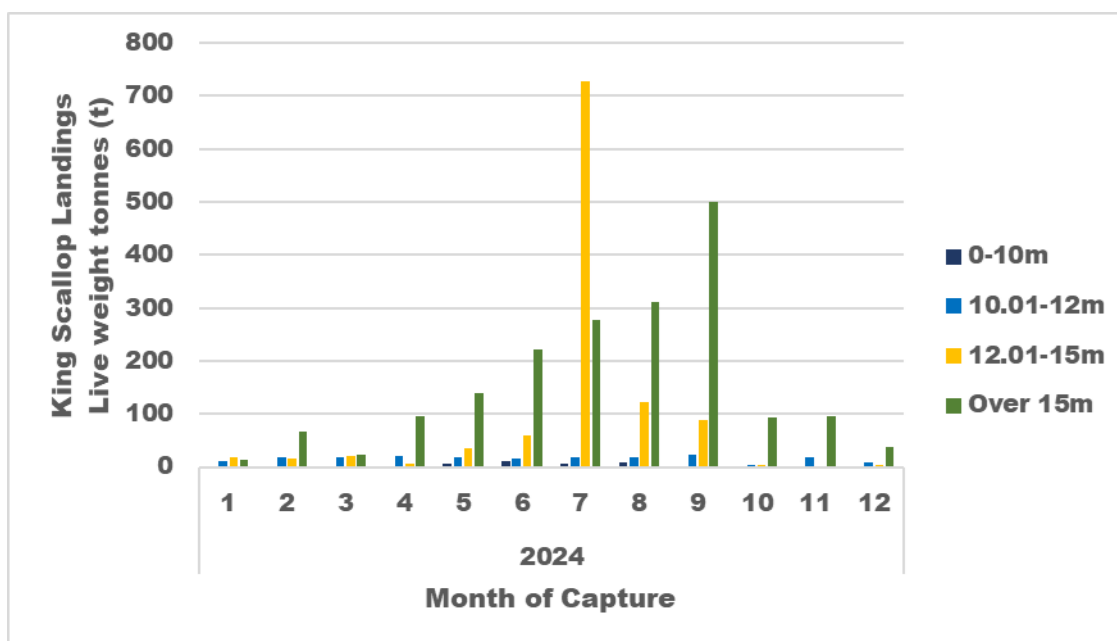


Figure 5B (2024): King scallop landings (t) in ICES area 7e(UK waters only) excluding Lyme Bay (ICES rectangle 29E6, 29E7, 30E6 and 30E7) in 2024 by vessel sector and month

