



Marine
Management
Organisation

Decision document on the ICES division 7d and 7e King scallop dredge fishery closure 2026

March 2026



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1. 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 exploitation. In previous years a closure has been implemented in International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) division 7d and Lyme Bay division of ICES division 7e which focused on providing increased protection for spawning stock, facilitating juvenile recruitment, supporting future viability and stock sustainability.

In 2025 Marine Management Organisation sought views on a proposed seasonal closure in ICES division 7d and 7e proposals to protect the king scallop (*Pectens maximus*) stocks in UK waters of ICES 7d and 7e for 1 July to 30 September 2026 and 1 July to 20 September 2027. Due to concerns regarding stock health in the 7e offshore division (division 27.7.e.O) MMO proposed an option to extend the spatial extent of 2026 and 2027 management to support spawning scallop stocks in the entirety of ICES divisions 7e and 7d.

There were 33 responses to the consultation, including responses from industry groups, fisheries managers, individuals and a mixture of sectors from under 10 m vessels to over 15 m vessels. Responses were also received from EU member states.

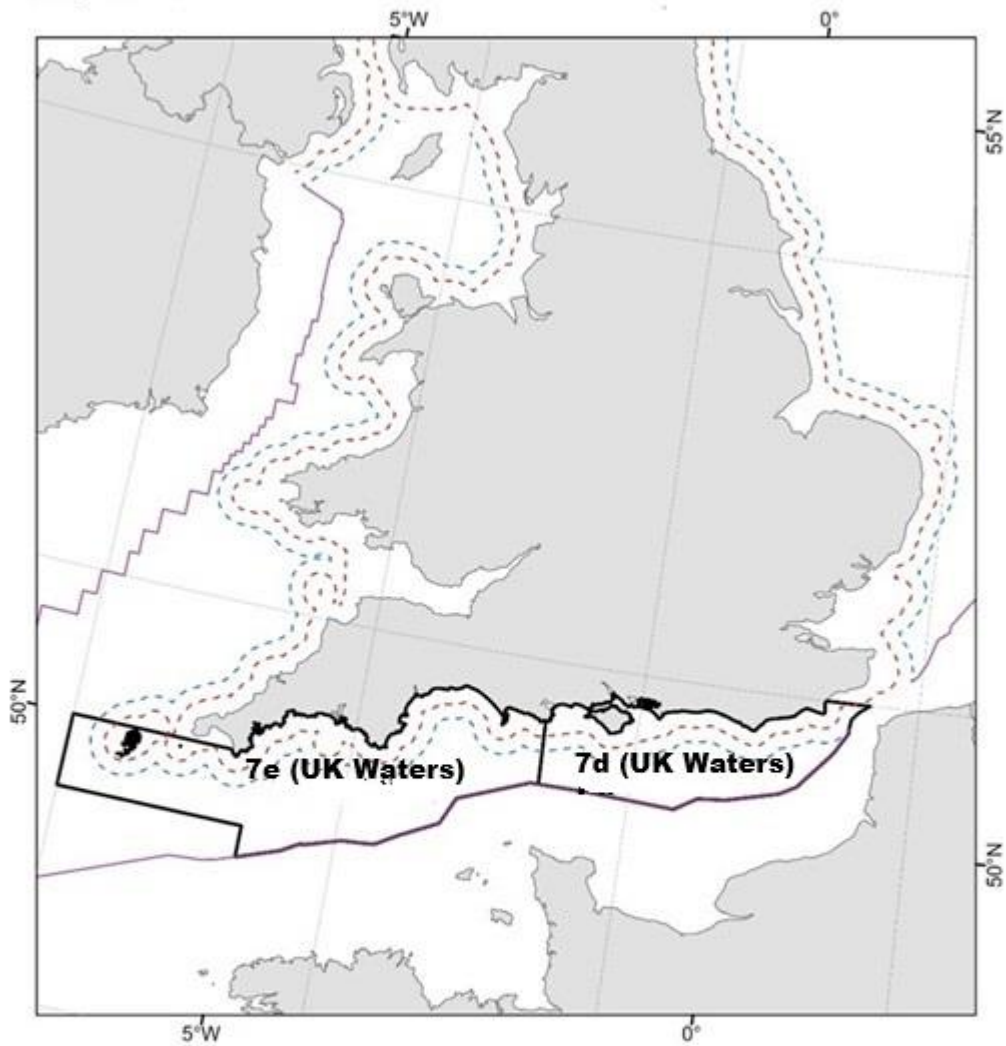
Overall, there was a mixed response with regards to the proposed closure, points were raised in favour of and against. In summary, approximately half of respondents agreed to the proposed king scallop dredge closure in the UK waters of 7d and 7e from 1 July to 30 September 2026 and 2027. Those who selected this option primarily cited protection to the scallop spawning stock as the leading reason. Many did not support a closure at all, and others indicated that they were supportive of an extended closure of May to September, in 7d and 7e (Lyme Bay) or only a closure in the 7d. More details on the consultation responses are provided in section 7 and in the annex.

The closure area in UK waters of ICES division 7d and 7e is illustrated below in Figure 1.



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ICES Area 7d & 7e (UK Waters)



- | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| UK European Zone 2013 | World Country Boundaries CB |
| 6nm Fishing Limit | ICES area 7d |
| 12nm Fishing Limit | ICES Area 7e |

Date of Publication: 19/02/2026
Coordinate System: ETRS 1989 LAEA
Projection: Lambert Azimuthal Equal Area

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Figure 1 - UK waters of ICES division 7d and 7e indicating scallop dredge closure - The closure in ICES division 7d will apply to all scallop dredge vessels over 10 metres and area of 7e closure will apply to all scallop dredge vessels over 12 metres in length.

Decision

In exercise of its obligations under the [Joint Fisheries Statement](#), MMO have determined the most appropriate closure decision to balance the environmental needs of the spawning stocks, with socio-economic impacts as expressed by stakeholders, is to apply a 3-month closure period applicable in both 7d and 7e from 1 July to 30 September 2026.

The closure in ICES division 7d will apply to all scallop dredge vessels over 10 metres and area of 7e closure will apply to all scallop dredge vessels over 12 metres in length. The closures will apply to both EU and UK scallop dredge vessels.

The exploitation rate in the offshore area of 7e in the Western Channel 7.e.O (Offshore EU and UK) is estimated to be below the maximum sustainable yield (MSY) proxy target of 26.4% as shown in (Table 4) below taken from the 2024 Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (Cefas) stock assessment, which is currently the most recent publicly available scientific evidence. The offshore 7e estimates take into account beds inside EU waters, limiting our understanding of UK waters in isolation. However, it is understood that there has been a considerable negative trend in stock health and reduction in harvestable biomass present in the UK 7e offshore area, corroborated through MMO landings and intelligence reports. Evidence suggests that predation resulting from the 2025 octopus bloom is having a negative impact on scallop stocks in addition to declining stock health. Therefore, MMO have determined to extend the management area for 2026 to cover the entirety of 7e to afford stocks opportunity to recover.

Paragraph 2.1.4 of the JFS states that “The fisheries policy authorities will place emphasis on rebuilding stocks and protecting the environment. This will need to be delivered in a manner that is sensitive to the needs of fishing interests”. A closure period of 1 July – 30 September 2026 has been chosen to protect during the peak spawning period for the stocks, which are either being fished below MSY (7d) or continues to sustain high levels of exploitation (7e).

2. Stock Assessment

MMO have referred to the Cefas stock assessment¹ published in 2024 which indicate trends in stock biomass and exploitation levels, with the limitation that figures for 2022 onwards are not definitive and 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 >12 meters (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

¹ Fincham et al. (2025) Assessment of king scallop stock status for selected waters around the English coast 2024. Published by Cefas, Available at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/68308562b33f68eaba953a59/SCE_assessment_report_2024.pdf

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.

