

Devon and Severn IFCA News

Somerset Fishermen Undertake Sampling for Bristol Channel Herring Project

Commercial herring fishermen from Minehead in Somerset have joined forces with scientists and fisheries managers from Swansea University, the Blue Marine Foundation and Devon and Severn IFCA to study herring in the Bristol Channel.



Fishermen from Minehead in Somerset believe that herring are spawning locally in the Bristol Channel, something that has never been recorded or documented, despite a commercial fishery for herring existing in the area for thousands of years. The fishermen have teamed up with Swansea University, D&S IFCA and the Blue Marine Foundation, under the [Marine Pioneer Programme](#), in order to improve the knowledge of herring stock structure in the Bristol Channel. Herring genetics are also being looked at, to see how those caught at Minehead and Clovelly are related to herring caught elsewhere in the Severn Estuary, Bristol Channel and Celtic Sea. This part of the work has been supported by the [SEACAMS-2 project](#), and led by Swansea University.

Initial findings have confirmed that herring are spawning locally at both Clovelly and Minehead and that the genetic population structure in the Bristol Channel is likely to be extremely complex. These new findings have implications for the management of commercial fisheries and, crucially, the management of marine developments in the Severn Estuary which have the potential to impact local herring populations. The need for a better understanding of the geographic structure of fish populations has been highlighted in the [D&S IFCA Annual Plan](#).

The results also support the need for an Ecosystem Approach to the management of fish stocks, where all the activities which have the potential to impact a population are considered. This is something D&S IFCA are currently advocating for.