



# Agenda Item 7

## Byelaw & Permitting Sub-Committee Meeting 11<sup>th</sup> October 2018

### Agenda Item 7:

#### To discuss the status of the request by a stakeholder to consider reviewing spatial access for mobile fishing vessels near Plymouth

In January 2018 D&S IFCA Officers requested further information from a permit holder who had previously made a request to the Authority to consider the possibility of closing an area south of Plymouth to demersal gear. The area in question is shown in figure 1.

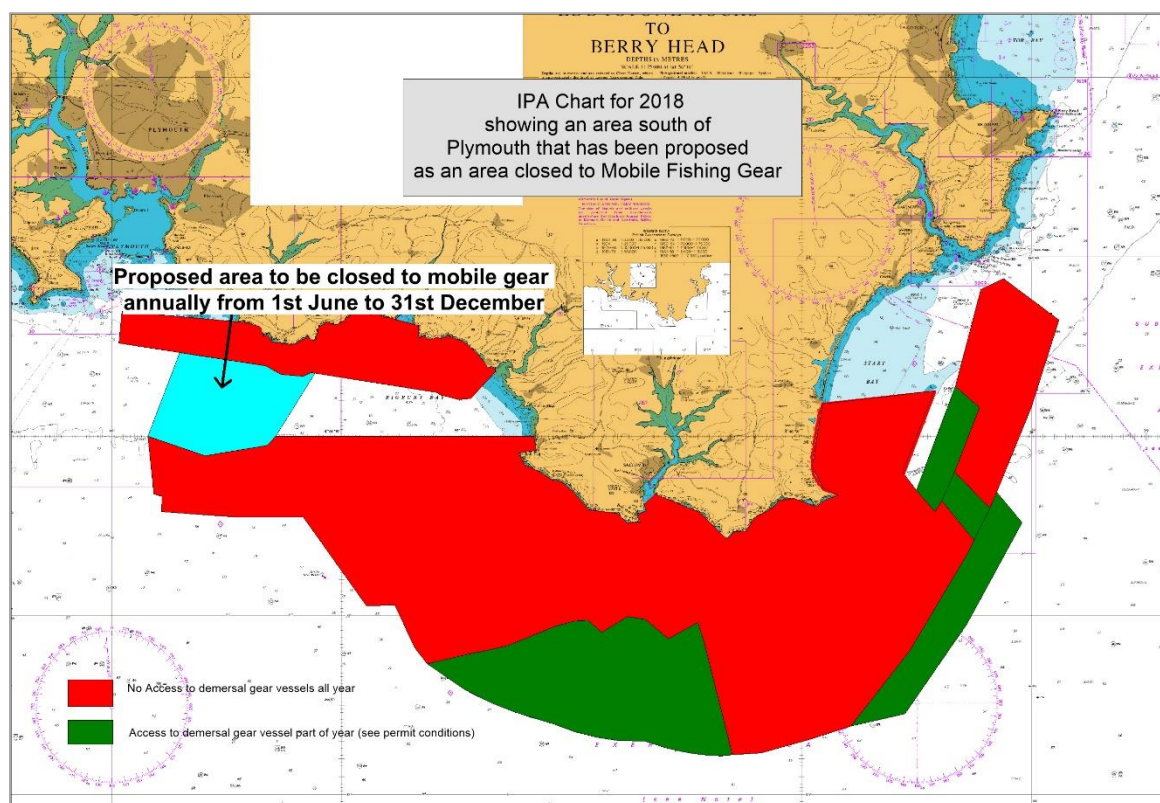


Figure 1 Area proposed to be closed to Mobile Fishing Vessels

The proposer provided a list of 23 vessels to IFCA officers. The list contained the names of the vessels whose owners were supportive of the proposals. The proposer informed the IFCA that the owners/skippers were happy for the IFCA to contact them regarding their opinion of the closure.

