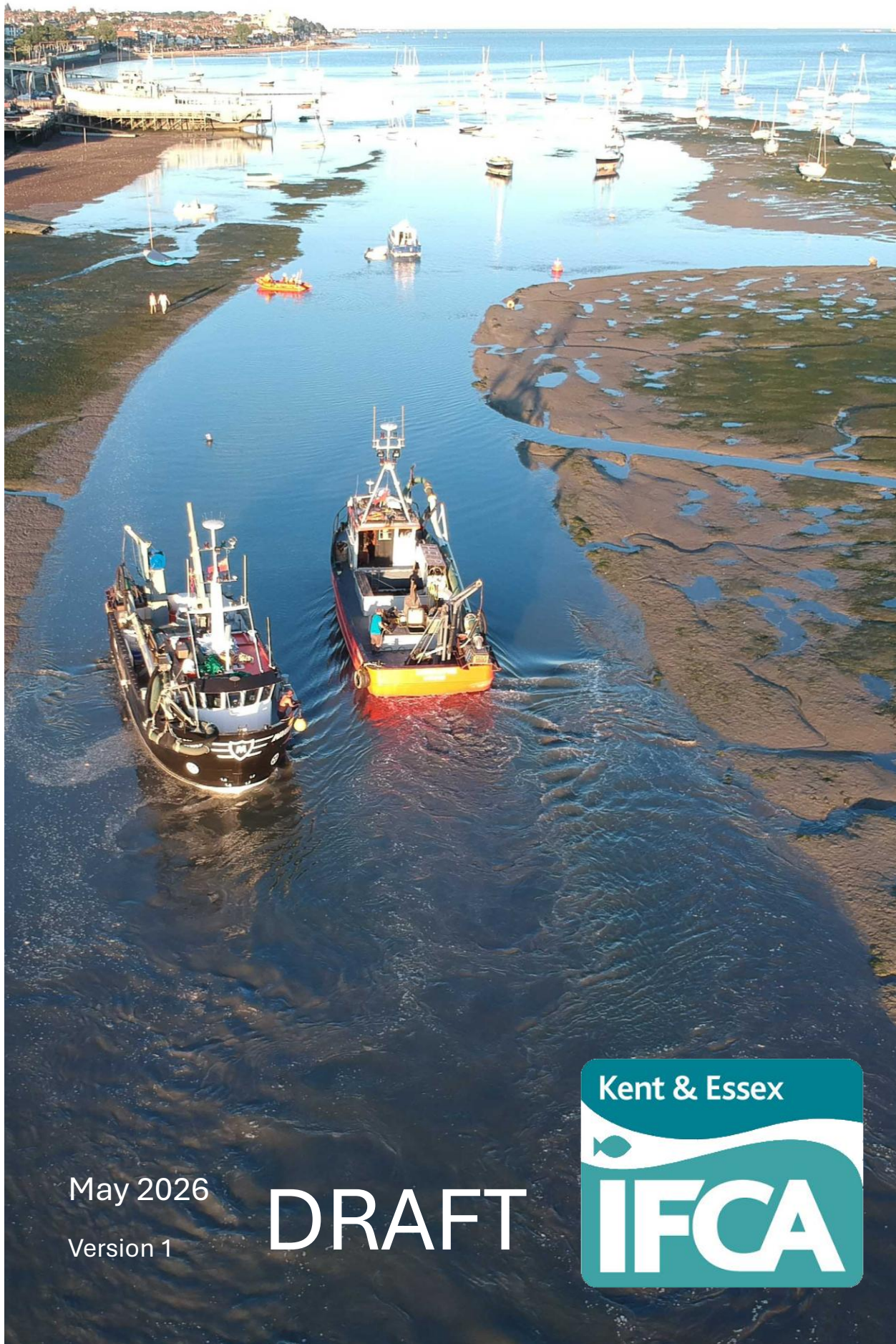


Thames Estuary Cockle Fishery Order 2024

Licence Application Summary

Appendix 1 to
Agenda item B8



May 2026

Version 1

DRAFT

Kent & Essex



Introduction

Over the last few months members of the cockle industry have contacted KEIFCA officers to help them understand and better prepare for the next licencing round that will take place in 2031, in 6 years' time.

