



## **Shrimp Permit Scheme: effort limitation policy**

***The following policy came into effect: 1 August 2023***

### **Introduction**

Eastern IFCA manages shrimp fishing activity within the Wash and North Norfolk Coast Marine Protected Area (MPA)<sup>1</sup>. Management measures are implemented to ensure that shrimp fishing activity does not impact on site integrity of the MPA or prevent the site's features from meeting their conservation objectives.

Shrimp fishing is typically undertaken using a shrimp beam trawl; a type of bottom towed gear specifically used to fish for shrimp. These are typically lighter than bottom towed gear used in fin fish fisheries and do not have 'tickler chains' which disturb fish (and sediment).

Eastern IFCA manages the shrimp fishing through the Shrimp permit Byelaw 2018. This byelaw enables Eastern IFCA to limit effort within the fishery to ensure that impacts on protected habitats within the MPA are mitigated as required.

Eastern IFCA's assessment of fishing activity within the MPA indicates that fishing activity must be limited to that which occurred during the ten years preceding the assessment (i.e. between 2006 and 2016).

### **What is meant by shrimp fishing effort?**

In the context of this policy, shrimp fishing effort means the amount and degree of interaction between shrimp fishing gear and the seafloor within the Wash and North Norfolk Coast MPA.

This is determined by many factors including the level of activity (number of tows using shrimp beam trawls) and the size, weight and design of shrimp beam trawls.

### **What was the level of shrimp fishing activity between 2006 and 2016?**

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<sup>1</sup> Wash and North Norfolk Coast Special Area of Conservation

The level of shrimp fish effort is thought to have varied during this time.

Changes in effort in relation to the level of activity at sea can and does change rapidly and in response to a number of factors. For example, in response to changes in market demand and price for shrimp. It is relatively easy for fishermen to change fishing practices in this regard.

Alternatively, gear weight, size and designs are likely to change more gradually as a reflection of the investment required on behalf of fishermen. For example, replacing shrimp beam trawls with wider, heavier ones.

The number of participants also changes over time. Between 2010 and 2018 (inclusive), between 29 and 58 different vessels have prosecuted the shrimp fishery within the Eastern IFCA district on an annual basis. In addition, the capacity and capability of vessels operating within the fishery varies from vessels which will only operate over a single tide to those capable of fishing for 36 hours or more.

Changes in the number of vessels active within the fishery and their capability do not necessarily relate to changes in effort within the fishery. Changes in the make up the fleet operating within the fishery are also likely to change more gradually over time.

No effort limitations have existed within the fishery previously and there have been no access restrictions, save for those which operate under market forces and natural barriers to enter the fishery (such as requirement to invest in specialised equipment).

### **How will Eastern IFCA manage fishing effort within the Wash and North Norfolk Coast MPA?**

Eastern IFCA consulted with industry over a number of years to determine the most effective and appropriate method for managing shrimp fishing effort within the MPA. Taking into account the outputs from the consultation and Eastern IFCA's duties<sup>2</sup>, a set of principles were developed. The section below explains these principles and how Eastern IFCA will implement them as management measures:

- **Fishing effort must not exceed that which has occurred over the past 10 years and this will take into account the variability of fishing activity over that period.**

This is derived from Eastern IFCA's legislative obligations<sup>3</sup> and as an output of the associated habitat regulation assessment<sup>4</sup>.

This will be achieved by determining a Total Allowable Effort (TAE) for each year's fishery (which will be 1<sup>st</sup> August to 31<sup>st</sup> July each year). The TAE for

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<sup>2</sup> S.153 Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009

<sup>3</sup> Under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (2017:1017)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.eastern-ifca.gov.uk/habitats-regulations-assessment-impacts-shrimp-fishery-wash-north-norfolk-coast-special-area-conservation/>

each year will be set so as to achieving a to a five-year rolling average number of trips per year. The fishery will close once the TAE has been exhausted. By using a rolling average, the natural ebbs and flows of the fishery can be encompassed into the management of effort.

- **Minimise the likelihood of the fishery closing**

To minimise the likelihood of the fishery closing in any given year, Eastern IFCA will monitor usage of the TAE and implement fishery wide effort limitations within the MPA. This will initially result in the suspension of issuing further permits and reducing the number of permitted. Fishing effort will be limited to slow the rate of fishing activity and reduce the likelihood of a complete closure within the MPA.

This will be achieved through the permit conditions associated with a Category One Shrimp Permit. Permit holders will be provided sufficient notice of amendments to the permitted number of fishing trips.

- **The shrimp fishery is accessible to enable diversification**

The ability to diversify into different fisheries is a mainstay of the inshore fishing industry. Over recent years however, increased levels of management on certain species have led to loss of access to several fisheries. With regards to shrimp fishermen of The Wash and north Norfolk Coast, this typically relates to loss of licences to fish for sole, sprat, herring and skate. In addition, there are increased barriers for new entrants into fisheries which are exacerbated by limiting access to further fisheries.

Whilst the Shrimp Permit Byelaw 2018 enables Eastern IFCA to limit the number of permits issued, Eastern IFCA can manage the fishing effort to meet conservation objectives of the MPA without limiting access to the fishery in the long-term. As such, Eastern IFCA intends to limit access to the fishery only when the required and only for a limited amount of time (at most until the end of the permit year). Eastern IFCA does not intend to implement eligibility criteria which would limit access based on track record.