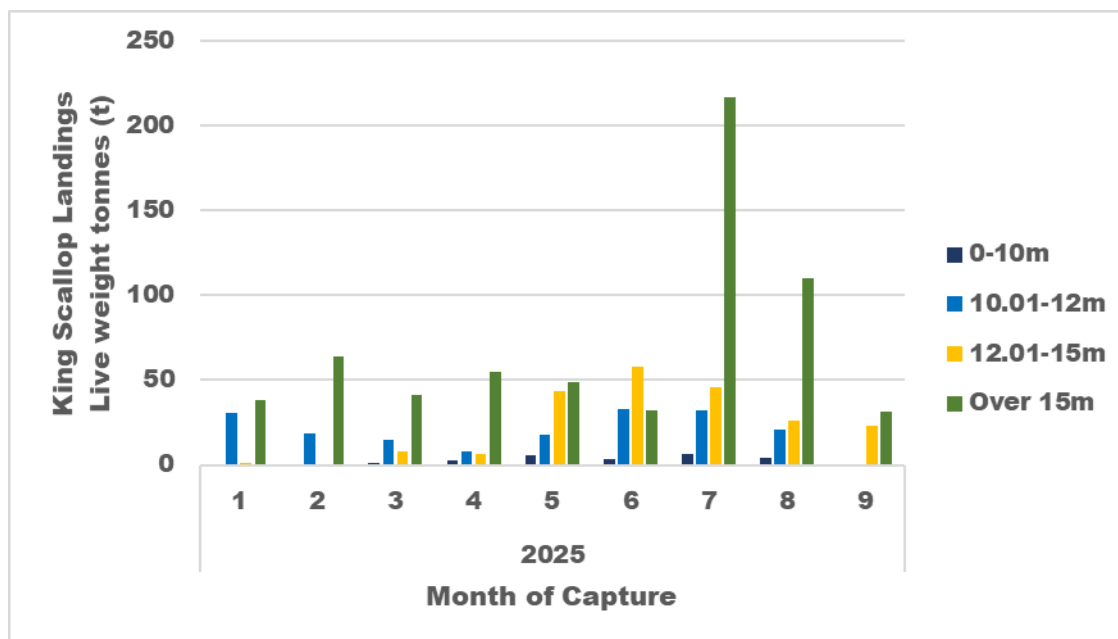


Figure 5C (2025): King scallop landings (t) in ICES area 7e (UK waters only) excluding Lyme Bay (ICES rectangle 29E6, 29E7, 30E6 and 30E7) in 2025 by vessel sector and month.

Landings by ICES areas and rectangles

27.7d and 27.7e generally show the highest landings, and fairly consistent landing amounts from other areas. What is notable is that the landings from 7d have increased since October 2024 and have dominated the total landings up to the closure in 2025. In 2025 landings from 27.7e generally make up a lower proportion of total landings from all areas than in previous years.

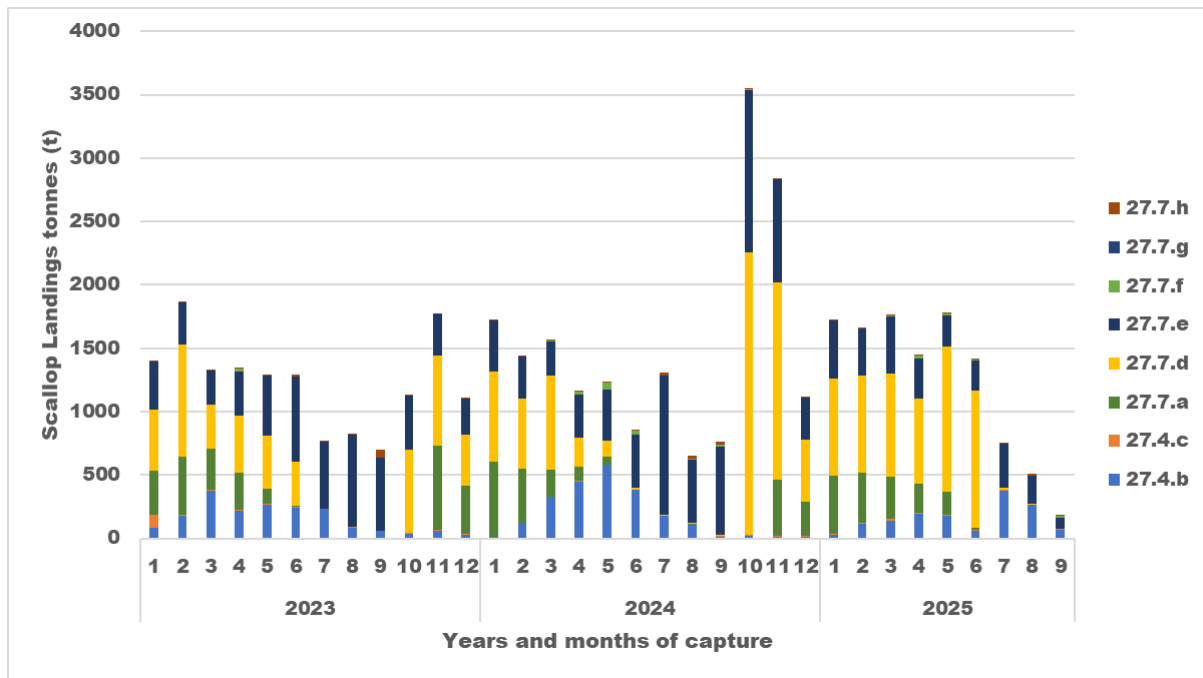


Figure 6 - King scallop monthly landings in tonnes from English Waters of ICES Area 7 for UK 10m+ vessels, from 2022 to July 2025.