As detailed above the Cefas stock survey assessment figures are in the process of being reviewed. Figures below are presented to explore general trends in stock health, with the understanding that figures presented for 2022 onwards may be subject to change.

3. Cefas data ICES division 7d

The most recent Cefas stock assessment ([Cefas stock assessment 2024](#)) suggests that the stock units assessed in the Eastern Channel (7d) are estimated to have generally been exploited above the MSY proxy target of 23.4% (Table 1), except for in 2019 and 2023 where they were at the MSY exploitation rate.

In 2018, the harvest rate was more than double the MSY proxy reference value of 23.4%, due to lower estimates of harvestable biomass combined with increased landings in 2018 of 16,659 tonnes (Table 1). The large variation in reported annual landings and estimated biomass suggests that the population assessed is not at equilibrium. However, the stock continues to look relatively healthy, despite fishing being above MSY proxy from 2017 to 2023.

Table 1: Harvest rate estimates for ICES division 7d (Eastern Channel North - 7.d.N). MSY proxy harvest rate is 23.4% based on the 2024 stock assessment.

Year	Landings (tonnes)	Harvestable Biomass in Dredged Area (tonnes)	Harvest Rate on Dredged Portion of Stock (%)	MSY Proxy Harvest Rate %
2017	10,040	22,981	43.69	23.4
2018	16,659	25,047	66.51	23.4
2019	8,258	34,612	23.86	23.4
2020	12,919	43,216	29.89	23.4
2021	14,857.	45,278	32.81	23.4
2022	10,240*	37,025**	27.66**	23.4
2023	10,633*	45,411**	23.42**	23.4

* Only UK landings data were available, non-UK landings are estimated based on recent trends.

**Figures are being revised and may be subject to change.

4. ICES division 7e

The most recent Cefas stock assessment ([Cefas stock assessment 2024](#))¹ suggests that the stock in the Western Channel 7.e.I (Inshore Cornwall) is estimated to have generally been exploited below the (MSY) proxy target of 24.2% (Table 2), except for in 2017 where it was above the MSY.

Table 2: Harvest rate estimates for Area 27.7.e.I (Inshore Cornwall) based on the 2024 stock assessment.

Year	International Landings (tonnes)	Harvestable Biomass in Dredged Area (tonnes)	Harvest Rate on Dredged Portion of Stock (%)	MSY Proxy Harvest Rate %
2017	2,423	7,337	33.03	24.2
2018	1,639	8,971	18.28	24.2
2019	1,927	10,378	18.57	24.2
2020	1,256	8,791	14.28	24.2
2021	1,748	8,576	20.38	24.2
2022	1,614*	14,994**	10.77**	24.2
2023	2,133*	14,740**	14.47**	24.2

* Only UK landings data were available, non-UK landings are estimated based on recent trends.

**Figures are being revised and may be subject to change.

In the Western Channel 7.e.L (Lyme Bay) harvest rates are estimated to be above the maximum sustainable yield (MSY) proxy target of 24.4% (Table 3), especially in 2022 when it was estimated to be 3 times above the MSY proxy.

Table 3: Harvest rate estimates for Area 27.7.e.L (Lyme Bay) based on the 2024 stock assessment

Year	International Landings (tonnes)	Harvestable Biomass in Dredged Area (tonnes)	Harvest Rate on Dredged Portion of Stock (%)	MSY Proxy Harvest Rate %
2017	1,526	2,636	57.90	24.4
2018	2,210	2,849	77.56	24.4
2019	1,387	3,384	40.98	24.4
2020	1,946	4,470	43.53	24.4
2021	1,794	2,622	68.43	24.4
2022	2,053*	2,808**	73.10**	24.4
2023	2,477*	3,880**	63.84**	24.4

* Only UK landings data were available, non-UK landings are estimated based on recent trends.

**Figures are being revised and may be subject to change.

In the Western Channel 7.e.O (Offshore EU and UK) harvest rates are estimated to be below the maximum sustainable yield (MSY) proxy target of 26.4% (Table 4). For 7.e.O (Offshore) there is a limitation to our understanding of the UK offshore area specifically, due to the figures provided in the Cefas assessment for 7.e.O (Offshore) area, including beds in the EU area of 7e.

Table 4: Harvest rate estimates for Area 27.7.e.O (Offshore EU & UK) based on the 2024 stock assessment

	International Landings (tonnes)	Harvestable Biomass in Dredged Area (tonnes)	Harvest Rate on Dredged Portion of Stock (%)	MSY Proxy Harvest Rate
2017	910	8,673	10.49	26.4
2018	1,488	10,746	13.84	26.4
2019	1,802	15,987	11.27	26.4
2020	2,939	35,370	8.31	26.4
2021	4,989	27,027	18.46	26.4
2022	6,412*	32,813.00**	19.54**	26.4
2023	4,053*	18,736.00**	21.63**	26.4

* Only UK landings data were available, non-UK landings are estimated based on recent trends. **Figures are being revised and may be subject to change.

5. Landings data

In ICES division 7d there is an increase of 2,765 tonnes landed from 2024 to 2025. In ICES division 7e there has been a decrease in landings between 2024 and 2025. The Overall landings for the year decreased slightly in 7e but increased in 7d beyond levels seen in 2023 (Table 5).

Table 3: Total yearly UK landings (tonnes) by UK vessels in ICES divisions 7d and 7e from 2023 to 2025.

Vessel Length	7d			7e		
	2023	2024	2025	2023	2024	2025
0-10 m	351	532	348	345	195	251
10.01-12 m	224	356	258	856	945	948
12.01-15 m	522	729	1843	1405	2108	824
15 m+	3596	5046	6934	2718	3642	1584
Total	4693	6663	9383	5324	6890	3607

In 2025 the 12 m and under UK fleet landed a total of 606 tonnes in 7d, with 8,822 tonnes landed by the over 12 m UK fleet. Over 90% of scallops from division 7d are landed by vessels 12 m and over.

During the 2025 closure period MMO observed some displaced effort across UK waters. Figure 7 (see annex) highlights that effort was displaced into alternative waters as vessels were unable to access 7d and Lyme Bay area of 7e during July – September 2025, showing that fishing behaviours were altered. Impacts can be identified in the English Channel, especially in the offshore area of 7e and the North Sea as well as Scottish waters during the July – September period, all of which are still areas with increased landings for 2025 when compared to 2024.

Landings trends varied notably across years: 7d showed increasing catches in the larger vessel classes, while 7e exhibited sharp declines in 2025 linked to a significant octopus predation event that reduced scallop biomass and caused fleet displacement. Fleet participation fell across most vessel length sectors, particularly in 7e, where vessel numbers declined from 78 in 2022 to 54 in 2025.

Table 4: Total UK vessel counts in UK waters in ICES divisions 7d and 7e from 2023 to 2025.

Vessel Count by Vessel Length	7d			7e		
	2023	2024	2025	2023	2024	2025
0-10 m	58	44	37	92	64	66
10.01-12 m	5	7	7	21	19	14
12.01-15 m	11	10	16	32	29	27
15 m+	31	31	34	63	65	54
Total	105	92	94	208	177	121

Observed behaviour during the 2025 octopus event suggests that while some vessels displaced effort, others did not fish or remained in the area with reduced profitability. Figure's 5 to 8 (annex) shows landings across the UK for 2024 and 2025. From this we can see an overall decrease in yearly landings from offshore areas especially offshore ICES 7e.

