

From: **Chief Officer and Deputy Chief Officer**

To: Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority -
6 August 2025

Subject: **Confirmation of TECFO 2024 ranked applicants list**

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Summary: The paper summarises the TECFO 2024 Licence Allocation Process and provides the recommended ranked list of applications produced by the Applications Panel for the period 2025-2032.

Recommendations: That the Authority:

AGREE the ranked list which aligns with the decision made in Agenda item B1

AGREE that licences be offered to applicants in descending order of the chosen ranked list, in accordance with the process detailed in the report, until all 15 licences are issued

DELEGATE authority to the Chief Fishery Officer to take relevant actions to implement this decision as necessary.

Introduction

The Thames Estuary Cockle Fishery (No.2) Order 2024 came into force on 18th December 2024 and provides the legislative structure for the management of cockle harvesting within the majority of the Thames Estuary. The Order is in force for a total period of 28 years which is split into four 7-year licencing periods. The first 7-year period is 2025 – 2031.

The Authority previously decided at its meeting on 17 September 2024 (<https://www.kentandessex-ifca.gov.uk/website-content/agenda-item-b3-t24-update-1725971138.pdf>) that for the first 7-year period, 15 licences would be available to issue. In addition, for this period, holders of licences under the previous Thames Estuary Cockle Fishery Order 1994 could apply for a transitional period licence provided that the company legal and beneficial ownership remains as it was on 30th January 2024 for the entire 7-year period.

Outline of the Licence Allocation Process

At the November 2024 Authority meeting, Members confirmed the key dates for the application process and the five KEIFCA members and two independent experts that were to sit on the Applications Panel (<https://www.kentandessex-ifca.gov.uk/website-content/agenda-item-b2-cockles-1732007486.pdf>). The window for licence applications opened on 19th December 2024 and closed on 19th January 2025. The opportunity to apply for a licence was advertised on the KEIFCA website and letters sent to all parties who had previously expressed an interest in applying for a licence and taken part in the consultation

A total of twenty two applications were received including the transitional licences application. Two of these were found to be non-compliant, and therefore ineligible for a licence, with article 5 (12) which states:

"Where a transitional period licence is issued to a company under article 6, any person who was a shareholder or officer of that company on 30th January 2024, is not eligible to be granted a licence under this article or a transitional period licence under article 6, whether as an individual or as a shareholder or officer of another company."

Of the remaining twenty applications, twelve applied for transitional licences. Thus, there were eight non-transitional applications which were placed into the Licence Allocation Process, for a total of three licences available to issue.

The process of scoring and ranking licence applications was undertaken by the Applications Panel as set out in the Management Plan. The Applications Panel evaluated and scored each application against the grade descriptors for each question. Total scores were used to rank applications.

Checking application forms and technical evaluation of answers

Upon receipt, applications were checked against the Fit and Proper Persons Assessment (FPPA) before officers undertook an initial technical evaluation of the applications against the descriptors. As part of this process officers ranked all the replies for an individual question and looked to seek any specific technical advice required to make an informed evaluation decision (e.g. technical details about engines, or effectiveness of CO₂ reduction plans etc).

Scoring and initial ranking of applications

Applications Panel members evaluated and scored all the replies from a specific question against the grade descriptors. Different members scored different questions with each member scoring between two and three questions. The Applications Panel scores for each question were then averaged, weighted, and added together to result in a total mean score per application. The total mean score was used to make a draft ranked list of the applications.

Moderation and ranking of applications – 26th February 2025

The Applications Panel then met to moderate and agree the scores and then rank the applications. The meeting first looked to address any mitigations from the

FPPA, agreed the applications that could be excluded from the process, i.e. those which failed to meet the requirements of the Order with regards to applying for a licence when a transitional licence had already been applied for.

Where the final scores were similar or the Applications Panel required further information and/or evidence, the relevant applicants were invited to a meeting of the Applications Panel and asked to orally run through their application and answer questions on their application from the Panel.

Oral evidence session and final ranking of applications – 12th and 13th March 2025

At the oral evidence session, applicants were asked questions regarding each section of the application form as well as then follow-up questions on each part of the application. All candidates were asked a set of standard questions, with application specific questions also being asked. Applicants were also asked if there was anything else they wanted to add or say in support of their application.

The Applications Panel, led by the Chairman, then reviewed each application in turn, running through the questions in order. The Panel reviewed each section in turn and came to a decision as to whether the mean score for that question allocated from the moderation meeting, should go up, go down or stay the same. The Chairman looked for a unanimous decision but if one could not be reached the decision was brought to a vote.

The new section scores were then added to reach a total. Total scores were used to provide a recommended ranked list of applications.

Ranked List

Below are two versions of the ranked list:

Revised ranked list 'A' for a licence for the 2025-2032 licencing period for the Thames Estuary Cackle Fishery Order 2024, is that which was initially presented in papers for the Authority meeting on 27 March 2025. Recommended ranked list 'A', is to be used if the Authority **IS NOT** satisfied, in line with the decision made under Agenda item B1, that any applicant would have applied for a different type of licence had the Order as varied been in force during the application window.