30F0 and 29F0 show consistently higher landings than other ICES rectangles, although the landings from these rectangles can vary between months and years (see figure 7). There doesn't seem to be a consistent pattern of exploitation regarding which ICES rectangles are fished in what month and what year (see figure 7).

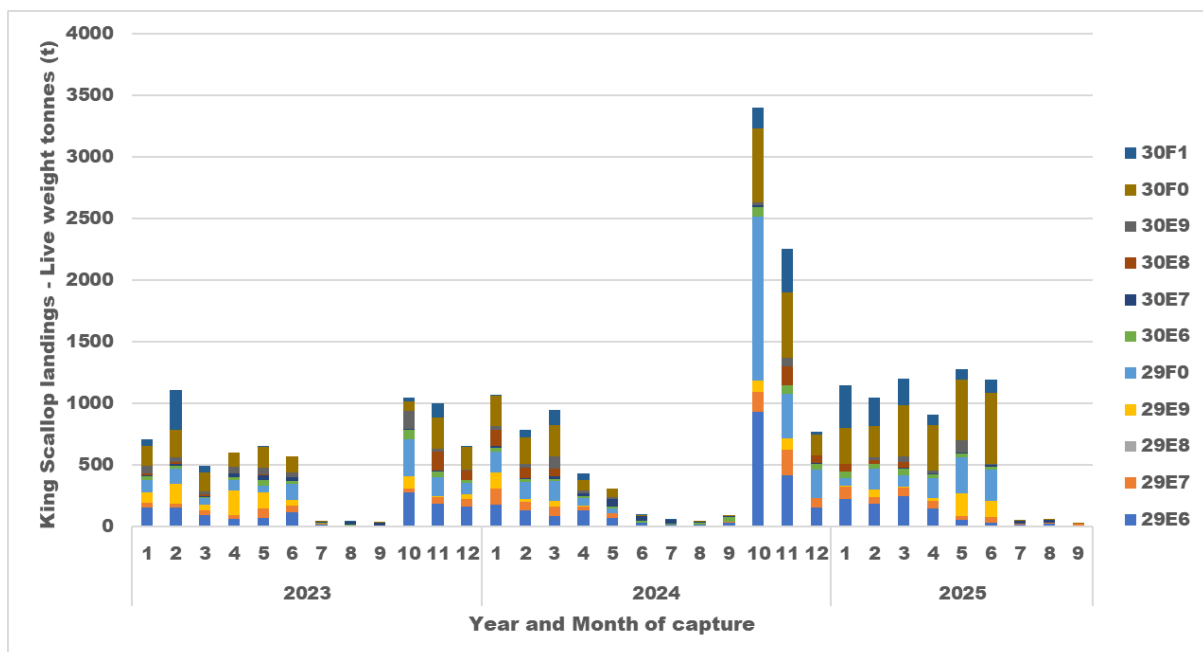
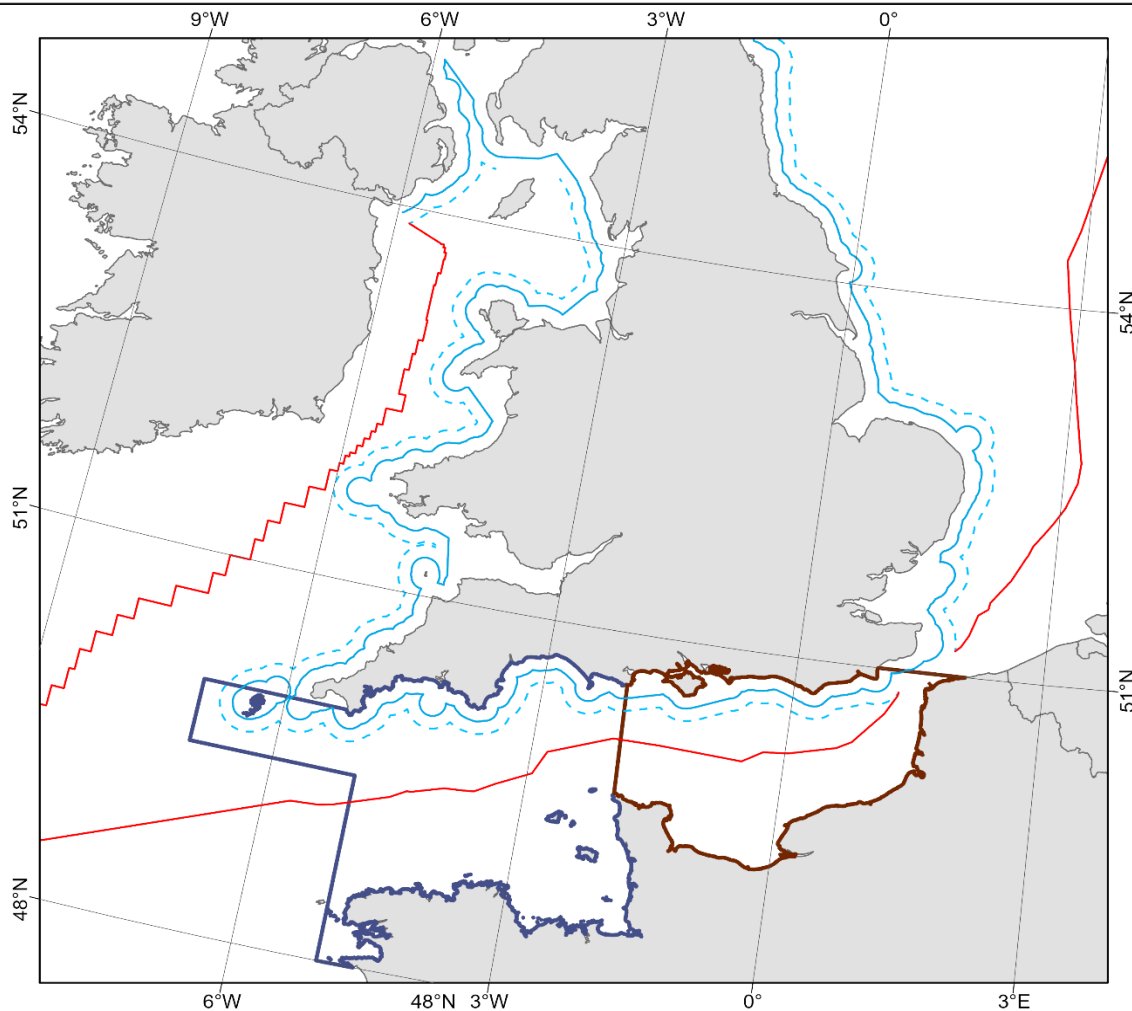