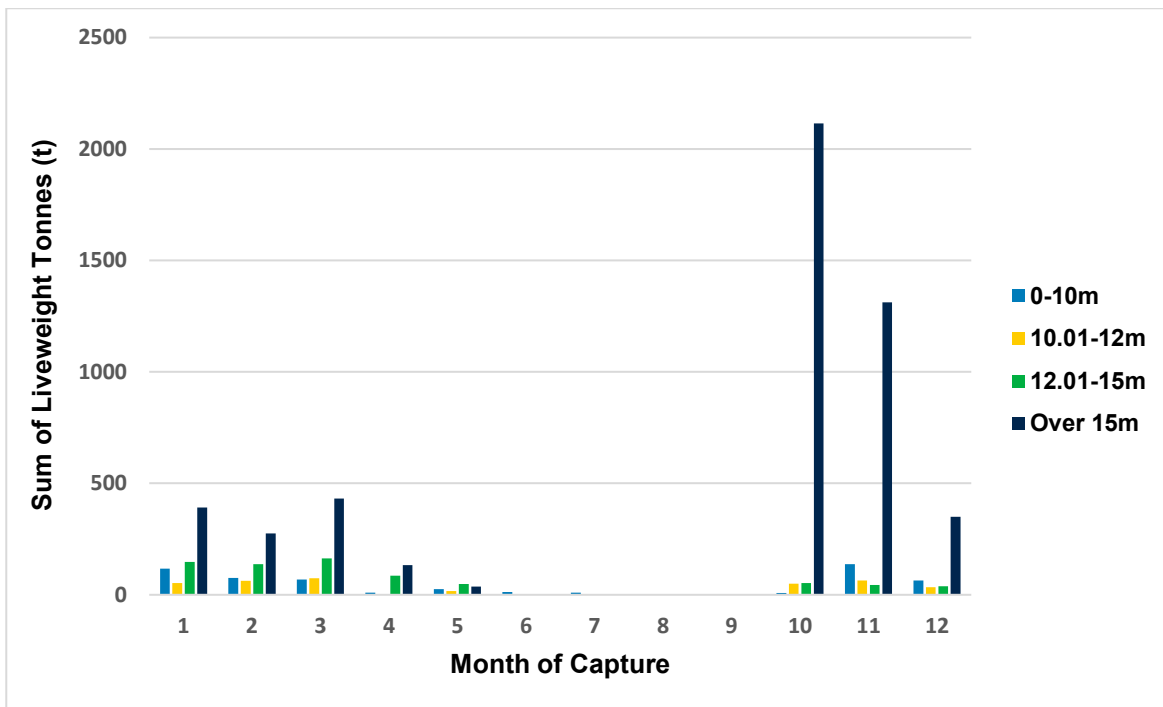


Figure 2a: Total live weight tonnes (t) of landings of king scallops by UK vessels in ICES division 7d (UK waters only) during 2024 by month (when a 4.5-month 15 May to 30 September closure was implemented). The different colours display UK vessel length fleet sector.

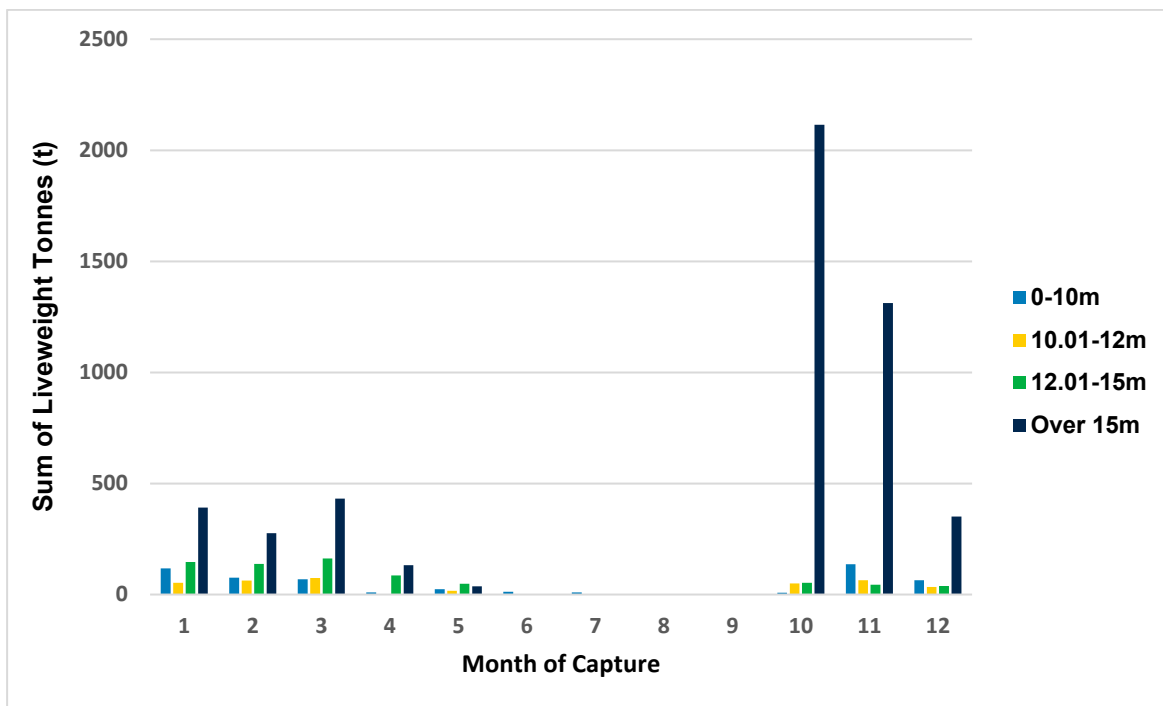


Figure 2b: Total live weight tonnes (t) of landings of king scallops by UK vessels in ICES division 7d (UK waters only) during 2025 by month (3 month 1 July to 30 September closure). The different colours display UK vessel length fleet sectors.

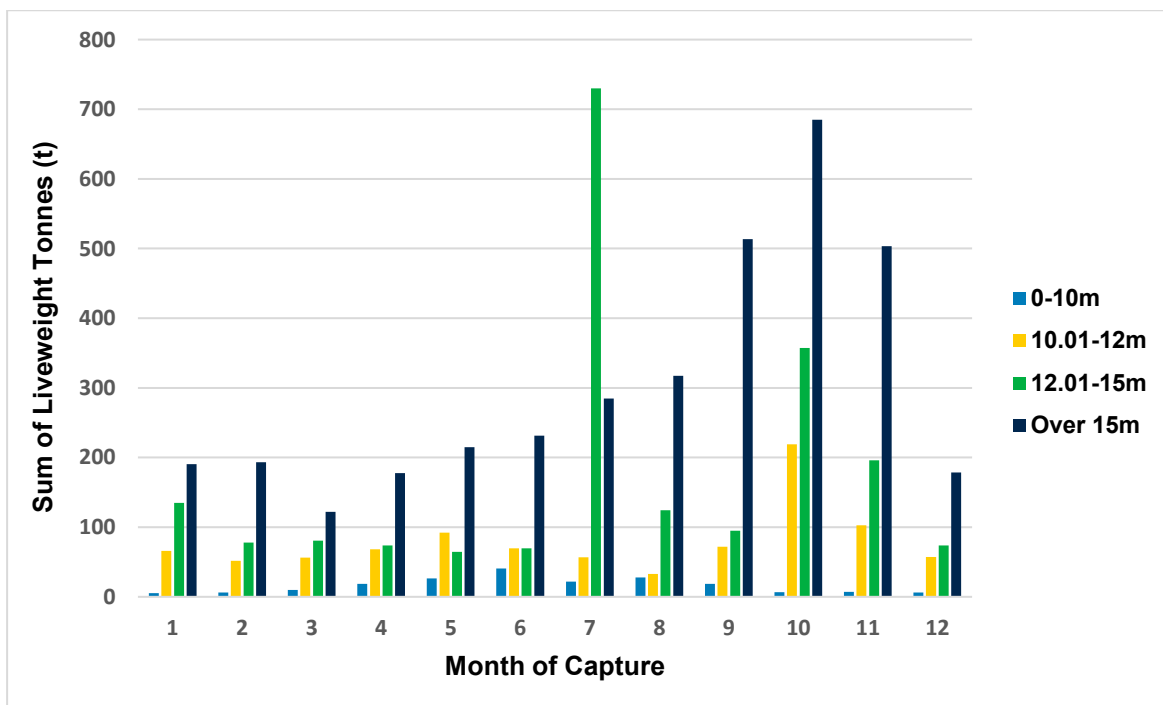


Figure 3a: Total live weight tonnes (t) of landings of king scallops by UK vessels in ICES division 7e (UK Waters only) during 2024, by month (when a 4.5-month 15 May to 30 September closure was implemented). The different colours display UK vessel length fleet sector.

