





## Introduction

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

This document explains the fishing gear rules in the Celtic Sea area (also known as the Celtic Sea Protection Zone).

The measures apply to all types of bottom trawl and seines (excluding beam trawls and Nephrops vessels) as these gears have highly mixed catches including valuable non-quota species with bycatch of cod, haddock and whiting.

Technical measures have been introduced in recent years aimed at conserving cod and haddock in the Celtic Sea area. Current Celtic Sea technical measures are written in licence conditions for UK and foreign vessel licences in UK waters.

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:

### Twine thickness

- 6mm maximum for single twine cod-ends
- 4mm maximum for double twine cod-ends
- Lighter twine is recommended where possible and conditional on certain derogations (see below).
- Lifting/strengthening bags are prohibited other than for vessels targeting Nephrops





## UK CSPZ Outer zone – Green area seen on chart

Demersal trawlers (including seines) operating in the outer CSPZ zone within UK waters must use:

- 100mm codend with a 100mm square mesh panel

*A 100mm square mesh panel is not required within UK waters of VIIe east of 5° west (see green line area).*

## UK CSPZ Inner zone – Yellow area seen on chart

Vessels fishing with demersal trawls and seines operating in the inner CSPZ zone within UK waters (*within ICES divisions from VIIf, VIIg, the part of VIIh north of latitude 49°30' North and the part of VIIj North of latitude 49°30' North and East of longitude 11° West*), the baseline mesh size is either:

- 110mm codend with a 120mm square mesh panel
- 120mm codend

## EU CSPZ Outer zone – Dark blue area seen on chart

Demersal trawlers (including seines) must operate using a baseline 100mm cod-end when operating in the outer EU CSPZ zone (*within ICES divisions VIIf to VIIk and in the area west of longitude 5°W in ICES division VIIe*).

Smaller mesh sizes are permitted for associated conditions (directed fishing for a variety of species), as stated in Regulation (EU) 2019/1241, Annex VI Part B.

## EU CSPZ Inner zone – Light blue area seen on chart

Vessels fishing with demersal trawls and seines operating in the inner CSPZ zone within EU waters (*within ICES divisions from VIIf, VIIg, the part of VIIh north of latitude 49°30' North and the part of VIIj North of latitude 49°30' North and East of longitude 11° West*). the baseline mesh size is either:

- 110mm codend with a 120mm square mesh panel
- 120mm codend

In addition, fishing vessels fishing with otter trawls whose catches weighed before any discards consist of at least 20 % of haddock (*Melanogrammus aeglefinus*) shall use a fishing gear that is constructed with a minimum of one metre spacing between the fishing line and ground gear



## Derogations:

- Within the inner CSPZ (yellow and light blue areas seen on charts) vessels catching more than 55% hake, angler and megrim may continue to use a 100mm codend with a 100mm square mesh panel. In EU waters (light blue area seen on chart) vessels may also use 100mm T90 cod-end extension.
- In the part of VIIIf East of the 5°W line, a derogation allows for an 80mm codend, provided the trawl is fitted with a 120mm square mesh panel, where the catch of gadoids (cod, haddock and saithe) caught, are less than 10% of the total catch over a full trip.

## Derogations pending ongoing scientific assessments

A new derogation will apply pending ongoing scientific assessment of the use of lighter twine in inshore fisheries.

- Vessels operating demersal trawls and seines in the 12 nautical mile belt of VIIIf and ICES rectangles 28E3 and 28E4 of VIIe, may use a codend of 100mm without a square mesh panel, provided that a single twine of a 5mm thickness is used.
- Vessels of 12m overall length or less with an engine power of 221kw or less may fish with 80mm cod-ends within the 12nm belt east of 5°W in ICES VIIe. When using 80mm cod-ends under this derogation vessels must comply with the technical conservation rules set out in regulation 1241/2019; for example, when fishing for sole and non-TAC species with 80mm gear, and a 80mm square mesh panel must be fitted.

The measures are intended to be flexible and take account of any evidence that supports further derogations. Proposals for gathering evidence for further derogations can be submitted to the MMO. Guidance will be updated with any new derogations or their withdrawal.

Vessels must follow the minimum requirements when within EU waters of the Celtic Sea Protection Zone.

## 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.

Fish Species you can Discard	Fishing Gear	UK ICES Area	Exemption
Skates and Rays	All Gears	VI and VII	Survival
Plaice (PLE)	Otter and Pair Trawlers	VIIId, to VIIg	Survival
Nephrops (NEP)	Demersal Trawls	VII	Survival
Whiting (WHG)	Demersal Trawls, Seines and Pair Trawls	VIIId to VIIj	<i>De Minimis</i>
Mackerel (MAC) and Horse Mackerel (JAX)	Demersal Trawls, Seines and Pair Trawls	VI and VIIId to VIIj	<i>De Minimis</i>
Haddock (HAD)	Demersal Trawls, Seines and Pair Trawls	VIIe to VIIj	<i>De Minimis</i>
Boarfish	Demersal Trawls and Pair Trawls	VIIId to VIIj	<i>De Minimis</i>
Megrim below MCRS	Beam trawls, Demersal trawls and Pair Trawls	VII	<i>De Minimis</i>