

W.G & S. J. Dell Ltd



Dear Authority Members

I'm unable to speak at today's meeting so was asked to submit my views in writing.

I'm very disappointed with the consultation process. I expected that it would be done impartially and that the best solution would be found. One that would preserve the fishery, the industry and the environment. However at each phase of the consultation the goal posts seem to move and new options are introduced that no stake holders have asked for.

Now you are being asked to consider the new Jamaica option, an option that will have a long term detrimental affect to the established cockle industry, and make a decision based on a wild assumption and unreliable feedback!

The assumption is that a small scale fishery would be successful and the unreliable feedback stems from the fact that fisherman from other sectors are being encouraged to ask for this not knowing all the relevant facts.

Most if not all of these fisherman will want to use a drag dredge as it will be the cheapest and easiest option.

However the only people with actual experience of drag dredging in the Thames is the established fleet and a few problems occur to us that no one is mentioning.

Can breakage rates of less than 10% be achieved? This is doubtful, in our experience breakage rates were closer to 30%. A different more efficient system will incur more expense!

Do the owners of the small vessels realize that they will have to install a riddle on deck to return undersize cockles to the seabed? Yet more expense and space taken up!

Does anyone understand and are they being told that the last time that there were cockles in area 15, on the Margate sand, was 26 years ago. Area 11, Red Sand and Middle Sand over 30 years ago, The Cant 16 years ago. These beds are not reliable.

And if you tow a drag dredge across Scraps Gate, area 13, the only thing you're likely to catch is puddingy clay.

Although not prolific these areas, when they do produce, are immensely important to the established fishery as fishing effort spread across multiple areas has ensured sustainability.

The fishermen from other sectors are being promised a pipe dream. How many would go to the expense and effort if they knew that it is more than likely that there may be no cockles to catch for years to come.

This option includes the 7 year review cycle. Something no one in the established industry wants. Please don't assume that a small scale fishery would be successful and make a decision that will have a long term damaging effect on the established industry.

Sincerely

Steven Dell