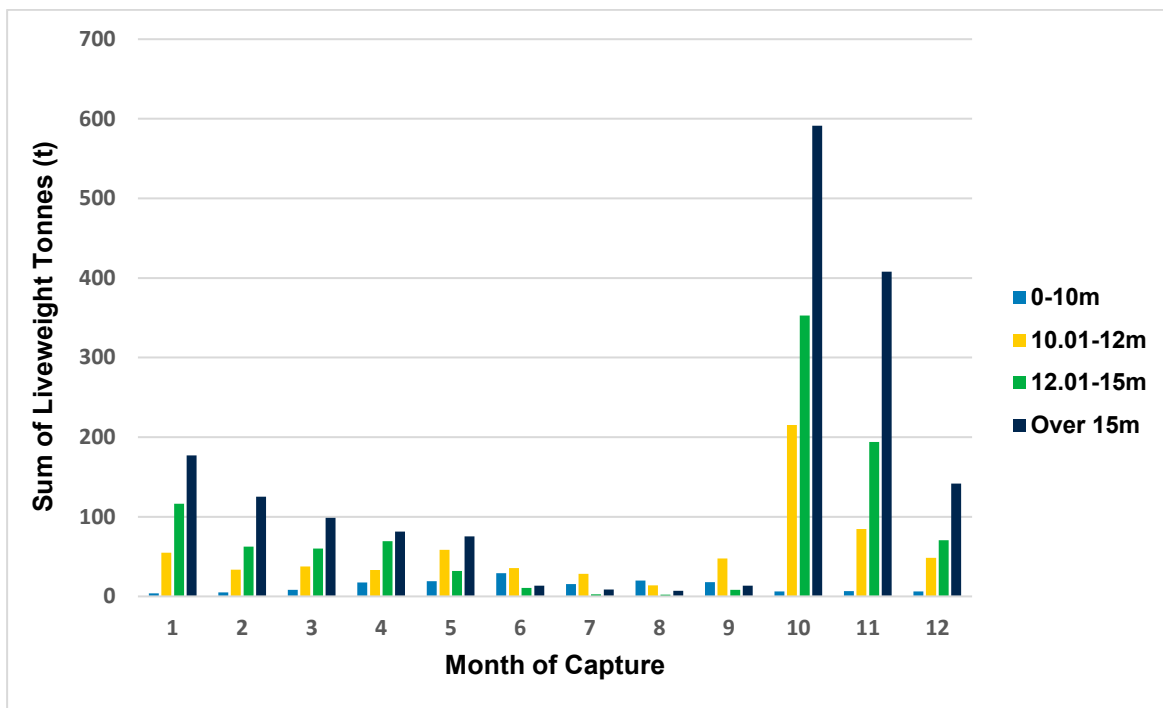


Figure 3b: Total live weight tonnes (t) of landings of king scallops by UK vessels in 7e Lyme Bay area of 7e during 2024 by month (when a 4.5-month 15 May to 30 September closure was implemented). The different colours display UK vessel length fleet sectors.

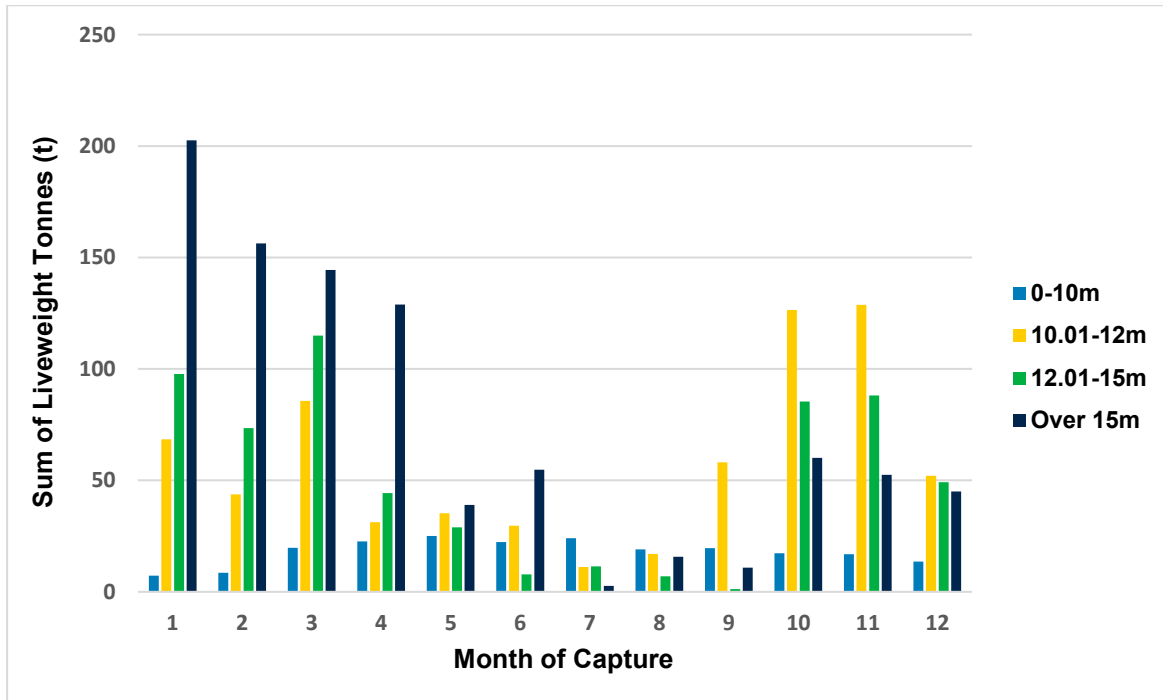


Figure 4a: Total live weight tonnes (t) of landings of king scallops by UK vessels in Lyme Bay area of 7e during 2025 by month (3 month 1 July to 30 September closure). The different colours display UK vessel length fleet sectors.

