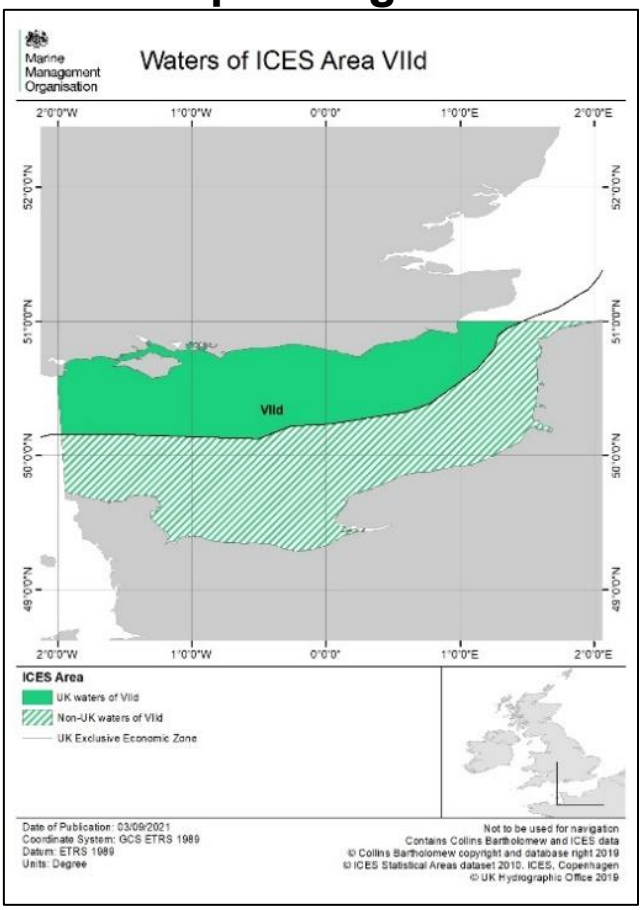
Marine Management Organisation

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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 English Channel

Guidance excludes Beam and Nephrops Trawlers, see separate guidance



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 English Channel section VIId.

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.

- 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 landed catch of less than 20% of cod, haddock and saithe combined, then you may use a mesh size below 100mm as specified below in table 1.

- In ICES division 7d (eastern English Channel), vessels using demersal otter trawls within British fishery limits must use a codend with a minimum mesh size of 90 mm.
- The 90 mm minimum codend requirement does not apply to vessels that are both:
  - 12 metres or less in overall length; and
  - 221 kW or less in engine power.

Directed fisheries for squid are exempt from the 90 mm requirement from 1 September to the last day of February.

Vessels permitted to operate within an Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (IFCA) jurisdiction are also exempt when fishing within the 6 nautical mile limit. This exemption does not apply to foreign vessels.

Gear selectivity requirements

All mesh sizes specified are the minimum.

Table 1: Standard gears that you must use.

Fishery	Gear(s)	ICES Area	Conditions
Sole and non-TAC species	Demersal Trawls	VIId and VIIe	80mm cod end and 80mm square mesh panel. In ICES division 7d, the 90 mm minimum codend requirement for demersal otter trawls applies unless an exemption applies[1]
Hake, Megrim and Anglerfish	Demersal Trawls	VIId and VIIe	80mm cod end and 120mm square mesh panel. In ICES division 7d, the 90 mm minimum codend requirement for demersal otter trawls applies unless an exemption applies[1]
Whiting (WHG), Mackerel (MAC) and non-TAC species	Demersal Trawls	VIId and VIIe	80mm cod end. In ICES division 7d, the 90 mm minimum codend requirement for demersal otter trawls applies unless an exemption applies[1]
Directed fishing for all species using fly-seining gear.	Fly Seines (including Danish and Scottish seines)	VIId and VIIe	Mesh size of at least 100mm[2]. **From 16 December 2024.**

[1] Exemptions from the 90 mm requirement in ICES division 7d: vessels of 12 m overall length or less and 221 kW engine power or less; directed squid fisheries from 1 September to the last day of February; and vessels permitted to operate within an IFCA jurisdiction when fishing inside 6 nautical miles. The IFCA exemption does not apply to foreign vessels.

[2] The Sea Fisheries (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2024.

Guidance on the Minimum Conservation Reference Sizes (MCRS) in UK waters is available at **https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/minimum-conservation-reference-sizes-mcrs/minimum-conservation-reference-sizes-mcrs-in-uk-waters**

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 Type	Conditions
Skates and Rays	All Gears	VI and VII	Survival	No Conditions
Dover Sole (SOL) below the minimum size (24cm)	Demersal trawls, Otter and Pair Trawls	VIId, to VIIg (within 6nm of the UK coast)	Survival	All conditions listed below must be met: The fishing vessel is no more than 10m long (LOA) and vessel's engine power is 221kW or less. Fishing takes place no more than 6 nautical miles from the coast and outside of identified nursery areas. Minimum cod-end mesh size of 80mm. The depth of water is no more than 30m and the towing time is less than 1.5 hours duration (1hour and 30 minutes).
Plaice (PLE)	Otter and Pair Trawlers	VIId to VIIg	Survival	No Conditions
Plaice (PLE)	Danish Seines	VIId	Survival	No Conditions
Nephrops (NEP)	Demersal Trawls, Seines and Pair Trawlers	VII	Survival	Minimum cod-end mesh size of 100mm.
Mackerel (MAC) and Horse Mackerel (JAX)	Demersal Trawls, Seines and Pair Trawlers	VIId to VIIj	*De Minimis*	No Conditions
Whiting (WHG),	Demersal Trawls, Seines and Pair Trawlers	VIId to VIIj	*De Minimis*	Minimum cod-end mesh size of 80mm
Haddock (HAD)	Demersal Trawls, Seines and Pair Trawlers	VIIe to VIIj	*De Minimis*	Minimum cod-end mesh size of 80mm