

Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority
Permitted Cockle Fishery Management Plan
DRAFT

MANAGEMENT CONDITIONS

Cockle harvesting under this byelaw will be managed in line with the following management plan which is approved by Natural England as part of the Appropriate Assessment required for this fishery under the Habitats Directive.

Management principals

The Cockle Byelaw Management Area will be divided into Specified Harvesting areas. These will be used for survey planning, stock calculation and allocation of TAC.

KEIFCA will undertake a survey of cockle stocks within the Cockle Byelaw Management Area by 30 April of each year.

Specified harvesting areas will be opened for harvesting during the period 31 July to 31 October, or until their allocated TAC is taken, provided that the survey shows that cockle populations meet the following criteria (a) or (b):

(a) A TAC of 30 % of the total stock biomass above minimum size of 16mm, at a density above 54 cockles/m², will yield above 350 tonnes from within that Specified Harvesting areas;

or

(b) Where a reduction in Cockle Minimum Size is implemented subject to the criteria in (c) below. In these Specified Harvesting areas the fishery will be opened, with a reduction in minimum size to 14mm, provided that:

(c) **Criteria for a reduction in Cockle Minimum Size**

Where cockles over one year old and between 14mm -16mm represent at least 60% of the stock and are at a stock density of above 400/m² and where a TAC of 30% of cockles above 14mm would yield above 350 tonnes from within that Specified Harvesting area;

or

Where cockles over two years old and above 16mm represent less than 60% of the stock and are at a stock density of above 250/m² and where a TAC of 30% of cockles above 14mm would yield above 350 tonnes from within that Specified Harvesting area;

or

Where cockles over 3 years old and above 16mm represent less than 60% of the stock and are at a stock density of above 54/m² and where a TAC of 30% of cockles above 14mm would yield above 350 tonnes from within that Specified Harvesting area.

A TAC will be calculated for each Specified Harvesting Area based upon the criteria above. If this calculation shows that the harvesting area will potentially yield above 350 tonnes permit holders will be notified of harvesting being permitted from the 31 July.

The number of permitted Harvesting Trips will be calculated on the basis of the number of category one and category two permits issued. These will be allocated in the ratio of 1:2 with each category one permit holder being allocated one Harvesting Trip and each category two permit holder being allocated two Specified Harvesting Trips until the TAC is allocated.

A maximum of 3 Harvesting Trips will be allocated to category one permit holders and 6 Harvesting Trips to category 2 permit holders per Specified Harvesting Period. Permit holders will be notified of all harvesting restrictions.

As it is likely that some permit holders may not have taken their allocation, if TAC remains per Specified Harvesting Area which is in excess of the volume taken by one trip of the total number of permit holders, the remaining TAC will be re-allocated and the fishery will be re-opened for a further period.

Harvesting in each Specified Harvesting Area will close either after the re-allocation is taken or on the 31 October, whichever is the sooner.

The Maximum Permitted Catch may be reduced if within the whole Cockle Byelaw Management Area the total number of allocated Harvesting Trips is less than 6 per permit holder or if within a single Specified Harvesting Area the total number of allocated Harvesting Trips within that area is less than 3 per permit holder.

Telephone Reporting

Notification of commencement of fishing and of notice to land shall be given by one of the following methods:

1. Leaving a message on the appointed telephone line.
Tel. Number 01206 306106
2. Verbal communication directly with a KEIFCA officer

BIO-SECURITY CONDITIONS

Background

A series of cockle mortalities have occurred around the country over the last 10 years and although no single factor has been identified KEIFCA have been advised that there is a risk that a pathogen or disease is involved. These biosecurity conditions have been developed in order to mitigate the risk.

The main biosecurity risk to Thames cockles is through the introduction of cockles from areas affected by cockle mortalities.

The most effective protective measure is to ensure that no cockles or cockle debris is transported into the Thames fishery area from outside.

To do this we need to ensure that all vessels, cockle fishing equipment and cockle bags are clean and free of cockles.

Requirements

Permit holders bringing Cockle Harvesting Vessels, Cockle Harvesting Equipment or bags into the Cockle Byelaw Harvesting Area from outside the KEIFCA district for the purpose of harvesting cockles must comply with the following requirements:

(a) The Cockle Harvesting Vessel, Cockle Harvesting Equipment and Cockle transportation bags must be cleaned of cockles and all other debris. This will include the hold, deck and all spaces that may retain cockles and the pumps, pipes and dredge head of the cockle gear.

(b) The vessel and cockle fishing gear will be washed with fresh water, using a pressure washer, and allowed to dry.

(c) The vessel will be submitted for inspection at a location outside of the Cockle Byelaw Harvesting Area where an inspection of pumps, pipes and dredge head will be carried out. *(Cockle pumps and pipes will be run for an appropriate time to remove any cockles or debris.)*

(d) Cockle Bags

All cockle bags used to transport cockles will be marked as required under the byelaw and cleaned, disinfected and dried, before returning for use in the Cockle Byelaw Harvesting Area, using the following process:

- Bags will be turned inside out and all cockles and debris removed
- The bags will be hung up and pressure washed using fresh water
- The bags will be immersed in a solution of sodium hypochlorite made up to a suitable concentration.
- The bags will be allowed to dry and then stored away from cockle material

Alternatively

Only new cockle bags will be used on vessels engaged in the Cockle Byelaw Harvesting Area and recycled for alternative use afterwards.

Review of Biosecurity Conditions

The KEIFCA will consider whether it is necessary to review the Biosecurity Conditions no less than every 3 years.

The Biosecurity Conditions may be revised in accordance with the following procedure taking account of the information referred to below:

The review of Biosecurity Conditions will be undertaken as follows:

- a. A consultation meeting will be held with permit holders to present available data and discuss options.
- b. The outcome of the consultation meeting will be reported to KEIFCA who will make a decision regarding whether changes will be made to the Biosecurity Conditions and if so what they will be.

- c. Following a decision being made by KEIFCA, permit holders will be notified in writing and permits will be re-issued to include the amended Biosecurity Conditions.

This review will consider the appropriateness of the Biosecurity Conditions and will make changes if required after taking account of the following:

- a. Scientific advice provided by Cefas or other persons approved by KEIFCA;
- b. Scientific and survey data relating to cockle populations and pathogens or diseases found in cockles;
- c. The outcome of a meeting, and consultation with permit holders that has considered available information and future management options;
- d. An Impact Assessment of any proposed changes;
- e. An Appropriate Assessment (where relevant and available);
- f. Advice given by Natural England; and
- g. Information from any other relevant sources

The Biosecurity Conditions that apply to cockle permits until they are reviewed are those set by the KEIFCA taking into account the Impact Assessment that accompanies the byelaw.