

# Informal consultation on Whelk Permit

## Conditions review

### Outcome report

---



#### Overview:

Eastern IFCA undertook an informal consultation on the addition of two conditions to whelk permits. This document summaries the key outcomes of the informal consultation which ran from 9<sup>th</sup> October 2025 to 6<sup>th</sup> November 2025.

#### We asked:

The consultation sought the views of stakeholders on the following two permit conditions:

- 1) An increase to a 3-minute 'ping' rate for VMS
- 2) A requirement to separate and report the catch caught from inside and outside of the Eastern IFCA district.

#### You Said & Our Response:

Stakeholder responses to the consultation included written and verbal submissions. There were 16 individual responses to the consultation questionnaire. A presentation on the proposed permit conditions was given to the Fisheries and Conservation Management Working Group to gather stakeholder views. Officers also received responses through one-to-one engagement with stakeholders over the phone.

The table below provides an overview of the breadth of responses received on key questions asked. Location based or numbers-based information, including information that could be related back to individual responses, is not included in this table.

You said	Our response
<b>Fishery engagement</b>	
<b>General questions to gather on stakeholder engagement with the whelk fishery</b>	
Stakeholder engagement with the whelk fishery ranges between 10% to 50% of	Since 2014, whelk fisheries have consistently constituted one of the top

fishing activity, but it was noted that this varies year to year depending on multiple factors such as the weather, productivity of the whelk in any particular season and the availability of other fisheries.	three most valuable fisheries in the Eastern IFCA district.
Activity is higher in the winter, with the main activity noted as between anytime between January and June.	The whelk fishery is managed through the Whelk Permit Byelaw 2016 which provides the main mitigation for risks associated with the fishery including the implementation of management measures to ensure a sustainable fishery.
Some stakeholders fish both inside and outside the district, whereas others will fish for whelk either inside or outside the district only.	
The whelk fishery has been noted as an important fishery when the other fisheries are less active. Other fisheries include cockles, crab, lobster, and cod.	
	Eastern IFCA notes the whelk fisheries importance, especially for during times of the year when other fisheries are less active.

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

##### **Effectiveness of the proposed permit condition**

Agreement a 3-minute ping rate would be effective.	Noted.
Not sure that it would be effective.	Noted.
A 3-minute ping rate is not enough. Ping rate should be turned up to a higher resolution for better spatial resolution.	The intention of a 3-minute ping rate for VMS is to improve the monitoring of the whelk fishery while discouraging non-compliance. A ping rate of 3-minutes for VMS was proposed based on these reasons:  Fishing vessels under-12 metres are now required to have iVMS units, these have a ping rate of 3-minutes. This permit would bring vessels over 12 metres in-line with the national measures for vessels under 12 and
Agreement that a 2-hour ping rate is not enough but that a 3-minute ping rate is unnecessary. Ping rate should be more than 3 minutes but less than two hours.	

	<p>would ensure consistency in monitoring and data analysis.</p> <p>3 minutes is deemed sufficient to provide spatial resolution for inshore fisheries management. Inshore Fisheries Conservation Officers are able to identify whelk potting activity from vessels with VMS or iVMS units with a ping rate of 3-minutes.</p> <p>A ping rate with less spatial resolution (above 3 minutes) would not provide sufficient resolution for inshore fisheries management. A ping rate with more spatial resolution (less than 3 minutes) is deemed unnecessary at this time and would not align with national measures.</p>
<b>Would there be any impact from this permit condition?</b>	
If compliant with existing permit conditions this condition will have no anticipated impacts.	Noted.
No anticipated impacts on business or fishing.	Noted.
This measure will have a financial impact and add to the already existing fees of VMS units.	The cost associated with an increased reporting rate is understood to be \$15 per month. This is not considered likely to pose a significant risk to business continuity.
Any costs generated from this permit condition should be funded by Eastern IFCA or at least subsidised.	Eastern IFCA does not compensate for any management necessary to retain the health of fisheries or the environment.
<b>On proposed permit condition 2: A requirement to separate and report on the catch caught from outside the district</b>	
<b>Effectiveness of the proposed permit condition</b>	

