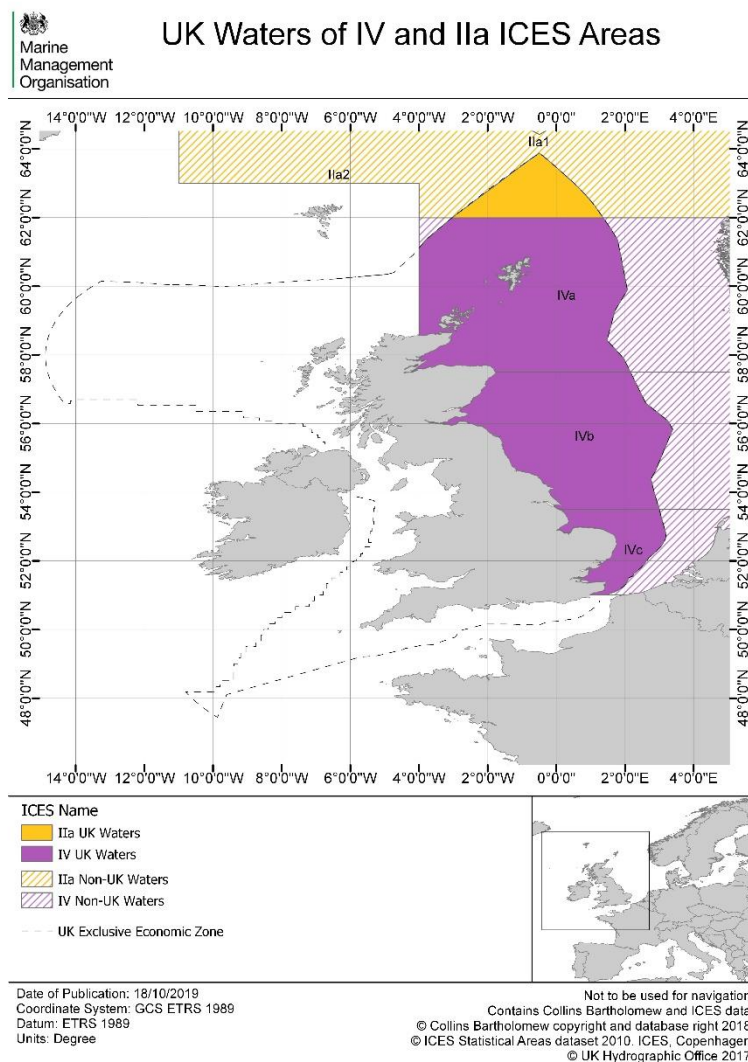




# Fishing gear requirements and Landing Obligation exemptions. Updated January 2025

Applicable to beam trawlers fishing 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 when using beam trawls in UK waters of the North 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](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.

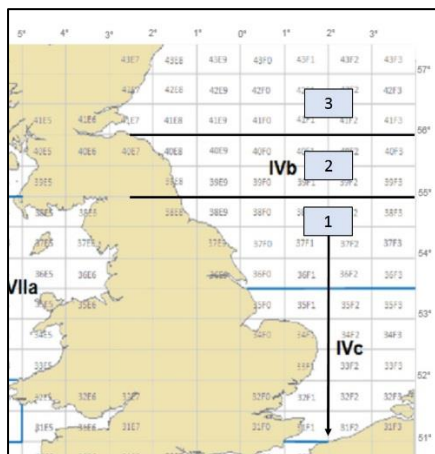
- The baseline mesh size in this area is now a 120mm cod-end and this must be used where landed catches exceed 20% of cod haddock and saithe combined.
- If you have a landed catch of less than 20% of cod, haddock and saithe combined, then you may use a mesh size below 120mm as specified below in Table 1.
- Further beam trawl restrictions apply inside 12nm



## Gear selectivity requirements

All mesh sizes specified are the minimum.

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



ICES Area	Standard gears
<b>1:</b> IVb and IVc South of 55°N	80mm cod-end and a headline panel with at least 180mm mesh
<b>2:</b> IVb North of 55°N to 56°N	100mm cod-end and a headline panel with at least 180mm mesh
<b>3:</b> IVa and IVb North of 56°N	120mm cod-end and a headline panel with at least 180mm mesh

## Landing Obligation exemptions

The table below (on following page) outlines a summary of exemptions from the Landing Obligation for these fisheries, which allow you to discard fish under the conditions set.

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
Plaice (PLE) below the minimum size of 27cm	Ila and IV	Survival	Cod-end mesh size of 80mm to 119mm beam trawls (BT2), if the plaice is caught with gears equipped with the flip-up rope.  Or with Benthos release panel* (BRP) and caught by vessels with an engine power of more than 221kW.
Flatfish	Ila and IV	Survival	Vessels with an engine power of not more than 221kW or less than 24m in length overall, which are constructed to fish in the 12nm zone, if the average trawl duration is less than ninety minutes.
Turbot (TUR)	Scottish Waters of IV	Survival	TBB gears with a cod-end more than 80mm.
Dover Sole (SOL) below the minimum size of 24cm	IV	<i>De minimis</i>	Minimum cod-end mesh size of 80mm. A Flemish Panel** must be fitted.
Horse Mackerel (JAX)	IV	<i>De minimis</i>	Minimum cod-end mesh size of 80mm.
Mackerel (MAC)	IV	<i>De minimis</i>	Minimum cod-end mesh size of 80mm.
Whiting (WHG) below the minimum size of 27cm	IV	<i>De minimis</i>	Minimum cod-end mesh size of 80mm.
All Species	IVb and IVc	<i>De minimis</i>	In the fisheries targeting brown shrimp by vessels using beam trawls.

The following exemptions below ceased on 28/02/25

Turbot (TUR)	English Waters of IV	Survival	TBB gears with a cod-end more than 80mm. <b>(Ceased 28/02/25)</b>
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\* Benthos release panel means a panel of larger mesh or square mesh netting fitted into the lower panel of a trawl, usually a beam trawl to release any benthic material and seabed debris before it passes into the cod-end

\*\* 'Flemish Panel' means the last tapered netting section of a beam trawl whose:  
- Posterior is directly attached to the cod-end



- Upper and lower netting sections are constructed of at least 120mm mesh as measured between the knots
- Stretched length is at least 3m