The Permit Holders/owners of the listed vessels were contacted in March 2018 and if there was no response they were again contacted in September 2018. Fifteen of the vessels were potters/netters and eight were trawlers/scallopers. Several of the Permit Holders owned more than one of the vessels listed. Of the 23 vessels, four vessels were no longer fishing or could not be found on the IFCA Permit database. Table 1 below summarises the responses.

In terms of support for the proposal, eight potting vessels owned by six individuals were supportive of the closure mainly to provide protection for their gear. Three potting/netting vessel owners were rather undecided or not totally supportive. They broadly supported the proposal but had concerns about trawlers needing to use that ground to make a living and to have somewhere to fish during northerly winds. Two of these owners also felt the area would be swamped by pots and would not provide the opportunity or the ground to shoot nets in the

area. They felt strongly about this and whilst could see the benefit of a closure felt it would not be for the benefit of netters – but purely for the potters.

Five trawlers/scallopers owned by three individuals were not supportive of the proposal at all and had never indicated that they support it. One owner said that this is an important area for trawling especially during the period, from 1<sup>st</sup> June to 31<sup>st</sup> December, proposed, and that there was a squeeze on space even more now that the MOD had moved their dumping ground from Whitsand Bay to 2 miles south of the Plymouth Sound Breakwater. The individual also gave a list of ten Plymouth and five Looe demersal gear boats that regularly fish in the area under consideration. One of the other demersal gear fisherman on the list explained he was in the process of selling his vessel that had always worked in that area and is planning to return there to fish with his new vessel. Another Mobile Fishing Permit holder, who owns several vessels, explained that whilst he sympathises with the pot gear losses, he felt that this is the risk fishermen take when pots are shot in areas not closed to trawling. He also explained that where he has been involved in gear conflict issues the fishermen try and sort out problems without involving regulatory agencies and this has been successful. His vessels trawl/scallop in this area and he would not be supportive and has never indicated that he is supportive of a closure, although he suggested that perhaps the whole district is closed for a year to scalloping and then certain areas or boxes are open for different months of the years to have a constant supply of scallops. He was also keen on opening access especially in the Lyme Bay SI.

One demersal gear vessel owner was supportive of the closure, but this Permit Holder also owns potting vessels and therefore can choose what activity his vessels undertake in that area. Two other demersal gear vessel owners were partly unsure. One owner switches gear on his vessel from pots to trawls so he wasn't really affected by the proposal as he can change his gear to work in the area under consideration whether the closure came into place or not. The other felt the closure was too long and suggested a shorter closed period from 1<sup>st</sup> June to 1<sup>st</sup> November so that scalloping could take place in the area in the run up to Christmas.

Some of the owners felt that IVMS was useful as it would show where the boats were operating, and potential reduce gear conflict. Now having the requirement for IVMS on all mobile fishing vessels, there is an opportunity to monitor this area fully in terms of the use by this sector. D&S IFCA officers have contacted the MMO's VMS mapping team. This team can investigate historic fishing activity in defined spatial areas to assess the usage by different vessels that have VMS fitted (over 12m). This historic information, together with the current and future monitoring on the fishing activity through IVMS, will provide detailed evidence on how the area is used by mobile fishing boats, which might better inform future management.

Table 1: Summary of Responses from Vessel Owners.

Vessel	owner	Gear	Supportive?		
			Yes	No	Not sure/ other suggestions
1	1	Potter	X		
2	1	Potter	X		
3	2	N/A			
4	2	Potter	X		
5	2	Potter	X		
6	3	Potter			X
7	4	Potter/netter	X		
8	5	Netter			X
9	6	Netter			X
10	7	N/A			
11	8	N/A			
12	9	N/A			
13	10	Potter	X		
14	11	Potter	X		
15	12	Potter/netter	X		
16	2	Trawler/ scallop	X		
17	13	Trawler/ scallop		X	
18	14	Trawler/ scallop		X	
19	15	Trawler/ scallop			X
20	16	Trawler/ scallop			X
21	17	Trawler/ scallop		X	
22	17	Trawler/ scallop		X	
23	17	Trawler/ scallop		X	