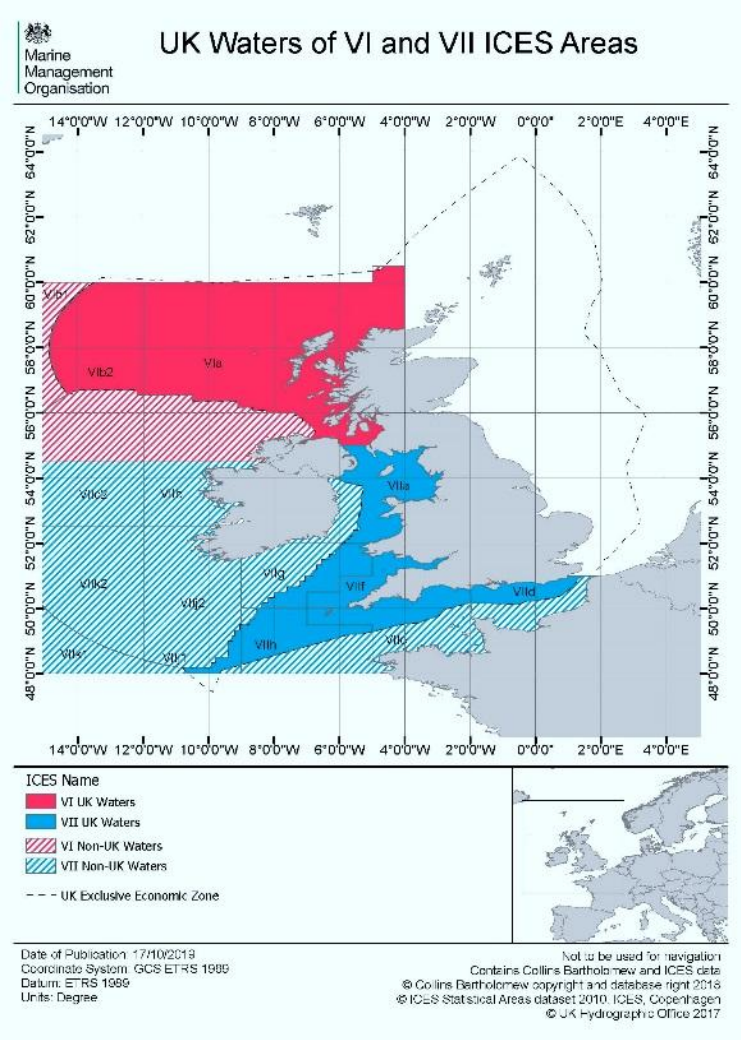
Document No.: V1
Date of Issue: November 2026

Marine Management Organisation

Fishing gear requirements and Landing Obligation exemptions. Updated November 2026

Applicable to Beam trawlers fishing in UK waters of the 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

The guidance 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 UK section of the North-Western Waters applicable to beam trawlers.

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.

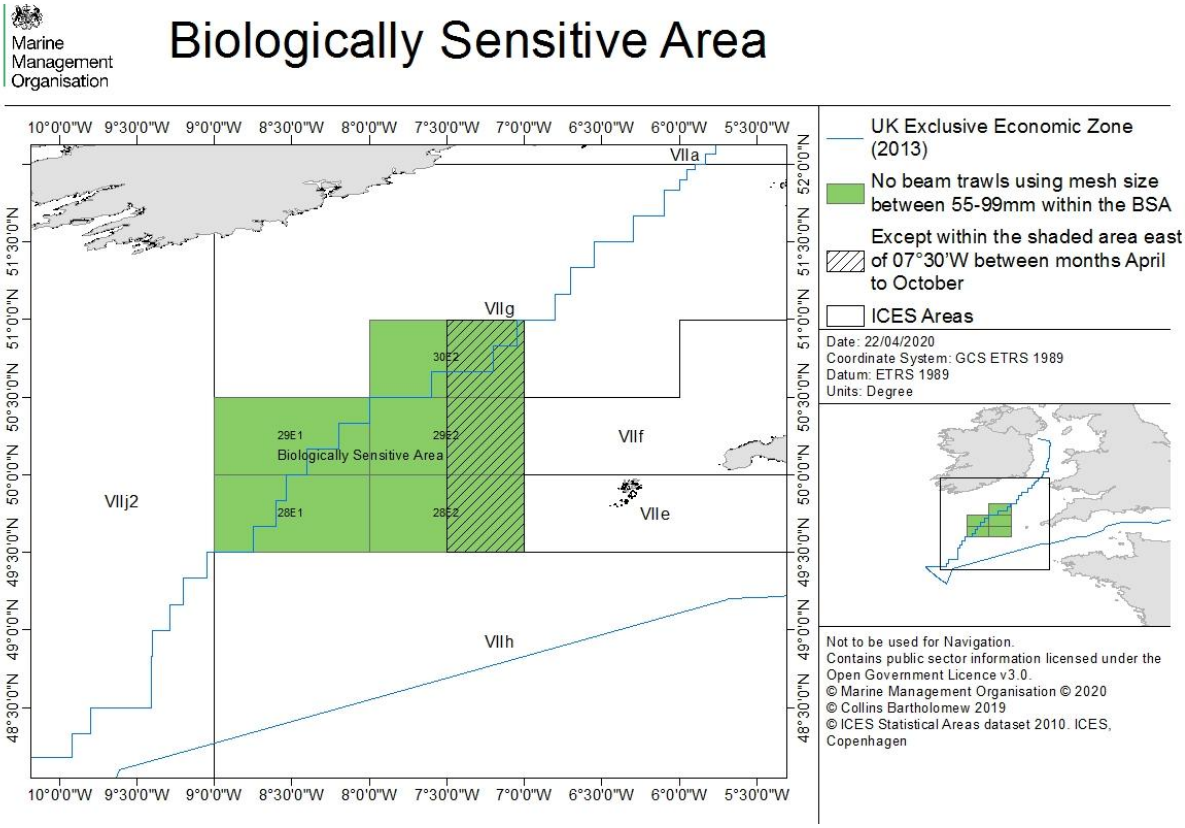
When operating in EU waters please refer to the EC rules on discarding
https://ec.europa.eu/oceans-and-fisheries/fisheries/rules/discarding-fisheries_en