This summary document aims to help prospective applicants navigate the application process, outlining the key steps to be taken, and signposts the different sections and questions in the application form.

This is a summary document; it is not definitive and should be read in conjunction with the TECFO 2024 management plan and the application form. As outlined on page 4 of the Thames Estuary Cockle Fishery (No.2) Order 2024 Management Plan, changes to this process can be made by KEIFCA following a consultation process.

The application process

The **Thames Estuary Cockle Fishery (No.2) Order 2024 Management Plan** contains all the information on the TECFO Licence Application Process; and we would advise reading the plan if you want to understand in detail how each step in the process will be run.

- ▶ An overview of the whole process can be found in the 'Managing the fishery – overall management framework' section (pg. 8-13)
- ▶ The details of the Licence Allocation Procedure (LAP) found in Annex 2 (pg. 16)
- ▶ The scoring of licence applications in Annex 4 (pg. 20-26).
- ▶ Information on the oral evidence session and final ranking of applications (pg 17-18)

The exact dates of each step of the application process will be confirmed closer to the time; however, the table below illustrates the sequence of different steps involved in issuing the next round of licences.

	2031										
	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	
Licence application period		█									
Cockle season				█							
Confirm final number of licences after summer survey*							█				
Score applications / send invites to oral evidence								█			
Hold oral evidence sessions and finalise ranked list									█		
KEIFCA members confirm licences*										█	
Award licences and recieved payment										█	

*(KEIFCA ¼ meeting)

The application form

We have attached the previous TECFO licence application form for reference and would suggest that your company familiarise itself with the different sections that need to be completed.

It is probable that some of the detail and text in the application form would need to be updated prior to the next application cycle. Any changes would go through a consultation process as outlined in the management plan and would need to be agreed by the Authority.

Application Form pg.	Section Name	Management Plan pg.
1-6	Details of applicant/ company applying (including contact details and fishing vessel details)	
4	Fit and Proper Persons Assessment (FPPA)	19
	7-year Business Report (2025-2031)*	28-30
7	7-year Business Plan (2032-2038)	21
8-9	Fishing Experience Track Record	22
	Socio-economic and Environmental Criteria:	
10	○ Landing and cooking cockles caught in the district	23
11	○ Support of skilled local employment	24
12	○ Reduce the impact of fishing operations on both cockle stocks and the seabed	25
13	○ Plan to reduce CO2 emissions and improve the wider environment	26
	Scoring of licence applications	20

* Only required if you have held a 7-year TECFO licence (2025-2031)

Answering the questions in the application form

Focus on clear and concise answers that demonstrate, and provide evidence of, the specific actions that your company has taken and any positive outcomes from those actions. Whilst future plans are a useful addition; the Application Panel would normally put more weight on answers that show actions have been completed and produced positive outcomes.

It is possible to answer each question in a number of different ways; this allows different companies to structure their answers in a way that best fits how they work. Use your

answers to highlight how your company is helping to deliver the vision and the objectives of the fishery (pg. 7-8) and clearly explain the benefits of your business and your actions rather than just listing the things you have done. Use this flexible structure to your advantage to highlight the strengths and ethos of your company and the role it plays within the local fishing community.

Whilst it is not the Authority's place to tell you how you should answer, it is worth bearing the following in mind when you are completing your application;

- **Answer the question:** Thoroughly read through all the documents, including the management plan, and evaluation criteria. Directly address what is asked and answer all of the questions. In questions where there are subheadings or bullet points, try to address each point directly in your answer.
- **Use evidence and examples:** Be specific and evidence based, using case studies, data and specific examples, to illustrate your company's capabilities and achievements when answering the questions.
- **Keep it simple:** The members of the application panel might not have detailed knowledge of your company or detailed technical knowledge in areas like engines or gear design. So, try to explain what you have done simply without overly complicated technical language.