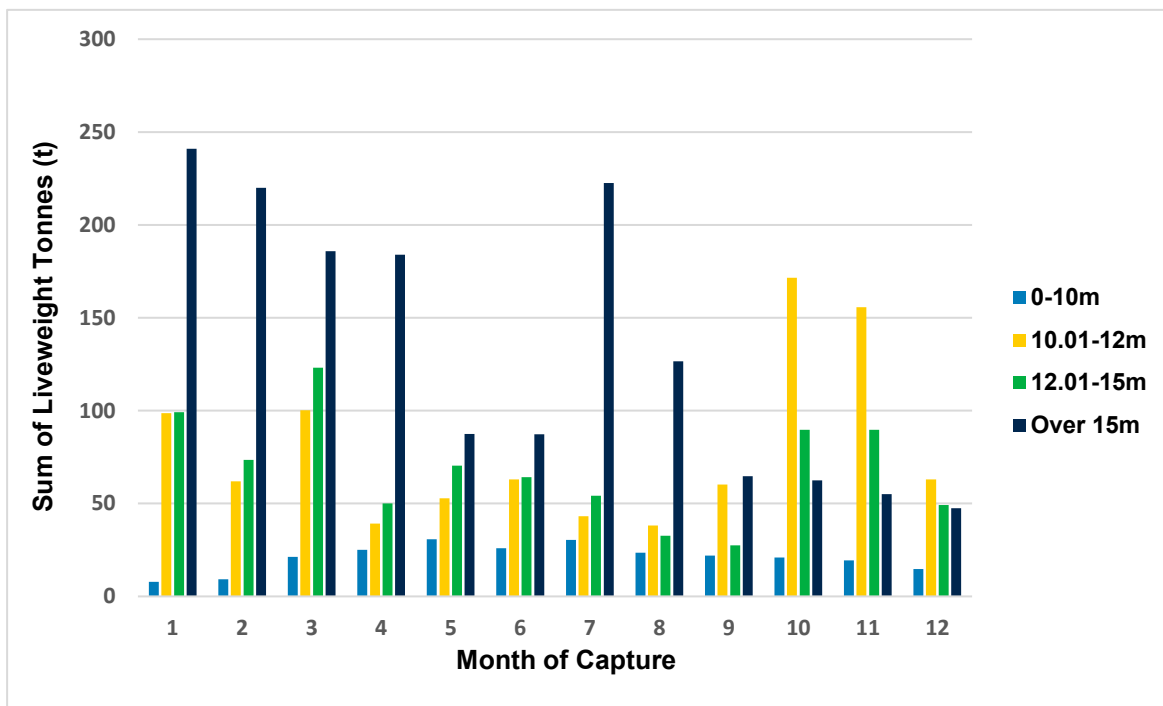


Figure 4b: Total live weight tonnes (t) of landings of king scallops by UK vessels in all of 7e during 2025 by month for different vessel size fleet sectors (3 month 1 July to 30 September closure). The different colours display UK vessel length fleet sectors.

6. Summary of Consultation Responses

The consultation ran from 10 November 2025 – 30 November 2025 with information on background of the fishery, reasoning for the proposed closure and consultation questions available for review [here](#).

Individuals who are the nominated contact on the domestic fishing vessel licence system, and other interested parties were directly emailed to notify them of the consultation. Additionally, communications regarding the consultation were published on social media.

33 representations to the consultation were received including responses from industry groups, fisheries managers, individuals and a mixture of sectors from under 10 m vessels to over 15 m vessels. Responses were also received from EU member states. A summary of responses can be found below, and further details in the Annex 2. Numbers presented below are to indicate general responses to the consultation and are **not** indicative of the number of people each respondent was representative of. Questions were not compulsory and not every respondent answered every question, as a result, the number of responses differs between questions.

The consultation asked “MMO would like to seek your views on a proposed closure prohibiting UK and EU king scallop dredge fishing for vessels in UK waters of ICES division 7d and 7e from 1 July to 30 September 2026 and 2027.”

Overall, there was a mixed response with regards to the proposed closure, points were raised in favour of and against. Many did not support a closure at all, and others indicated that they were supportive of an extended closure of May to September in both 7d and 7e, or only a closure in the 7d area.

Of the 33 respondents, 13 supported the proposed closure in the UK waters of 7d and 7e from 1 July to 30 September 2026 and 2027. Those who selected this option primarily named protection to the scallop spawning stock through the restriction of the impact of scallop dredging as the leading reason. Other reasons included protection the closure will offer to channel brown crab breeding and migration zones, the small vessel exemption protecting the respondents and a want to restrict the effort of large vessels.

12 respondents were against any closure, noting economic impact and the lack of relocation options due to spatial squeeze as the leading reason. The impact of octopus predation on king scallop biomass was also raised as a reason that the closure is inappropriate as respondents felt king scallop biomass will not increase sufficiently and as a result a closure will be ineffective.

2 respondents would like to see a longer closure of May- September in order to encourage stock recovery and to align with the French closure period. Concerns were raised that the stock understanding does not differentiate between UK and EU waters so management of the area should be considered together.

Some respondents only supported a closure in 7d, citing the displacement caused by a closure of 7e to the North Sea and the impact of octopus in the area as issues for a

closure in 7e.

Alternative forms of management were suggested such as technical measures. Further details of these are included in the Annex.

Information provided during consultation by key theme

Points below have been drawn out from responses received during consultation and grouped into key themes for consideration.

Environmental theme

- Scientific evidence suggests a closure can protect the stock during spawning as well as reducing the environmental impacts from dredging. Peak spawning is typically summer, although spawning events occur from spring through to October.
- The potential impacts of any closures are uncertain. A closure would be expected to materialise as an increase in the average level of future recruitments. However, it would be difficult to separate management benefits from natural variability for a single event. The additional benefits of a longer closure compared with a shorter closure is also unknown.
- If overall effort patterns across the year are not reduced, it can negate any positive impact of a closure.
- If any displaced effort from the 7d closure is redirected to 7e, there is a risk to the sustainability of the local scallop population.

Social and economic theme

- Environmental and stock benefits must be balanced against socio-economic needs, allowing for sustainable fishing to be achieved.
- Consultation responses and engagement with the SICG brought to our attention that the extended closure period implemented in 2024 had significant economic and social impacts on the UK scallop fleet.
- Increase in spatial extent to include entirety of 7e brings increased risk to businesses for catching and processing sections.
- Displacement to the 7e offshore area and subsequent gear conflict as a result of the longer 2024 closure was highlighted.
- Economic impacts included distorted market for king scallops, problems fulfilling orders from customers, the disproportionate impacts of a closure on certain sections of the fleet, loss of valuable roe-on scallops for export, limited time to adequately prepare and the loss of valuable time fishing for scallops which are in good condition.

Exclusion of the 10m and under fleet from the 7d closure and the 12m and under fleet from the 7e closure

- Consultation responses suggest that the under 10m and under 12m fleet are suffering due to limited opportunities for diversification. Although landings data and consultation responses suggest that they do not predominantly target scallops during the closure period, including them would further limit their opportunities for diversification.

Respondents suggested that smaller vessels often operate under smaller profit margins and further limiting their opportunities for diversification could disproportionately impact them economically.

- Many small coastal communities in 7d and 7e are reliant on the smaller vessels which often operate directly out of their ports – including them in the closure has the potential to impact these communities.
- Although many smaller vessels are still capable of operating large numbers of dredges, many of them fish within 0-12nm and are heavily dependent on weather. Both of these place an additional limitation on the effort exerted on the stock by these vessels.
- Numbers of under 10 m vessels fishing for scallops in 7e and 7d have been falling from 2022-2024 (Table 3).

7. Consultation outcome

Having considered the consultation responses, socio-economic information provided by stakeholders, and considered all available scientific advice on the stock biomass and environmental health. MMO have determined to introduce a closure in UK waters of 7d and 7e (Figure 1) for the king scallop dredge fishery from 1 July to 30 September 2026.

In 2026 the 7d closure will apply to all UK and EU vessels over 10 metres in length and the 7e closure will apply to all UK and EU vessels over 12 metres in length. This is intended to provide access to fishing opportunities for vessels who would otherwise be unable to transit to alternative fishing grounds or target alternative fisheries.

When considering this decision UK Fishery Authorities (UKFAs) must be mindful of the principles of public law which includes requiring measures to be necessary and expedient for the regulation of sea fishing, as well as being proportionate and enforceable. UKFAs also considered the Fisheries Act 2020 in their decision making including the sustainability objective and environmental, social and economic considerations.

MMO will continue to monitor data, scientific advice and feedback from industry to ensure that the closure achieves its objectives.