Agree that this permit condition would be effective.	Noted.
Not sure whether it would be effective.	Noted.
Possibly effective, however effectiveness relies on compliance with additional permit conditions. Believes that non-compliance is still a risk and that better monitoring is needed.	Eastern IFCA notes that non-compliance with permit conditions is a concern for stakeholders. The intention of the two proposed permit conditions is both to further discourage non-compliance and to make it easier and quicker for enforcement officers to identify non-compliance.
Does not think it will be effective.	Noted.
<b>Financial impacts from this permit condition</b>	
No financial impacts anticipated	Noted.
Possibly by impacting whether people chose to target whelk both inside and outside of the 6 nm district limit, or whether they choose to just stay inside or outside.	Consultation with industry indicated that the majority of whelk fishers do not fish outside of the district, and if they do, that they tend to fish either within or outside of the 6 nm district limit during one trip. However, Eastern IFCA acknowledges that this is a concern and intends to monitor the impacts of the permit conditions carefully. Furthermore, as required by the Whelk Permit Byelaw 2016, permit conditions are required to be reviewed every 4 years and so any impacts from this condition would be detected at that point.
Possibly due to the increase in time and effort to sort catch, which could decrease the amount of time spent fishing.	Eastern IFCA is committed to ensuring that the method chosen for separating and reporting catch is easy to implement and does not represent a significant burden for permit holders.
<b>Other impacts from this permit condition</b>	

Reporting catch from inside and out the district limit would generate more paperwork and be an administrative burden, particularly combined with the other existing administration involved in fishing.	Eastern IFCA plans to incorporate the requirement to report catch separately into the pre-existing whelk return forms. As whelk returns are already required by Eastern IFCA for any whelk fishing, and information on landings is required by the MMO also requires information from whelk landings, the additional administrative work is expected to be minimal.
Do not foresee any issues from the requirement to have additional bags/boxes so that catch can be separated.	Noted.
Reporting catch from inside and out the 6 would be an administrative burden, particularly combined with the other existing administration involved in fishing.	Eastern IFCA notes that the amount of paperwork that industry members are required to fill out in order to fish is a concern. Eastern IFCA plans to incorporate the requirement to report catch separately into the pre-existing whelk return forms. As whelk returns are already required by Eastern IFCA for any whelk fishing, and the MMO also requires information from whelk landings, the additional administrative work is expected to be minimal.
Could pose a challenge to smaller vessels due to limited space. Separation of catch into bags/boxes could cause safety issues due to weight differences on the vessel and as well as manual handling concerns due to the increased number of bags/boxes.	<p>Eastern IFCA would ensure that the implementation of this permit condition would not jeopardise safety aboard a vessel through careful consideration of the method chosen to separate catch. The general practice observed in the whelk fishery is to store catch on one side of a vessel, which shows that whelk catch does not appear to unbalance a vessel at sea.</p> <p>The techniques used to store whelk onboard during fishing varies, with some fishers using boxes or trays, while some use Raschel bags and some using tonne bags. The permit conditions will not have an impact on individual fishers</p>

	<p>preferred container for storing whelk, only that they would need to be marked to show catch from inside and outside of the 6 nm district limit and so should not influence how whelk is stored upon a vessel. The only scenario where this may happen is if a whelk fisher would normally only use a single container, such as a tonne bag, to store all whelk catch, they would now need to use two if planning to catch whelk from inside and outside of the district. This is not anticipated to cause weight issues on a vessel, as two bags can be shifted to balance weight onboard as much as a single bag can be.</p> <p>The permit condition is also not anticipated to markedly increase the number of bags/boxes required aboard a vessel, and so along with the correct manual handling technique, no impacts are anticipated.</p>
Estimating the weight of whelk catch is already difficult to do at sea, this would require an additional estimate.	Eastern IFCA acknowledges the difficulties of estimating the weight of catch at sea. However, as whelk is weighed by processors once landed it is not necessary for an estimation to be made for the whelk returns required by Eastern IFCA. Rather, the weight of the catch can be taken from the weight recorded by the processors.
Concerns about whether catch would then be mixed at the processors and whether this would impact fishers at all.	Eastern IFCA has contacted one of the main processors to query how they would process separated catch. They did not foresee any issues for themselves or whelk fishers. They explained that their prices are based on the whelk yield, and so it is not a concern if catch from inside and outside of the district limits is mixed or separated.
<b>Other comments</b>	

