

Devon and Severn IFCA News

D&S IFCA Close Public Shellfish Beds

Public Shellfish Beds in the Teign And Exe Estuary have been closed since 1st May

A temporary closure of public mussel beds in both the Teign and Exe Estuary has been implemented. Defined areas in both estuaries have been closed from 1st May 2019.

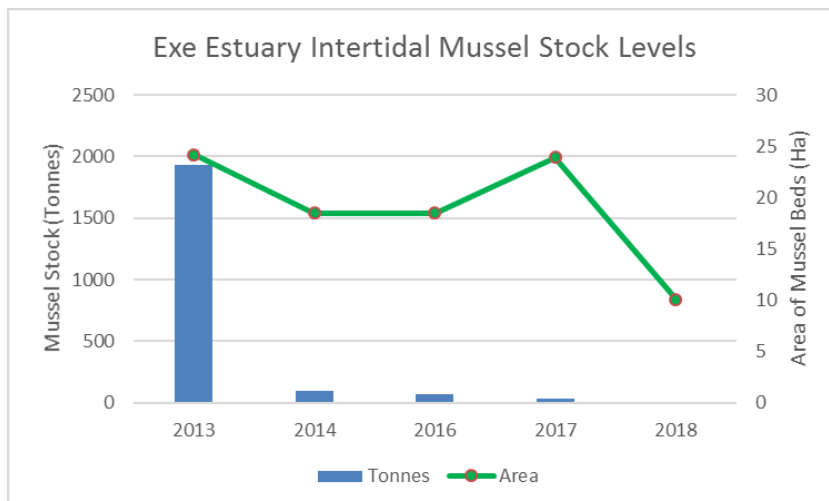
Why?

The stocks of Mussel in both the Teign and Exe Estuary are severely depleted. Devon and Severn Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (D&S IFCA) has the legal duty to manage the exploitation of sea fisheries resources in the District. This is set out in the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 and D&S IFCA has used the Temporary Closure of Shellfish Beds Byelaw to close specified areas. The closure applies to both commercial and recreational fishers and is for mussel, not other shellfish such as oysters, clams and periwinkles.

The Exe

The Exe Estuary is a designated European Marine Site – a Special Protection Area (SPA) designated to protect populations of overwintering birds. Within the Exe, commercial hand gathering of mussels is limited to the classified areas which are part of the private fishery leased from the Earl of Devon. Recreational gathering of mussels has taken place on the public unclassified beds although the stock of mussels in these areas has deteriorated dramatically, possibly due to several factors.

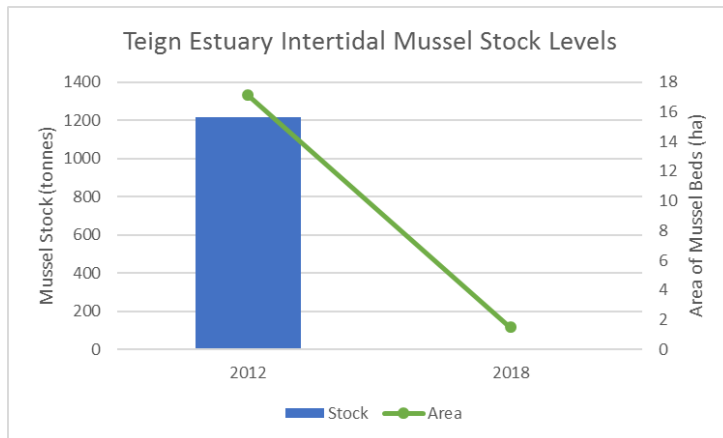
The graph below demonstrates the decline in mussel stocks on the Exe Estuary.



In the past D&S IFCA has received multiple reports of large groups of hand gatherers operating in areas on the Bull Hill Bank, Cockle Sands and at Cockwood / Starcross collecting mussels and cockles. These beds here are not classified for shellfish harvesting and this could raise public health issues. The Local Authorities Environmental Health officers have worked with D&S IFCA and have been involved in many of the reports produced by D&S IFCA

The Teign

The Teign Estuary is not covered by any statutory designations, and therefore has not been surveyed as frequently as the Exe Estuary. A baseline mussel stock assessment was carried out in 2012, with the survey repeated in 2018. During this time the estuary has lost almost all its mussel stock as demonstrated by the graph below:



Where exactly are the closures?

Teign: The Salty and Polly Steps public beds.

[\(View the poster here\)](#)

Exe: The public beds on the eastern banks of the Exe Estuary.

[\(View the poster here\)](#)

Who decides?

The [Byelaw and Permitting Sub-Committee](#) are tasked with reviewing the management of fishing activities within the District and considered the evidence that was presented to them in a [report](#) at their meeting in November 2018.

After [considering the evidence](#) presented to them it was concluded that a temporary closure of specific areas for a period of 18 to 24 months may produce a positive effect and allow the sites to recover. Efforts are being taken to re-stock areas within the Exe Estuary and a temporary closure will help to protect transplanted mussel. Monitoring of the sites will be conducted.

Review of Management

D&S IFCA is currently reviewing the management of a range of hand working type of fishing activities that includes hand gathering methods, bait digging and the use of crab tiles. All the legacy byelaws need to be examined and the B&PSC are scheduled to discuss options for management in November 2019.

Need more Information?

- Visit the [Consultation Page](#) on our website
- Explore our website [Resource Library](#) for a range of information including reports and minutes of meetings
- [Contact](#) D&S IFCA and talk to an officer.
- You can subscribe to our free E-newsletter by contacting D&S IFCA