When to start the application process: a possible approach?

Whilst the application process for the next round of 7-year TECFO licences is not due to start for another 6 years, it might be useful for your business to start to familiarise itself with the form and the process as soon as possible.

Starting to fill in some of the more detailed questions, maybe by writing summary bullet point answers, could give you an idea of how your application might come together. Using the scoring criteria in Annex 4 of the management plan, it would be then possible for someone in your company, or closely related to it, to score the application allowing your company to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the application.

With 6 fishing seasons before the application form would need to be submitted, your company directors could then draw up a list of additional actions it might undertake in this period and then add to these to the answer. This could allow your company to map out any changes or steps it might take to improve its application score in the next 6 years. As these tasks are completed, your company could tick them off the list after each season finishes.

Frequently asked questions

Applying for a licence

Anyone (company or individual) can apply for a licence; however, it is recommended to check your vessel complies with requirements for fishing within the KEIFCA district (KEIFCA Vessel Length and Engine Power Byelaw). In addition, to harvest cockles your vessel must be able to carry the maximum quantity of catch allowed under the licence and be certified by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency to undertake dredging.

To achieve high scores in the application process, applicants will need to have significant knowledge and experience of fishing for cockles, running an associated business and be able provide examples of both in the application process. Applications that receive an Unacceptable or Major reservations score from one or more of the questions may be excluded from the process (Annex 2).

I have multiple vessels; can I obtain more than one licence?

If both vessels are owned by different applicants, you would be eligible to apply for two licences. However, no applicant may hold more than one licence for the fishery.

Who will be scoring my application?

Your application will be graded by a panel of seven people; five of whom will be IFCA members, and two independents that have worked in a relevant field. In 2025 one independent was from the Association of IFCA's and the other worked for CEFAS.

Is there a score I need to reach to get a licence?

No. All applicants are scored by the Applications Panel and then ranked. Your position on the ranking is relative to other companies scores. In the last round of licence applications, the Authority issued 15 licences, and the top 15 ranked licence applications got a licence.

What evidence should I submit with my application?

Do not submit documents such as drawings, quotations or invoice etc with your application. Instead, rather than simply saying you have done something, you can say that you have receipts etc. to prove the action you have taken. If the Application Panel wants to see them, they will ask.

How will the overall score be calculated?

Each question will be scored and a total calculated for each of the six sections. The six criteria are weighted differently so each contributes to a specific percentage of the overall application score (Annex 4).

Below is an example of how the total score for a question will be calculated using the 'Question weighted score' from the 2024 applications:

$$85 \div 100 = 0.85(a) \rightarrow 0.85(a) \times 23(b) = 19.55 \text{ (total score for that question)}$$

Criteria	Mark from question	Divide mark by 100 (a)	Question weighted score (b)	a x b = Total score for that question
Business Plan	85	0.85	23*	19.55
Fishing experience track record	100	1	36*	36
Landing and cooking cockles caught in the district	80	0.80	6*	4.8
Support of skilled local employment	40	0.40	12*	4.8
Reduce the impact of fishing operations on both cockle stocks and the seabed	60	0.60	18*	10.8
Plan to reduce CO2 emissions and improve the wider environment	100	1	5*	5
TOTAL OVERALL SCORE				80.95

Please note the weight of the score is subject to change in 2031 the above example is taken from the previous 7-year licence 2024 application

The total score will be used to rank the applications and starting with the highest scoring applicant, licences will be offered until all available licences have been awarded.

What help can KEIFCA officers give?

It is the Application Panel not KEIFCA officers that will be scoring the applications in 6 years' time. KEIFCA officers can help potential applicants understand the application process and scoring system, but they are not in a position to advise companies as to the merit or otherwise of specific actions or to give advice on potential scores or outcomes of a potential action. It is for the directors of each company to make informed business decisions as to the actions they think their company might take.