

Date: 18 July 2022  
Your ref: TECFO Cockle Fishery Licenses Consultation



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**BY EMAIL ONLY**

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Dear Dr Haupt,

Natural England response to number of cockle fishing licenses in new TECFO fishery

Thank you for inviting Natural England to the KEFICA TECFO workshop on 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> July 2022. The following constitutes Natural England's formal response.

As stated during the workshop, Natural England are happy with the proposed options and confident that none of the proposals risk putting the TECFO into a position in which it is in conflict with any of the conservation objectives of the relevant Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). We support the initial small increase in licenses and the management flexibility provided by the agreed license durations. Natural England are of the view that, provided that there will not be a large increase in the number vessels and trips, the potential impact on Natura 2000 sites will be similar to that of the existing fishery and therefore the Habitats Regulations Assessments (HRA) for the new fishery options will be similar to that of the current TECFO.

Natural England have reviewed the supplied KEFICA report, "Review of Environmental Impacts of Hydraulic Suction Dredging for Cockles" and agree with the report's conclusions and those presented during the workshop that there is uncertainty around the magnitude of impacts that will result from increasing the number of fishing vessels. As such, we are content that the proposed options with small increases in vessel numbers (15 licenses initially with the potential to increase over time or fixed at 14 licenses) will not lead to significantly greater impacts on relevant MPAs. Given the uncertainty and the potential environmental risks of rapidly increasing the fishing fleet/effort that would result from issuing a larger number of licenses, Natural England has concerns about increases of 18-20 licenses from the beginning of the new licensing regime and would not be keen to see this approach pursued without robust evidence to demonstrate that potential environmental impacts had been assessed and mitigated.

Natural England would also like to take this opportunity to thank the KEIFCA team for organising such an informative and well-run workshop.

For any queries relating to the content of this letter please contact me using the details provided below.

Yours sincerely

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