



Agenda Item No. B5

By: Deputy Chief Officer

To: Kent and Essex IFCA – 19 May 2026

Subject: **TECFO 2024 transitional licence variation – S.J. Meddle Ltd**

Classification: Unrestricted

**Summary:**

This report sets out a received application from S.J. Meddle Ltd, a company holding a transitional licence under TECFO 2024, requesting the continuation of its TECFO 2024 licence despite a change to the beneficial ownership of the company, under the exemption mechanism, contained within TECFO 2024.

**Recommendation:**

To **APPROVE** the continuation of the licence to S.J. Meddle Ltd.

**Background**

The Thames Estuary Cockle Fishery Order 2024 (“the TECFO 2024”) provides the statutory framework for the management of the Thames Estuary cockle fishery, replacing the previous Thames Estuary Cockle Fishery Order 1994. The Order establishes a revised licensing and management regime intended to ensure the sustainable exploitation of the fishery while supporting the continued operation of established fishing businesses within the estuary.

A key feature of the TECFO 2024 is the introduction of transitional period licences for the first seven years of the Order (2025–2031). These transitional arrangements are designed to allow companies and vessels that were established participants in the fishery under the 1994 Order to continue operating while adapting to the new regulatory framework. The Order therefore includes provisions that require transitional licence holders to remain in the same legal and beneficial ownership as at 30 January 2024, subject to limited and clearly defined exemptions, including circumstances involving the death or incapacity of a licence holder or shareholder, which may be considered by the Authority on application.

## **The detail of what is set out by TECFO 2024**

The Thames Estuary Cockle Fishery Order 2024 sets out under Article 6(5) the criteria for an applicant holding a transitional licence for the first 7 years of the Order. One of these is that where the licence holder is a company, that company remains in the same legal and beneficial ownership as it was on 30th January 2024. Article 6(6) goes on to say that a transitional period licence ceases to be valid if that company changes either legal or beneficial ownership or both at any time during the first 7-year period (2025-2031).

However Article 6(7) provides an exemption mechanism in the event of death or physical or mental incapacity of a shareholder as follows:

*(7) Notwithstanding paragraph (6), a transitional period licence continues to be valid if—*

*(a) a licence holder or shareholder dies or suffers physical or mental incapacity during the term of the transitional period licence,*

*(b) the Authority is notified in writing,*

*(c) an application is made in writing to the Authority for the transitional period licence to continue, giving details of any changes to the legal or beneficial ownership of the company, and*

*(d) the Authority approves the application and the continuation of the transitional period licence.*

### **Application received from S.J.Meddle Ltd**

S.J.Meddle Ltd is a company which holds a transitional period licence issued under Article 6 of TECFO 2024. The company previously held a licence under TECFO 1994 which it had held under the same family ownership since 1994. S.J.Meddle Ltd applied for a transitional licence on 10 January 2025.

The parent company and therefore *legal* ownership of S.J.Meddle Ltd is S.J.Meddle (Holdings) Ltd. On the 30 January 2024, according to Companies House records, the shareholders of S.J.Meddle (Holdings) Ltd who therefore hold the *beneficial* ownership of S.J.Meddle Ltd, were Mr Steven Meddle, Mrs Bonita Meddle and Mr Michael Meddle.

Officers were made aware prior to the 2025 fishery that one of the shareholders of S.J.Meddle Ltd had died. Officers have had a number of discussions with the company since then regarding the changing of the beneficial ownership of the company as a result. Once probate had been granted further discussions were undertaken as the company made decisions on how to move forwards. On 10 April 2026 KEIFCA received an application from S.J.Meddle Ltd for authorisation to continue the transitional period licence despite the variation of the *beneficial* ownership of the company following the death of one of its holding company shareholders. The *legal* ownership of S.J.Meddle Ltd is proposed to remain the same.

The application form submitted containing this request lists Mr Steven Meddle and Mr Michael Meddle as the only shareholders moving forwards with no new shareholders being added.

**What the Authority should consider.**

Annex 5 of the TECFO 2024 Management Plan sets out the rationale for the transitional arrangements under the TECFO 2024 as follows:

*As part of the T24 consultation, a suggestion was put forward to 'grandfather on' the 14 TECFO 1994 licence holders for the first 7-year cycle. The Authority members discussed this proposal and agreed to this along with attached conditions (see T24 Regulating Order for exact wording). If a TECFO 1994 licence holder does not want to use this transitional arrangement, then the licence would be issued following the full application process and the current licence holder could apply using that process along with any other applicants.*

*The transitional arrangements are designed to allow established companies and vessels which have taken part in the fishery in recent years to continue doing so for the first 7 years of the new Regulating Order. This is to allow time for those businesses which are set up under the current framework, to adapt to the new legislative landscape. The company and vessel must remain in the same legal and beneficial ownership throughout.*

In considering whether to approve the continuation of the transitional licence for S.J.Meddle Ltd, the Authority should have regard to the rationale for the transitional licences as set out in the Management Plan. Whilst the TECFO 2024 specifies clearly that there should be no changes to a transitional licence holding company's legal or beneficial ownership, it clearly creates an exemption which applies in this situation. Furthermore, the company is making no attempt to bring in outside investment or shareholders with this application. The shares which were split three ways will now be split two ways amongst the two remaining existing shareholders. Therefore the recommendation is to approve the continuation of the licence to S.J.Meddle Ltd.

**Recommendations:**

To **APPROVE** the continuation of the licence to S.J.Meddle Ltd.