A summary of the reasoning for this decision is outlined below:

A closure length from 1 July to 30 September for 7d and 7e would allow a balanced approach to protect stock during spawning, whilst aiming to allow for sustainable exploitation to occur and aligning with MMO's obligations under the Joint Fisheries Statement and Fisheries Act.

The decision to implement a three-month gear-restriction closure from 1 July to 30 September, aligns directly with the peak reproductive period for king scallops. The prohibition of dredge activity for vessels >12 m in 7e ensures the retention of a substantial proportion of the spawning biomass within this region.

The projected biomass retention: 1,785 tonnes based on the 2022-2024 average, or 1,468

tonnes based on the 2022-2025 average, indicates measurable ecological benefit through increased protection of mature scallops during spawning.

In 7d, where a long-standing seasonal closure already exists, this does not introduce additional environmental change. The resulting environmental impact in 7d therefore remains neutral but consistent with ongoing management objectives intended to sustain long-term stock productivity. Overall, this decision provides a high level of ecological benefit in 7e, while maintaining continuity with existing spatial measures in 7d.

Environmental consideration

Although the exploitation rate of the offshore area of 7e in the Western Channel 7.e.O (Offshore EU & UK) is estimated to be below the MSY proxy, these figures are due to be revised therefore reducing confidence in the available estimates. Draft stock survey data, landings and intelligence reports have provided evidence that there has been a considerable negative impact to the UK beds in the 7e offshore area observed, therefore for a precautionary approach the decision is to close the whole of 7e to vessels over 12m from July to September 2026 and 2027.

In determining which precautionary approach to take MMO have considered the extension in area provides direct protection to the areas understood to be most at risk, whilst affording the same level of protection as the previous closure period, without an increase to the duration which would be considered the most precautionary approach.

Displacement of fishing activity is anticipated as a likely consequence of any closure period, which has resulted in poorer meat yields being reported in previous years. Displacement maps found in the annex present the areas whereby activity is known to have occurred during previous closure periods and are considered likely to occur during the 2026 closure period. This will likely result in an increase in fuel use and extend the footprint of seabed disturbance beyond the traditional management areas. However, MMO deem it necessary to afford protection to the stocks understood to be at risk, aiming to ensure long term sustainable exploitation and viability of such key areas for future years.

Socio-economic consideration

It was shared by stakeholders that an increase in extent or a return to a 15 May – 30 September closure would have a detrimental impact on the catching and processing sectors, bringing into question the economic viability of the sector, whilst introducing significant risk to jobs both at sea and in the supporting land-based infrastructure.

Furthermore, UK vessels could lose access to appropriately sized roe-on scallops identified by stakeholders as a key market for the UK industry, if a return to the 4.5 month closure period was determined. Stakeholder responses also suggest that any closure would result in socio-economic issues, with no overall decrease in total landings, without the introduction of additional management measures alongside the closure period.

MMO must balance fishing interests against stock and environmental benefits. Evidence suggests that a longer closure period would again result in prolonged displaced effort and significant socio-economic impacts, which would likely be increased this year by the environmental need to protect additional areas. MMO have aimed to minimise socio-economic impacts where possible and have ensured access to roe-on scallops remains by not increasing duration, therefore allowing access to scallops during the known spawning period. Although a closure does not introduce a limit to fishing activity and therefore landings, it does provide necessary protection directly to stocks considered in the

management decision.

A request was raised for the MMO to consider increasing the size of the vessels excluded from management measures. MMO are not proposing to increase the size threshold at this time due to additional risk to stock health as larger vessels have greater fishing capacity which could lead to extra pressure on stocks. There is also a limitation of scientific evidence, the current evidence does not provide sufficient certainty to support a change at this time.

MMO elected to exempt vessels 10 m in length and under from the 7d closure and vessels 12 m in length and under from 7e closure for the following reasons. These size classes are heavily dependent on weather which imposes a natural limit on the number of days they can spend at sea. Smaller vessels often have finer profit margins and a lack of options for diversification can increase this vulnerability. Exempting smaller vessels from the closure gives them the ability to switch to scallop fishing should they need, providing alternative income opportunities. In 2025 landings by these exempted vessel classes were low during the closure period suggesting limited impact on the stock.

MMO will monitor and analyse landings data from all vessel lengths throughout 2026 to ensure mirroring the 2026 closure in 2027 is the correct decision. MMO will monitor landings from exempted vessel classes to ensure levels of fishing activity does not risk the objectives of the closure. Should this indicate that the stock sustainability objective of the closure isn't being met the MMO will react accordingly to undertake the most appropriate management action.

Other considerations

When making the decision, MMO has also taken into account all policy and legislative considerations.

Within the consultation responses that were received, concern over the wider environmental impacts have been received, such as the impact of dredging on crab stocks.

Concerns were raised that vessels displaced from 7d and 7e will encroach on [mid-channel potting boxes](#)², resulting in gear conflict and bycatch of other important species. MMO will monitor VMS and landings data to consider whether the chosen management option is having an impact to nearby stocks of other species. As part of the MMO's communications regarding the closure, these mid-channel potting box arrangements will be highlighted to increase awareness and aim to prevent displacement into these areas.

This decision has considered national policy such as the relevant marine plans and the Joint Fisheries Statement, to ensure the short term social and economic risks have been balanced with long term health of the marine environment that provide resilience to coastal communities whilst protecting the stock for future fisheries.

This decision does not set a precedent for any potential future closures, and future decisions on fishing effort and gear restrictions will be made through the [king scallop](#)

² [Grounds - IPA / Mid Channel / Lyme - SOUTH DEVON & CHANNEL SHELLFISHERMEN](#)

[fisheries management plan \(FMP\)](#) using best available scientific evidence and with input from a cross section of the scallop industry. The FMP sets out a holistic approach to king scallop management where seasonal closures (if deemed appropriate) will be implemented alongside other management to ensure sustainable fishing of the stock.

Improving non-quota species management, including shellfish stocks, is a priority for Government as we work towards developing and implementing longer term approaches. This will be supported through the Fisheries Management Plans and international agreements on non-quota species such as the Trade and Cooperation Agreement, as set out in the Joint Fisheries Statement.

Exercises such as this consultation and the introduction of improved measures, alongside continued engagement with industry and scientists, will help inform these longer-term management approaches and improve the evidence on which decisions around future management will be based. This approach will also help to ensure the impacts of any future management measures are fully understood, both in terms of the likely socio-economic impacts and the level of protection they provide to the stocks.

The decision has been assessed against the South¹ and the Southwest² Marine plans:

This activity is compliant with the following marine plan policies in the South Marine Plan³: S- FISH-1, S-EMP-2, S-SOC-1, S-BIO-2, S-FISH-4. The remaining policies in the South Marine Plan are not applicable to this decision.

This activity is compliant with the following marine plan policies in the Southwest Marine Plan⁴: SW- FISH-1, SW- FISH-2, SW- FISH-3, SW-EMP-1, SW-SOC-1, SW-BIO-2. The remaining policies in the Southwest Marine Plan are not applicable to this decision.

8. Next steps

The following closure in UK waters for the king scallop dredge fishery will be enacted via a fishing vessel licence variation:

- ICES division 7d for all UK and EU vessels over 10m from 1 July to 30 September 2026
- ICES division 7e for all UK and EU vessels over 12m from 1 July to 30 September 2026

UK fishing vessel licence holders (or their nominees) who hold a scallop entitlement or have recorded dredges as a gear in their fishing logbook will be notified of the variation by email.

All UK vessel licence variations can be found [here](#).

All EU vessels with a UK foreign vessel licence for UK waters will be notified of the

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-south-marine-plans-documents>

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-south-west-marine-plans-documents>

variation by email by the UK Single Issuing Authority (UKSIA).

All foreign vessel licence variations can be found [here](#).

