

Whelk Permit Byelaw 2016 - permit conditions review consultation:

Eastern IFCA are consulting with whelk permit holders as part of the review process for the Whelk Permit Byelaw 2016, which enable the Authority to manage whelk fishing in the Eastern IFCA district. It is a requirement of the byelaw that the permit conditions are reviewed every four years. We are continually reflecting upon best practice approaches to fisheries management. This includes adapting our management in response to new information and evidence about the fishery from fishermen, scientific stock assessments and conservation advice.

The findings of the most recent review (2024) 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. The key findings were:

- The Wash whelk fishery emerged as an area of concern for health of whelk stock due to only marginal recovery in Landings Per Unit Effort (LPUE) following a significant decline in 2021/22.
- Non-compliance with pot limitations undermines the accuracy of LPUE data. If fishers exceeded pot limitations and do not report the actual number of pots used, LPUE may be overestimated, potentially masking decline in the fishery's productivity. This issue has also been raised by fishers as a key concern.
- 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.

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

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

A "VMS unit" means a vessel monitoring system which utilises satellite tracking to transmit 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 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.

2) A requirement to separate and report on the catch caught from outside the district:

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.

We do not currently know the full 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](#)

Making your comments

This consultation is to seek the views of current whelk fishers in our district. To inform the development of permit conditions, we are seeking the views of whelk fishermen on the proposed conditions. In particular, we are focused on:

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

[Click here to respond to the consultation by submitting a response to the questionnaire.](#)

If you require a printed copy of this questionnaire, please contact the office on the details below. If you would prefer instead to write your response to this consultation, please send your responses to the contacts below.

The information you provide will be processed in accordance with our privacy notice found [here](#).

What happens after the consultation closes?

After the consultation deadline when we have received all of the questionnaires and written responses, the results will inform the review of the permit conditions to be presented at the 62nd Authority meeting and will go on to inform the development of the new permit conditions.

Once developed, we will hold another formal consultation for you to view and comment on the new permit conditions, where again your considerations will be taken into account.

We are committed to meaningful engagement with industry to further understand the potential impacts of management decisions on fishery livelihoods. We take these into

account alongside our obligations to maintain sustainable fisheries and healthy environments.

Contact Details

Address:

Eastern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority
6 North Lynn Business Village
Bergen Way
King's Lynn
Norfolk PE30 2JG

Phone No: (01553) 775321

E-mail: mail@eastern-ifca.gov.uk