Figure 7: King scallop monthly landings in tonnes for closure areas of Lyme Bay 7e (ICES rectangles 29E6, 29E7, 30E6 and 30E7) and closure areas of 7d (ICES rectangles 29E8, 29E9, 29F0, 30E8, 30E9, 30F0 and 30F1) UK vessel working in UK waters only.



Ices Area 7d and 7e



Maritime Boundaries

- UK Exclusive Economic Zone (2013)
- ICES Area 7e
- ICES Area 7d
- UK 12 Nautical Mile Limit (UKHO 2025)
- UK 6 Nautical Mile Limit (UKHO 2025)

Date of Publication: 18/09/2025
Coordinate System: ETRS 1989 LAEA
Projection: Lambert Azimuthal Equal Area
MMO Reference: MMOSC2026001

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Figure 8: Map of ICES area 7d and 7e – illustration of the potentially closed areas ICES area 7d and ICES area 7e.

Potential displacement

Illustrated in the maps below are the king scallop landings during 2025 from January to September and during the closure period July – September.

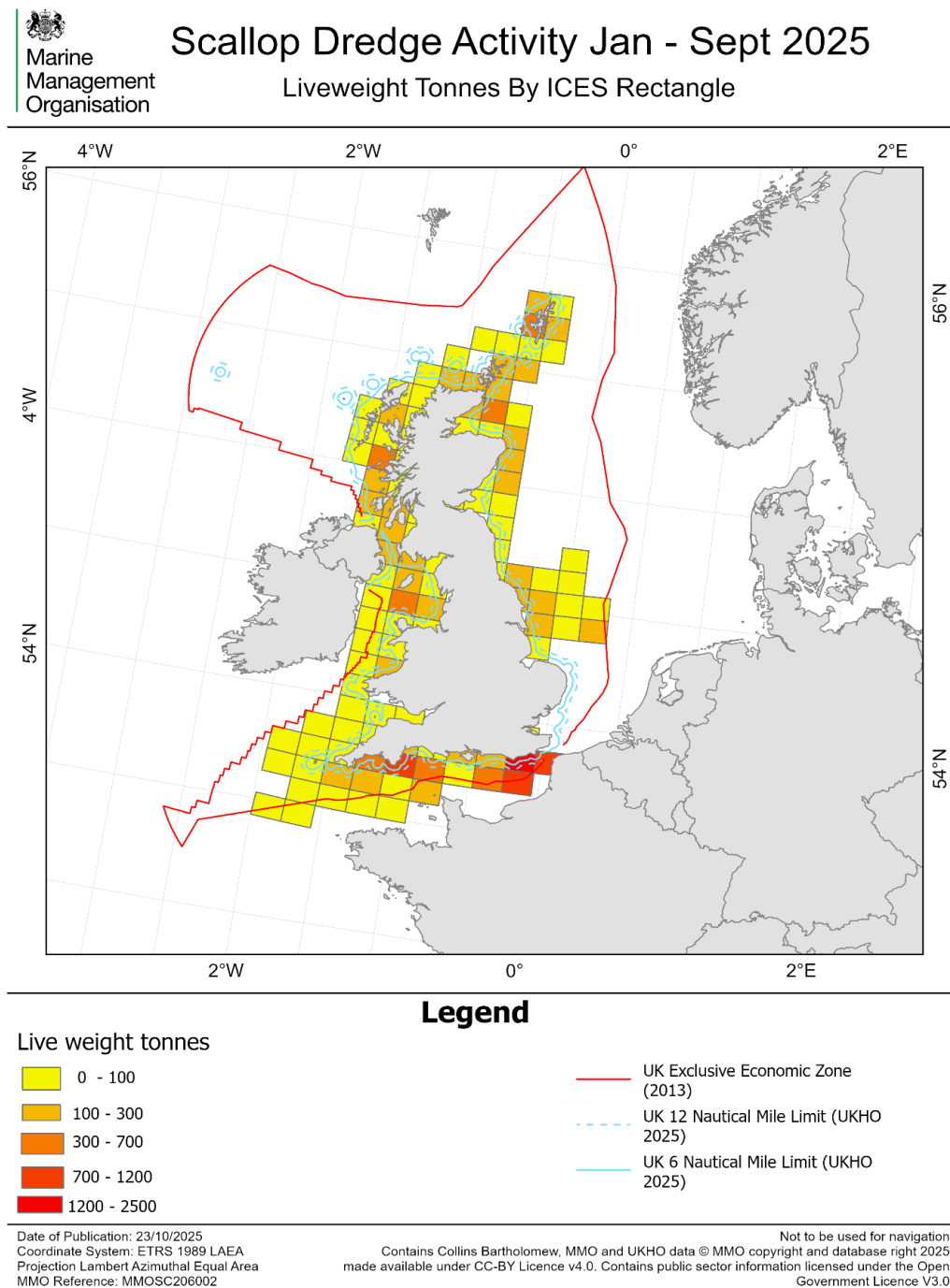
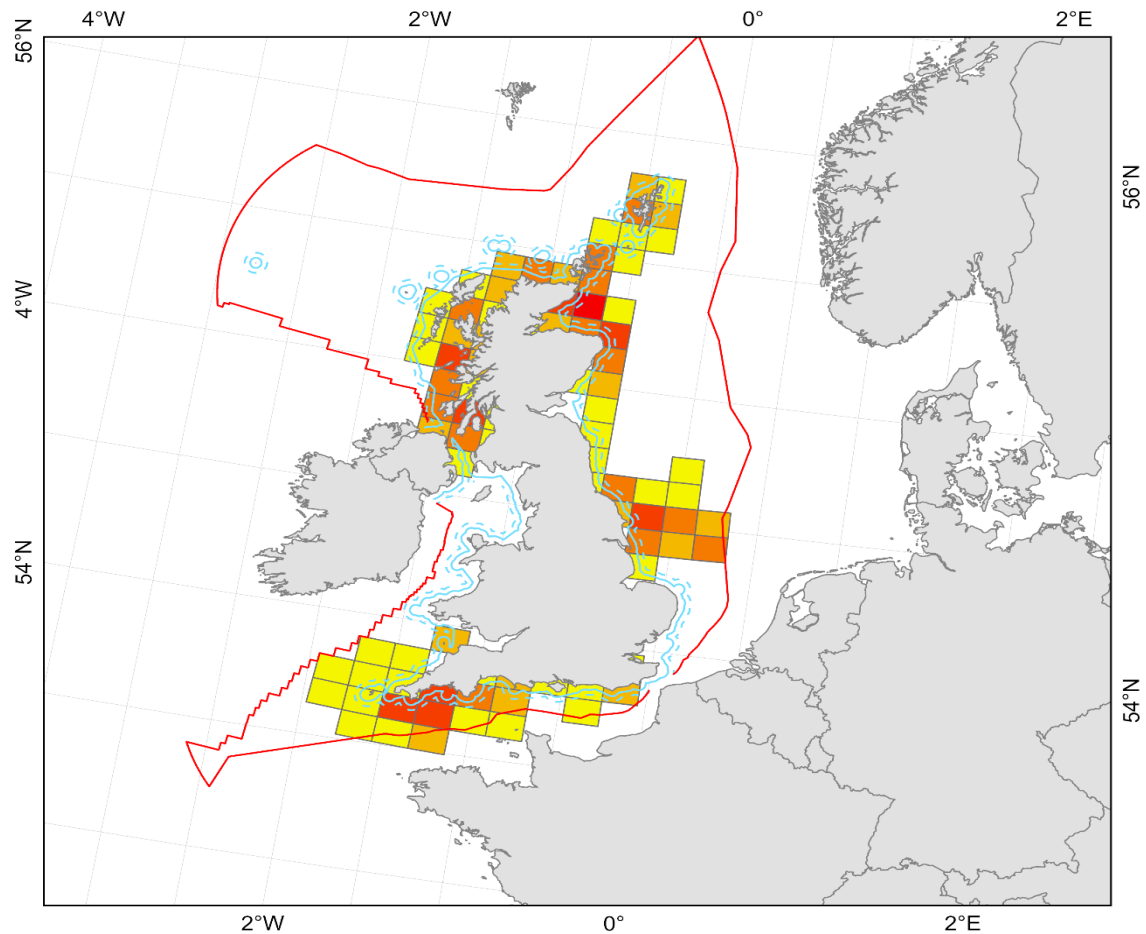