Annex 1

Maps

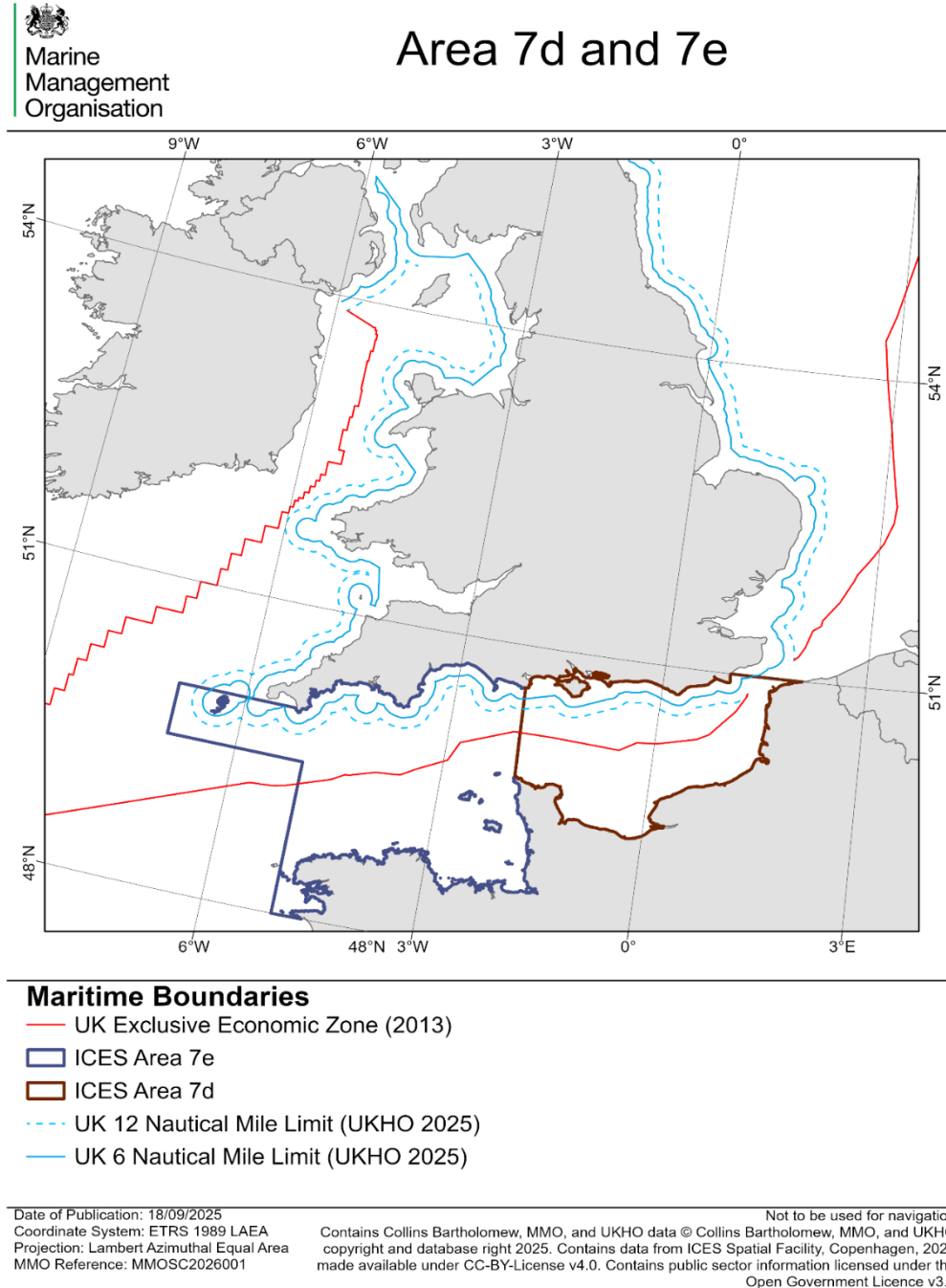
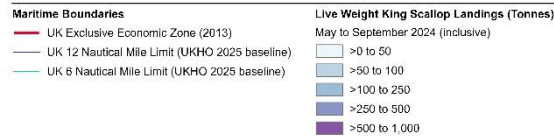
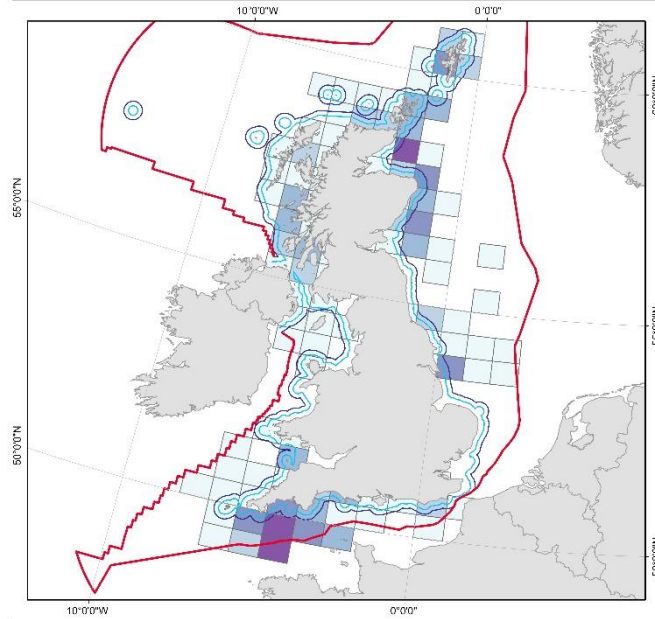


Figure 3 - Map of ICES divisions 7d and 7e

UK King Scallop (*Pectens maximus*) Landings

Live weight landings by UK vessels in UK waters per ICES rectangle into all ports - May to September 2024 (inclusive)



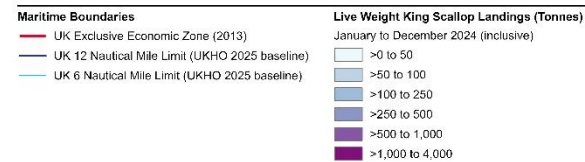
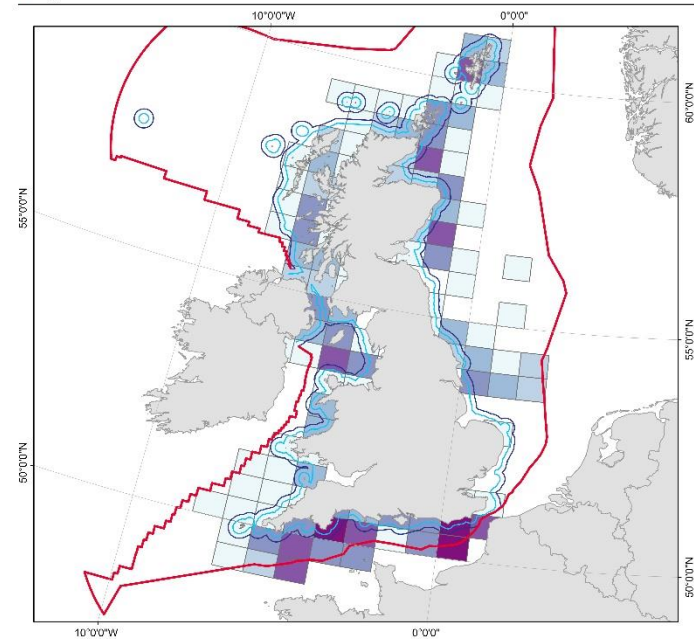
Date of Publication: 02/03/2026
 Datum: ETRS 1989
 Projection: Lambert Azimuthal Equal Area
 MMO Reference: GIS0075

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Figure 4 – UK King Scallop Landings by ICES rectangle May – September 2024

