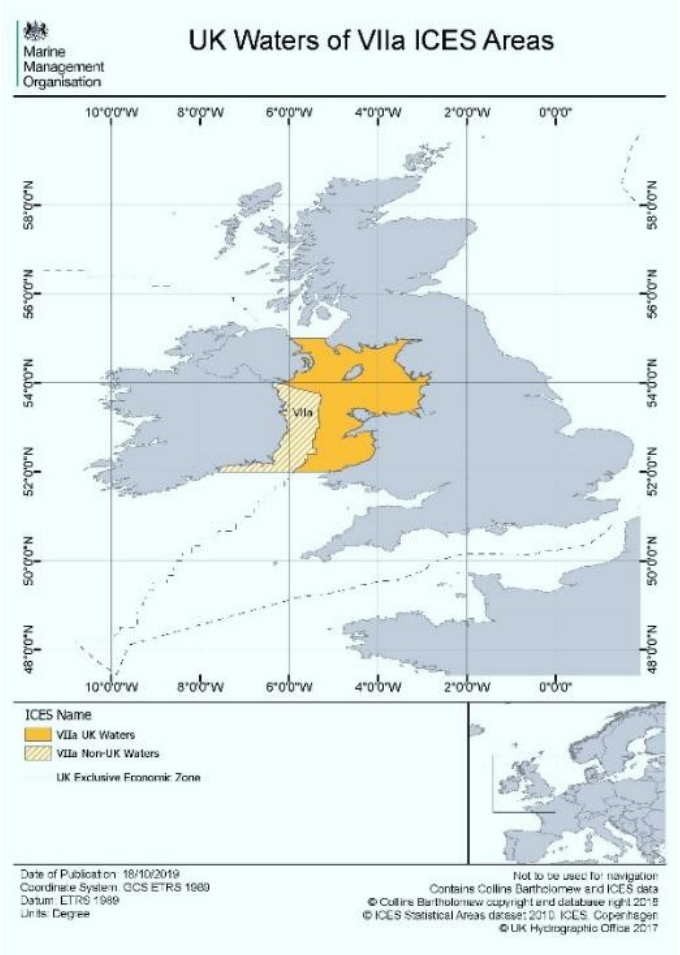
Marine Management Organisation

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Fishing gear requirements and Landing Obligation exemptions Updated November 2026

Applicable to Demersal towed gears fishing in UK waters of the Irish Sea

(Excluding Nephrops vessels and Beam Trawlers, see separate guidance)



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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 explains rules specific to UK waters of the Irish Sea, ICES area VIIa.

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

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.

Gear requirements for Irish Sea demersal and pelagic towed fisheries are set out in the next table.

Please refer to the Irish Sea Nephrops trawl guidance note if you catch greater than 30% Nephrops

Gear selectivity requirements

All mesh sizes specified are the minimum.

Table 1: Standard gears that you must use

Fishery	Gear(s)	Fishing Gear Options
Fisheries where catches of cod, haddock, skates and rays (combined**) exceed 10%** of total catch weight.	Demersal trawls	Vessels over 12m must use one of: a) 120mm cod-end b) Eliminator trawl* with 600mm large mesh panels and 100mm cod-end
Fisheries where catches of cod, haddock, skates and rays (combined) are **less than 10%** of total catch weight.	Demersal trawls	Vessels over 12m must use: 100mm cod-end and 100mm square mesh panel
Vessel 12m and under. Where catches are less than 20% for cod, haddock and saithe (combined)	Demersal trawls	**80mm cod-end and 80mm square mesh**
Vessel 12m and under. Where catches are more than 20% for cod, haddock and saithe (combined)	Demersal trawls	**100mm cod-end**

* An Eliminator Trawl[1] (see page 5) must include all the following as a minimum specification:

- all top sheet wing netting sections to be made of diamond mesh netting of at least 600mm mesh size
- all lower sheet wing netting sections to be made of diamond mesh netting of at least 600mm mesh size
- the belly panel must be made of diamond mesh netting of at least 600mm mesh size. It must extend across the full width of the trawl, be attached directly to the fishing line and extend towards the rear of the net for at least 7.5m (stretched length)
- all top sheet netting directly above and forward of the belly panel must be made of diamond mesh netting of at least 600mm mesh size

Note: This requirement will not apply in targeted Queen Scallop *Aequipecten Opercularis* (QSC) fisheries.

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.

UK 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.

[1] https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/annex-c-specification-eliminator-trawl-tr1-gear

- 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	Gear	UK ICES Area	Exemption Type	Conditions
Skates and Rays	All Gears	VIIa	Survival	No Conditions
Nephrops (NEP)	Demersal. Otter Trawls and Pair Trawls	VII	*De Minimis*	Minimum of 100mm mesh size
Megrim – below minimum conservation reference size.	Demersal Trawls and Pair Trawls	VII	*De Minimis*	Cod-end mesh size of 70-99mm

Net plan of Eliminator trawl (courtesy of Superior Trawls, Rhode Island, USA)

