# A blue and white sign  Description automatically generated with low confidenceConsultation Document – Informal Consultation

Whelk Permit Conditions Review

**This consultation closes at midday on Thursday 6 November**

Eastern IFCA are seeking views of whelk fishermen as part of the review process for the Whelk Permit Byelaw 2016. It is a requirement of the byelaw that the permit conditions are reviewed every four years. The purpose of the review is to evaluate the sustainability of the whelk stock and assess the effectiveness of existing permit measures.

The findings of the most recent review indicated that the current permit conditions were contributing positively to the protection and sustainability of the whelk fishery. However, several areas of concern were identified, particularly around compliance and data accuracy, which may affect the reliability of stock assessments.

As a result two measures are being proposed to address the concerns:

1. **An increase to a 3-minute ping rate for VMS**:

Non-compliance with pot limitations was highlighted as a primary issue currently affecting the whelk fishery. A 3-minute ping rate would enable officers to identify when additional gear is being used, aid in identifying when fishing has taken place inside and outside of the Eastern IFCA district and bring reporting in line with iVMS.

1. **A requirement to separate and report on the catch caught from outside the district:**

The whelk fishery extends beyond the Eastern IFCA district, allowing fishing activity both within and outside the 6 nautical mile limit. This creates enforcement challenges, as fishers may attribute large catches to pots set outside the district, making it difficult to verify compliance with permit conditions.

A requirement to separate and report on catch from outside the district would aid in tackling non-compliance issues that arise from fishers claiming that catch is from outside of the district including compliance the pot-limitation and the increased minimum size for whelk caught within the district.

To inform the development of permit conditions, we are seeking the views of whelk fishermen on the proposed whelk permit conditions. In particular, we are focused on:

* Any loss of business or income
* Other impacts such as damage to business relationships

We do not currently know the form that new permit conditions will take. We will not finalise the new permit conditions until we have carefully considered comments from this consultation.

The existing measures for the Whelk Permit Byelaw 2016 can be found [here](https://www.eastern-ifca.gov.uk/whelk-permit-byelaw-2016/)

# Making your comments

This consultation document is intended for you to have your say on management measures and to inform an impact assessment on the matter.

The information you provide will be processed in accordance with our privacy notice found here: <https://www.eastern-ifca.gov.uk/consultations/>

We acknowledge that consultations can be time consuming to complete and we appreciate your continued engagement.

If you require a printed copy of the document, please contact the office and we will post you a physical copy.

Please email completed documents to [mail@eastern-ifca.gov.uk](file:///%5C%5Ceifca-fs1.eastern-ifca.gov.uk%5Ceifca_share%5CS_Correspondence_library%5CC_Mussel_correspondence%5C2025_Mussel_fishery%5CBiosecurity%20Review%20Consultation%5Cmail%40eastern-ifca.gov.uk). Alternatively, physical copies may be sent to the address below. You are welcome to provide a written response instead of filling out this document, also to the address below.

Eastern IFCA

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King's Lynn

Norfolk

PE30 2JG

**This consultation closes at midday on Thursday 6 November 2025**

# Section 1. Your Details

Please provide your details below. This will enable us to provide specific support if it is requested and to contact you about your answers if we require further clarification.

Full name:

Operating port:

Vessel name(s) and PLN:

Address:

Telephone (landline):

Mobile:

Email:

# Section 2: Fishery Engagement

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| Please indicate whether you have participated in any whelk fishery in the last five years?  | Yes | No |
| If yes to the above, please indicate in what way you have participated in the whelk fishery | Recreationally | Commercially |
| If applicable, please provide further details below on your participation in the whelk fishery. I.e. General area(s) where you fish for whelk, how often you fish for whelk, does whelk fishing make up a large part of your fishing activity/income from fishing, etc. |
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| Have you participated in the 2024/2025 whelk fishery? If so, can you estimate the value of the fishery that year to you?  |
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# Section 3: Impact of proposed conditions

The permit conditions that are being proposed will apply to Category One permits only and are detailed below, with the opportunity to provide ratings and comments for each.

**Proposed permit condition 1: An increase to a 3-minute ping rate for VMS**

A vessel must carry a VMS unit that reports at least at a 3-minute ping rate.

Explanation and Intention:

A “VMS unit” means a vessel monitoring system which transmits the position, speed and course of a fishing vessel. A “ping rate” is the frequency at which the VMS unit reports this information. The condition requires that vessels fishing commercially for whelk must carry a VMS unit that reports at least every 3 minutes. It is intended that this would enable enforcement officers to identify when additional gear is being used and help to identify when fishing has taken place inside and outside of the Eastern IFCA district.

It is intended that such a condition would provide a caveat where a vessel has a VMS device which cannot increase its ping rate to 3 minutes and that in such circumstances, the Authority would provide a device which would be used instead. The provision does not apply to vessels under 12m in length because these vessels must report using Inshore VMS (iVMS) which has a ping rate of 3-minutes.

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| Please indicate to what extent you believe the measure will be **effective at achieving its intent**? |
| Very Ineffective  | Ineffective  | Neither effective or ineffective  | Effective  | Very effective  |
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| Do you have a unit reporting at a ping rate of 3 minutes? | Yes | No |
| If no to the above question, what would the **financial impact** of an increased ping rate be on you? |
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| Please provide further information about your answer and any other comments about this permit condition. |
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**Proposed permit condition 2: A requirement to separate and report on the catch caught from outside the district**

A vessel must separate whelk caught from outside the Eastern IFCA district from whelk caught from inside the Eastern IFCA district. Catch from inside and outside of the district must be reported separately on whelk returns forms.

Explanation and Intention:

This condition is intended to aid in tackling non-compliance and improve data collection for the monitoring of the whelk stock. This condition requires that whelk caught from outside of the Eastern IFCA district must be kept separate from whelk caught inside the district and will require catch from inside and outside of the district to be reported separately on whelk returns forms. The exact method for separating catch (e.g., by container, labelling, or location on the vessel) has not yet been decided. Feedback and comments from this consultation will help determine the most practical and effective way to implement this requirement.

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| Please indicate to what extent you believe the measure will be **effective at achieving its intent**? |
| Very Ineffective  | Ineffective  | Neither effective or ineffective  | Effective  | Very effective  |
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| --- | --- | --- |
| Would the requirement to **sort and report** whelk caught from inside and outside the district have a financial impact on you?  | Yes | No |
| If yes to the above, what would you estimate the lost revenue for this year to be? |
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| Would there be any other costs involved with sorting and reporting catch? I.e. Time taken to sort catch, reduced total catch, etc. |
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# Section 6: Other comments

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| Do you have any other comments or suggestions on the proposed conditions, or any other conditions you would propose? |
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| Do you have any other feedback you would like us to know or believe we should be aware of? |
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