UK King Scallop (*Pectens maximus*) Landings

Live weight landings by UK vessels in UK waters per ICES rectangle into all ports - January to December 2024 (inclusive)



Date of Publication: 02/03/2026
 Datum: ETRS 1989
 Projection: Lambert Azimuthal Equal Area
 MMO Reference: GIS0075

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Figure 5 – UK King Scallop Landings by ICES rectangle January - December 2024

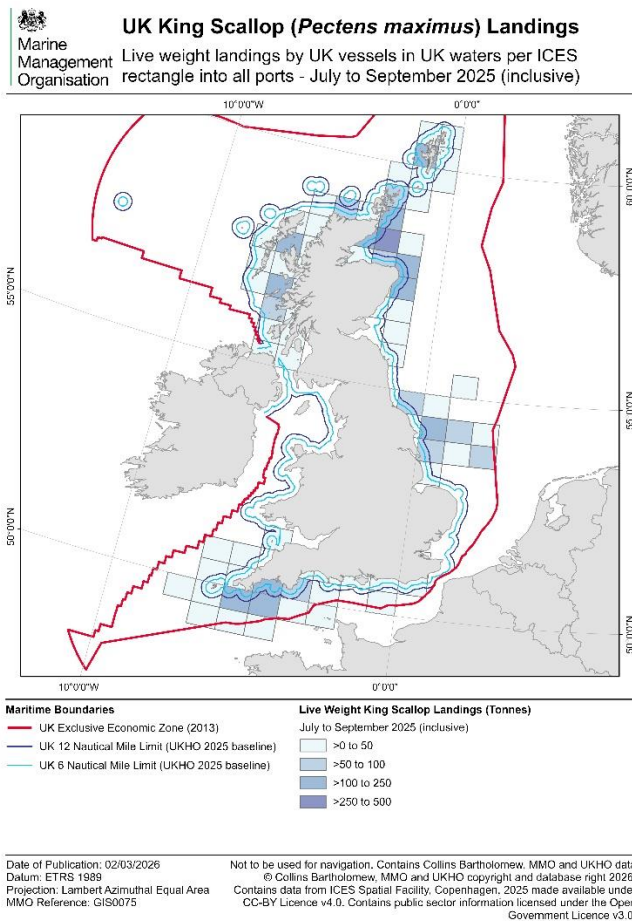


Figure 6 – UK King Scallop Landings by ICES rectangle July – September 2025

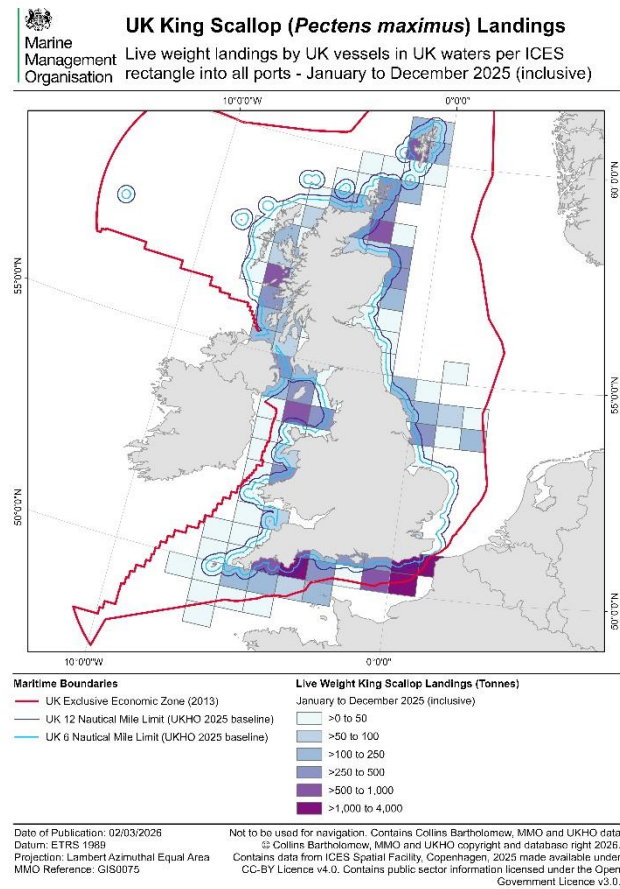


Figure 7 – UK King Scallop Landings by ICES rectangle – January – December 2025

Annex 2

Consultation Responses

Summary of Responses to the Consultation Questions

This consultation ran from 10 November 2025 – 30 November 2025 with information on background of the fishery, reasoning for the proposed closure and consultation questions available for review [here](#). Further detail of responses can be found below, numbers presented below are to indicate general responses to the consultation and are **not** indicative of the number of people each respondent was representative of. Questions were not compulsory therefore not every respondent answered every question, as a result the number of responses differs between questions.

Notably, the consultation asked “MMO would like to seek your views on a proposed closure prohibiting UK and EU king scallop dredge fishing for vessels in UK waters of ICES divisions 7d & 7e from 1 July to 30 September 2026 & 2027.”

1. How would this proposed closure of ICES divisions 7d and 7e to king scallop dredging impact you and your business?

A range of comments were received. Some respondents indicated that the proposed closure would benefit their business due to the protection for scallop spawning and therefore support the sustainability of the stock. Some owners of smaller vessels cited that they would have greater access with a small vessel exemption. Others said that their business would not withstand the closure, that they would have to tie up vessels or that the closure would not have an impact on stock health. Economic, operational and displacement challenges as a consequence of the proposed closure were also raised. There was some support for restrictions in 7d but not 7e.

2. Do you consider your business to rely on king scallop fishing all year round?

- 18 respondents selected Yes
- 7 respondents selected No

3. 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?

Other fishing activity such as pot fishing for species such as whelk and beam trawling were raised. Some respondents noted that king scallops make up an important part of annual sale.

4. If you are a vessel owner/vessel agent or skipper: in which length group is your vessel?

- 7 respondents represented 10m and under vessels
- 6 respondents represented 10.01m-12m vessels
- 6 respondents represented 12.01m-15m vessels
- 6 respondents represented over 15m vessels
- 2 respondents represented not a vessel owner.

Please note responses were submitted by representatives of multiple size classes of vessels.

5. Would you consider any alternative areas to be of concern for displaced effort as a result of any proposed closure? i.e. ICES rectangles other than those covered in the closure, or other areas such as the mid-channel potting blocks.

North Wales, Northeast of Scotland and the North Sea were alternative areas raised in response to this question. Some respondents commented that they would not be able to displace effort due to small vessel size limitations or local crew.

6. Do you have any other comments?

Representatives of smaller vessels highlighted the importance of an exemption due to the limitations of travelling further afield and ability to diversify gear.

Respondents representing vessels 12-15m in length expressed they face similar challenges to smaller vessels such as being unable to fish during adverse weather, lack of diversification options and travel limitations. Some 12-15m vessel owners/representatives responded that they will be put out of business unless included in the exemption.

Alternatively, it was raised that the inshore area should be reserved for under 10m vessels that cannot compete with weather and travel. It was added that the proposed measure would protect brown crab breeding and migration zone and prevent effort displacement into sensitive areas.

Alternative suggestions to the proposed closure included:

- Inclusion of vessels under 15m length in exemption
- Introduction of a dredge limit of 6/10/12 aside in the Channel
- Opening the Dogger Bank MPA for controlled scalloping
- Shortening of 7d closure

- Controlled access arrangement in the Eastern Channel to allow for the market for roe on scallops to continue
- Effort limitation (days at sea/ number of vessels)
- Partial/ rotational closures/ fallowing
- Smaller closure area
- Removal of the small vessel exemption to encourage faster recovery
- Increase dredge ring size to improve selectivity
- Limit pot fishing to reduce gear conflict