

Wash Fishery Order (1992) Cockle Handwork Fishery - Code of Best Practice



This code sets out the best practice activities for hand working cockles in The Wash. The intention of the code is to reduce the impacts of the fishery on the marine protected area of The Wash.

Any evidence that indicates the handwork fishery is causing excessive disturbance to the site may lead to the immediate closure of the fishery.

1. To avoid damage to the seabed from the keel and hull of the vessel do not attempt to steam off the sand before the vessel is adequately afloat;
2. Ensure the area to be harvested is assessed and marked out prior to the day that harvesting occurs, in order to understand the distribution and abundance of the stock to be harvested;
3. A Daily Vessel Quota (DVQ) of 2 tonnes is in operation;
4. Propeller wash activity should be restricted to the minimum required to uncover the cockle that can be harvested in one day bearing in mind the DVQ. As cockles occur just below the surface, only use sufficient wash to uncover the cockles so as not to create deep rings in the sediment;
5. Each vessel should set a maximum of two marker buoys to mark out the stocks to be targeted and provide a marker around which to steer and help minimise the area of impact. Such buoys should be labelled with the associated vessel's PLN. Fishers should not use plastic bottles or similarly recycled items but should use marker buoys made of marine grade plastics or cork. Any buoys must be removed from beds which are no longer being fished.
6. Evenly rake any cockles left exposed (e.g. from riddling or if more cockle is exposed by propeller washing than is required) over the bed at the end of the day;
7. Fishers should avoid taking small cockle (under 14mm width) to enable this cockle to grow on for future fisheries;
8. Raise awareness of this code with other fishers if they are not fishing in line with best practice;
9. Avoid disturbance to seals by keeping away from seals. Seals respond to disturbance first by raising their heads, then by fleeing into the water. Fishers should not approach seals and should move away if seals are observed reacting to their presence.

Addendum: 2022 cockle fishery

The following measures apply to the 2022 cockle fishery as forming part of 'best practice'.

10. Fishermen must undertake best practice generally in the course of fishing so as to minimise having a detrimental impact on future fisheries.
11. Cockles must be sorted using a hand-held net which is capable of rejecting the majority of cockles which are under 10mm (width) and / or are of the 2022-year class of cockles.
12. Shovels, spades or any other implement which are capable of moving cockles without also sorting them, must not be used prior to them being sorted for size in accordance with code 11 (above).
13. Cockles of less than 10mm should be left on the cockle beds and not landed. Where cockles of less than 10mm are landed excessively, the Authority will consider closing the fishery or parts thereof.