

Chairman: Cllr J Lamb
Clerk: Mr P Sass

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website: www.kentandessex-ifca.gov.uk
Our Ref:

Dear Permit Holder,

On the 15th August 2014 KEIFCA decided to open the cockle fishery in the Thames outside the regulating order. Due to atypical mortality events in the Burry Inlet, the Wash and other areas of the country, this fishery has been closed since 2010 as a biosecurity measure, to help prevent any potentially harmful vector entering the Thames. In an attempt to manage this risk KEIFCA have made a biosecurity emergency byelaw to allow the fishery to open but within strict conditions.

All the biosecurity measures that the Authority have put in place relate to the management of a dredge fishery as commercial hand raking has not taken place since the 1970s. This year KEIFCA has received a large number of permit applications for gear types including hand raking and tractor dredging. We would therefore like to request some information from you regarding the activities you intend to carry out when harvesting cockles in our district.

KEIFCA officers need this information to be able to accurately undertake an Appropriate Assessment (as the activity takes place within a marine protected area - European Marine Site) and to accurately assess any biosecurity risks and make sure appropriate biosecurity mitigation measures are in place. Due to the relatively short time period before the fishery opens on the 5th October 2014 KEIFCA will require a written reply (either by email or a hard copy) by midday the **11th September 2014**. It is imperative that the following questions are answered to the best of your ability

- What is the name of the company you work for or represent? (Who is the likely processor?)
- How many people would work for your company in this operation? (If handraking how many people would rake?)
- How are you intending on accessing the site and transporting cockles off the site?
- How are you planning to harvest the cockles in the KEIFCA district? (Brief description of the type of gear used, method of use, its size/ dimensions, how undersized cockles would be discarded and a riddle used)
- What planning have you undertaken so far to scope out the fishery/ site?

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Kent County Council - Essex County Council - Medway Council - Thurrock Borough Council - Southend Borough Council

- What tides are you planning working while the fishery is open?
- Has your company got any risk assessments for working on the cockle beds that are open in the KEIFCA district? (Please include in reply if possible).
- What biosecurity measures could your operation undertake to help prevent the potential spread of a harmful vector entering the Thames and causing atypical cockle mortality?

In addition to requiring permit holders to answer the questions above KEIFCA is contacting Natural England, CEFAS and the Marine and Coastguard Agency for additional advice and guidance.

A copy of the emergency byelaw and a chart showing the densities of cockles across the site is attached to this letter for your information and to aid you in providing the above information.

If you are intending on using a cockle dredge from a vessel please could you confirm the type of dredge you intend to use, a brief description of the dredge, its size/ dimensions, how undersized cockles would be discarded and a riddle used).

Yours faithfully



Dr William Wright

Chief Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officer