- **Longer-term direction of travel**

Changes in the amount of fishing activity can and do change rapidly and management measures mitigate this by capping the effort. However, other factors, such as fishing behaviours and gear design can change more slowly over time but also influence the level of impact on the MPA. As such, a longer-term vision for the fishery is proposed.

- *Planned reduction in impact per vessel*

The level of impact caused by the fishery is determined not only by the number of fishing trips but also by the extent and manner of the interaction between fishing gear and the seabed.

For example, the overall impact of shrimp fishing within the MPA would be halved if all fishing vessels reduced towing speed or the width of shrimp beam trawls by half.

As such, Eastern IFCA intends to **encourage reductions in fishing / seabed interaction** over time by influencing business decisions regarding replacement of fishing gears and fishing practices. This will have the effect of enabling further capacity within the fishery and provide room for new entrants to enter the fishery.

By providing a road map to the fishing industry which is intended to be achieved over a longer time period, the impacts on business models will be minimised.

Eastern IFCA intends to develop a long-term vision for the fishery in dialogue with the industry. Initially, two areas identified for further consideration are as follows:

- The width of shrimp beam trawls will reduce toward the current average of 6.5m (per beam);
- The weight of shrimp beam trawls will reduce towards the current average of 600 kg (per beam).

Where Eastern IFCA monitoring indicates behaviours not in keeping with the long-term vision of the fishery, Eastern IFCA may seek to implement regulations which do achieve the long-term vision of the fishery.

- *Incorporating best practice into regulation as necessary*

Given the sensitivity and importance of habitats within the Wash and North Norfolk Coast MPA, encouraging best practise is important to minimise impacts and a sustainable fishery. To this end, Eastern IFCA intends to develop a code of best practice in collaboration with the industry. This will be partly informed by the industry led Marine Stewardship Council accreditation bid.

It is intended that a code of best practice is added to and refined over time, taking into account modern practices. This code would also set expectations as to the long-term direction of travel and, through monitoring, Eastern IFCA would determine if any elements of the code should be written into regulation to require best practice.

It is intended that such a code would be continually updated as informed by examples in other fishers and the views of the industry.

Eastern IFCA intends to set up an experienced crew register. This will facilitate fishers to evidence their experience in fishing for shrimp within the MPA.

- **Fishing effort and fishing practices are well understood and monitored by Eastern IFCA**

The management of the fishery in accordance with these principles is reliant on Eastern IFCA's ability to effectively monitor the fishery within the MPA.

To this end, Eastern IFCA has implemented a permit condition with the effect of prohibiting fishing under the authority of a shrimp permit where shrimp return forms are more than a month in arrears.

In addition, all shrimp fishing gear must have an associated certificate of approval and changes fishing gear will require new certification. This will enable Eastern IFCA to monitor the fishery in the context of ensuring the long-term vision is achieved.

## **Fisheries Management Plan**

The following measures are in place to reduce the risk of fishing activity having an adverse effect on site integrity of the MPA and stock sustainability.

The Authority may temporarily suspend the issuing of permits or temporarily close the fishery (until 1<sup>st</sup> August each year) where there is an 'enhanced risk' to the Wash and North Norfolk Coast SAC or fisheries sustainability.

Eastern IFCA will determine the level of risk to the MPA or the fishery in relation to fishing effort by estimating anticipated levels of fishing effort taking into account historical trends in fishing effort and all other information available. Where fishing effort is considered likely to exceed the allocated Total Allowable Effort, the Authority will consider there to be an 'enhanced risk'. This may include, for example, where a greater number than expected of fishers apply for shrimp permits, where the level of

fishing activity has exceeded anticipated levels at any point in the year or where fishing behaviours change to increase interaction with the seabed.

<b>Management measures</b>	<b>Description</b>
Access to the fishery – no limitations in permit allocation at outset.	Eastern IFCA will not limit permit allocation at the outset of each permit year (1 <sup>st</sup> August to 31 <sup>st</sup> July).
Preventing changes to fishing gears which would lead to increased impact on the MPA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prohibition on the use of tickler chains or other components which would have the effect of penetrating the seabed.</li> <li>• Restricting the design of ‘try-nets’</li> <li>• Gear Certification – all gear must be certificated by Eastern IFCA to be used in the fishery. Any modification of gear invalidates the certification.</li> </ul>
Setting Total Allowable Effort (TAE) within the fishery	This will be set on an annual basis and determined so as to achieve a five-year rolling average of fishing effort. The five-year rolling average is 1101 trips per year. The maximum number of trips which may be permitted in any one year is 1746.
Limiting effort to reduce the risk of exceeding effort limitation	<p>Eastern IFCA will respond to activity levels which increase beyond that which is expected, to reduce the likelihood of the TAE being exceeded.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suspend the issuing of permits temporarily – until end of permit year (31<sup>st</sup> July);</li> <li>• Reduce the permitted trips per month per permit temporarily – until end of permit year (31<sup>st</sup> July).</li> </ul>

	<b>N.B. Eastern IFCA would also be able to restart issuing permits or increase permitted tides as necessary.</b>
Requirement to complete and return fisheries data forms	Permit condition which prohibits fishing for shrimp if return forms are more than one month in arrears.