<p>The permit conditions do not address larger whelks being placed on the top of the bag/ box. Thorough checks will be needed to be implemented with this management to mitigate non-compliance.</p>	<p>During inspection enforcement officers are required to take a random sample from bags and boxes rather than just sampling from the top.</p>
<p>Small whelk in the Wash should be left to contribute to the next years stock.</p>	<p>Following the previous whelk permit byelaw review, the Minimum Landing Size (MLS) of 55 mm was not noted as an area of concern. The MLS appears to be appropriate for the majority of the fishery at this current time, however the report indicated that for areas towards the south of the Eastern IFCA District, 55 mm could be too high to enable a viable fishery. A study is ongoing to gather evidence to test whelk size at maturity in different areas in the district.</p>
<p>Suggestions of ways to mark separated catch:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Different coloured bags/ boxes – Would be obvious and easy to check</li> <li>• Cable ties on bags/ boxes</li> </ul>	<p>Noted. Eastern IFCA appreciates suggestions on the best ways to implement this permit condition.</p>
<p>Is the whelk MLS increasing? If so, it would have a negative impact on the stock.</p>	<p>There are currently no plans to increase the MLS for whelk. The most recent whelk permit byelaw review indicated that the MLS appears to be appropriate for the majority of the fishery. The review indicated that this might be different for areas in the south of the district, however more evidence is needed to determine whether an increase in MLS for this area is appropriate. A study is ongoing to gather evidence to test whelk size at maturity in different areas in the district.</p>
<p>The whelk fishery should not open until after Christmas/ after the shrimp fishery has ended to reduce the impact on whelk.</p>	<p>Eastern IFCA's whelk stock assessment indicates that the majority of fishing activity for whelk occurs between January and June. Industry members indicated that whelk fishing is important</p>

	<p>during this time as other fisheries are not available to them. As stock assessments indicate that whelk stocks in the district are being fished at a sustainable level, and due to the importance of the whelk fishery to the industry, Eastern IFCA has no plans at this time to restrict whelk fishing to certain months of the year.</p>
<p>Why not use quotas as part of the management measures?</p>	<p>The most recent review indicates that the whelk fishery is currently being managed at sustainable levels, with pot limitations providing adequate effort limitation.</p>
<p>Concerns about whelk FMP impacts.</p>	<p>The Whelk Fisheries Management Plan (FMP) outlines a strategy for achieving sustainable management of whelk fisheries. The FMP's primary focus is on enhancing data collection, alongside the introduction of initial management measures that largely align with existing Eastern IFCA Whelk Management. Over the longer term, the FMP aims to explore more targeted interventions such as pot limits, catch restrictions, and gear design improvements, as the evidence base improves.</p> <p>Eastern IFCA recognises the importance of aligning management with these plans is essential to ensuring sustainable inshore fisheries and avoid separate and conflicting management, leading to confusion and conflicts and minimise impacts overall.</p>
<p>Eastern IFCA officers should have training to analyze the data from VMS and iVMS.</p>	<p>Eastern IFCA officers are deemed sufficiently competent to use VMS data.</p>
<p>Are there plans to reconsider allowing the use processed crab as whelk bait?</p>	<p>Eastern IFCA is planning to propose the use of cooked offal as whelk bait in a separate byelaw.</p>



## Responses Summary:

### Importance of the whelk fishery

- Most respondents that engage with the whelk fishery stated that the fishery is important as an interim during the winter season while the other fisheries are less active
- All respondents that engage with the whelk fishery indicated that whelk fishing makes up a portion of their fishing, but that this varied between respondents from 10% – 60%.
- Most noted that they only fish either inside or outside of the 6 nm district limits for whelk, whereas some will target whelk from both areas.

### Proposed permit condition – Increase to a 3-minute ping rate for VMS

- Most respondents supported an increase in ping rate to 3-minutes for VMS.
- Most agreed that the measure would be effective in tackling non-compliance issues.

### Proposed permit condition – Requirement to separate and report catch

- Most broadly supported the measures for separating and reporting whelk caught from inside and outside of the Eastern IFCA district and noted that they did not foresee any issues arising from the measure.
- Some respondents were not sure whether the measure would be effective, citing non-compliance as an ongoing issue.
- Suggestions were made for the method used to separate and mark whelk catches from inside and outside of the district, including the use of coloured zip ties or different coloured bags.

## Outcome:

As documented through our comments above, we reviewed all responses to the consultation. As the majority of respondents agreed with the proposed permit conditions, we will undertake the following:

Propose the implementation of the additional permit conditions as originally outlined to Category One permits, to increase the deterrence against non-compliant activity and aid in the collection of accurate data.