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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.

- Biologically Sensitive Area (BSA): No beam trawls using mesh size between 55-99mm within the BSA *(ICES rectangles 28E1, 28E2, 29E1, 29E2 or 30E2).*
    - Except within the shaded area east of 07°30'W between months April to October.



- Cod ends must be sewn into net
- Equal number of meshes in top and bottom panels
- The baseline mesh size in this area is a 100mm cod-end and this must be used where catches exceed 20% of cod, haddock and saithe combined.
- If you have a catch of less than 20% haddock *(with the exception of Nephrops vessels as derogated in the North-Western Waters discard plan)* fishing in VIIf-k and VIIe west of 5° West, must use a 100mm cod-end

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- If you have a catch of less than 20% of cod, haddock and saithe combined, then you may use a mesh size below 100mm as specified below:

Gear selectivity requirements

All mesh sizes specified are the minimum.

Table 1: Standard gears that you must use

Fishery	ICES Area	Standard gears
Sole and mixed demersal species	VIIa, b, f, g, h, and j	80mm cod-end and a headline panel with at least 180mm mesh
Sole and mixed demersal species	VIIe	90mm cod-end and a headline panel with at least 180mm mesh. In UK waters, vessels ≤12m length **and** ≤221kW, or vessels operating within the 6 nm limit that are permitted to operate within the jurisdiction of an Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority, may continue to use an 80mm cod-end under a derogation.
Sole and mixed demersal species	VIId	90mm cod-end. In UK waters, vessels ≤12m length **and** ≤221kW, or vessels operating within the 6 nm limit that are permitted to operate within the jurisdiction of an Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority, may continue to use an 80mm cod-end under a derogation.

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.

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- 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	IV and VII	Survival	No Conditions
Plaice (PLE)	VIIa and VIId to VIIg	Survival	**For fishing vessels with an engine power of 221 kW or less:** The fishing vessel is no more than 24m long (LOA). The towing time is no more than 1.5 hours duration (1 hour and 30 minutes). Fishing within 12 nautical miles of the coast.
Plaice (PLE)	VIIa and VIId to VIIj	Survival	**For fishing vessels with an engine power of more than 221 kW:** Uses beam trawls fitted with a flip-up rope* or Benthos** release panel.
Monkfish	VIId to VIIj UK waters only	*De Minimis*	No Conditions.
Whiting (WHG)	VIId to VIIj	*De Minimis*	No Conditions.
Dover Sole (SOL)	VIIa, VIId to VIIj	*De Minimis*	A Flemish Panel*** must be fitted.
Haddock (HAD)	VIIe to VIIj	*De Minimis*	No Conditions.
Horse Mackerel (JAX)	VIId to VIIj	*De Minimis*	No Conditions.
Mackerel (MAC)	VI and VIId to VIIj	*De Minimis*	No Conditions.

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Megrim – below MCRS	VII	*De Minimis*	No Conditions.
Species below minimum conservation reference size.	VIIa	*De Minimis*	In the demersal mixed fishery carried out by vessels targeting brown shrimp and using beam trawls (TBB) with a mesh size equal to or greater than 16mm:

***** Flip-up rope means a gear modification on demersal beam trawls to help prevent stones, boulders entering the trawl and causing damage to both gear and catches.

****** A Benthos (or Benthic) 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 benthos (benthic) material and seabed debris before it passes into the cod-end.

******* Flemish Panel means the last tapered netting section of a beam trawl, the posterior of which is directly attached to the cod-end. The upper and lower netting sections of the panel are constructed of at least 120mm mesh as measured between the knots and the panel must have a stretched length of at least 3m.