Recommended ranked list 'B' is modified from that initial list. Recommended ranked list 'B' is to be used if the Authority **IS** satisfied, in line with the decision made under Agenda item B1, that WG and SJ Dell Ltd would have applied for a different type of licence had the Order as varied been in force during the application window.

Either list is subject to confirmation by the full Authority in accordance with the process set out in the Management Plan. Transitional licence applications in both lists have all been ranked as equal position 1 and are listed in alphabetical order.

Ranked List 'A'

Count	Applicant	Final Ranking
1	Arthur Marine Ltd	=1
2	Cardium Shellfish Ltd	=1
3	Coral Island Seafoods Ltd	=1
4	Deal Bros Ltd	=1
5	Essex Shellfish Ltd	=1
6	Fruits of the Sea Ltd	=1
7	M W Smith Shellfish Ltd	=1
8	Oly Ray Ltd	=1
9	Renown Fisheries Ltd	=1
10	S J Meddle Ltd	=1
11	Trevor Lineham (Shellfish) Ltd	=1
12	W H Osborne Ltd	=1
13	Seacraft Ltd	13
14	Osborne & Sons Ltd	14
15	O & L Fishing Ltd	15
16	Ferris Fisheries Ltd	16
17	Tricia B Shellfish Ltd	17
18	WG & SJ Dell Ltd	18
19	Hollowshore Shellfish Ltd	19
20	S W Fishing Ltd	20
21	Sea Breeze Trawlers Ltd	Ineligible
22	West's Seafoods Ltd	Ineligible

Ranked List 'B' – TBC following change request process

Count	Applicant	Final Ranking
1	Arthur Marine Ltd	=1
2	Cardium Shellfish Ltd	=1
3	Coral Island Seafoods Ltd	=1
4	Deal Bros Ltd	=1
5	Essex Shellfish Ltd	=1
6	Fruits of the Sea Ltd	=1
7	M W Smith Shellfish Ltd	=1
8	Oly Ray Ltd	=1
9	Renown Fisheries Ltd	=1
10	S J Meddle Ltd	=1
11	Trevor Lineham (Shellfish) Ltd	=1
12	WG & SJ Dell Ltd	=1
13	W H Osborne Ltd	=1
14	Seacraft Ltd	14
15	Osborne & Sons Ltd	15
16	O & L Fishing Ltd	16
17	Ferris Fisheries Ltd	17
18	Tricia B Shellfish Ltd	18
19	Hollow Shore Shellfish Ltd	19
20	S W Fishing Ltd	20
21	Sea Breeze Trawlers Ltd	Ineligible
22	West's Seafoods Ltd	Ineligible

What happens next

There are 15 licences to issue for 2025 – 2031. If the Authority determines that licenses should be issued on terms set out earlier in the report, including confirming either Ranked List A or Ranked B, then the following process will apply:

- *7 August 2025* - officers will write to the applicants in descending ranked order advising them of the offer of a licence, initially applicants in ranked positions 1 – 15 will be offered a licence.
- *No later than 5pm on 13th August 2025* - The applicant will be required to accept the offer in writing and will be required to complete a TECFO-002 form to provide details of the vessel and master for the 1st year of the licence. This acceptance and the completed TECFO-002 form must be accompanied by the payment of the appropriate annual fee (the 2025 fee is specified in the Order itself). **If the offer of a licence is not accepted or payment is not received and cleared by the deadline, KEIFCA will offer the licence to the next ranked applicant.** This process will repeat until all 15 licences are issued.
- *14 August 2025* – Transitional licences will be issued.
- *15 August 2025* – Non-transitional licences will be issued.
- *15 August 2025* – Licence holders meeting
- *17 August 2025* – fishery commences at 1800 in line with the management measures approved by the Authority at the meeting of 18 June 2025.

Licence applicant feedback

Recognising the importance of securing a sustainable and accessible fishery for license holders, the key priority is to facilitate the commencement of fishery operations this year, subject to proper completion of the Licence Application Process. Following successful completion of the LAP and the commencement of the fishery, a feedback process will be undertaken. All applicants for Article 5 (open) licences will be provided with feedback on their applications, identifying the positive aspects of their application as well the criteria upon which higher ranked applications received a greater score. This feedback is planned for late August once officers have got the TECFO fishery up and running.

False and misleading information discovery following issue of a licence

If any evidence comes to light, following confirmation by the Authority of the ranked list, that the information provided in a licence application form was misleading or false, officers will seek further clarification from the applicant on their licence application.

Should the answers not be to a satisfactory level, KEIFCA reserves the right to review the scores previously allocated and, where there arises a material issue, Officers will bring the matter to a full Authority meeting for a final decision on whether to continue to issue the licence to the applicant or to issue the licence to

the next ranked application held on the ranked list, in the same manner as the other licences for the remainder of the 7-year period.

Recommendations: That the Authority:

AGREE the ranked list which aligns with the decision made in Agenda item B1

AGREE that licences be offered to applicants in descending order of the chosen ranked list, in accordance with the process detailed in the report, until all 15 licences are issued

DELEGATE authority to the Chief Fishery Officer to take relevant actions to implement this decision as necessary.