Figure 9– illustration of King Scallop Dredge Activity between January 2025 and September 2025. King scallop monthly landings in tonnes the most landings took place between these months in ICES area 7d within ICES rectangle 30F0, 30F1, 29F0 then ICES Area 7e ICES rectangles 29E6, 29E5 and 29E7 where between 1000 and 2000 tonnes were landed between the months of January and December 2025.



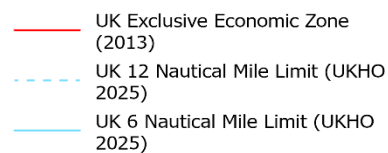
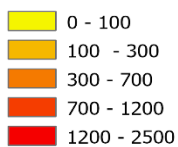
Scallop Dredge Activity July - Sept 2025

Liveweight Tonnes By ICES Rectangle



Liveweight tonnes

Legend



Date of Publication: 23/10/2025
Coordinate System: ETRS 1989 LAEA
Projection Lambert Azimuthal Equal Area
MMO Reference: MMOSC206002

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Figure 10 – Illustration of King Scallop dredge activity during the closure months in 2025 July to September, within these closure months the landings were predominantly in ICES area 4a within ICES rectangle 45E7 and 44E8 following is ICES Area 6a ICES rectangle 42E3, ICES area 4b, ICES rectangle 37F0 ICES rectangle 42E3 then 7e ICES rectangles 29e5, 28e5 and 28e4. These are the areas that most of the scallop's fishery has fished over the closure months, between 1000 and 2000 tonnes were landed in these areas.