

## Commercial Scallop Divers Given a Boost by Fisheries Regulator

**Devon and Severn Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority amends Diving Permit Conditions to provide greater access to scallop stocks in July, August, and September.**



A closed season within the Devon and Severn Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority's (D&S IFCA) District has, until now, prohibited commercial divers from removing scallop in July, August, and September.

D&S IFCA manages the fishing activity of diving for specified species using a permit-based model which is both flexible and adaptive.

Engagement with all stakeholders, especially the fishers that operate within D&S IFCA's District that are affected by legislation, is a cornerstone of this fisheries management approach.

The changes to the Permit Conditions from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2022 demonstrate how informal and formal consultation can work positively and how local people and organisations can inform the decision-making process.

For several years, the case has been argued that commercial diving is one of the most sustainable forms of fishing, and that management measures could better reflect the needs of different fishing sectors. D&S IFCA has adopted a vision that highlights innovation, championing the use of technology and the delivery of low impact fisheries.

On 9<sup>th</sup> June 2022, D&S IFCA's Byelaw and Permitting Sub-Committee (B&PSC) agreed a series of changes to the commercial (Category One) Diving Permit Conditions that reflected aspects of the Vision.

Since 1<sup>st</sup> July 2022, commercial divers are able to remove scallops from specified areas, during certain months, within some of the Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in D&S IFCA's District. This may sound like a contradiction, but MPAs are not "*no take zones*" and are designated for specific and differing reasons. Commercial scallop diving is a low impact fishery with respect to its interaction with designated habitats within MPAs in D&S IFCA's District, as supported by Natural England's formal advice on the MPA assessments submitted by D&S IFCA. However, the removal of scallop from these areas is not unlimited, and D&S IFCA has introduced a package of management measures to apply during July, August, and September, including the use of vessel monitoring (IVMS), a daily catch limit, and an increase in the minimum conservation reference size (MCRS) for scallop (an increase to 110mm as measured across the shell).

Chief Officer, Mat Mander, said, "*I am pleased that fishers and other stakeholders took the time to get involved in the consultations and provided their views and information to the Authority. In conclusion, the Authority has introduced permit conditions that demonstrate how participation in the consultation process and the use of technologies can help change and improve the way in which we approach our fisheries and conservation management*".

The Chair of the Authority, Professor Mike Williams said, "*The use of new technology such as vessel monitoring, alongside prudent measures such as catch limits and increased MCRS, as well continuing research, enables D&S IFCA to adopt an adaptive precautionary approach to sustainable stock management, while providing new socio-economic benefits to the local community*".

The Chair of the B&PSC, Dr Emma Bean said, *“The implementation of a package of management measures with the addition of close monitoring of the fishery was considered to be essential by the B&PSC in opening up access to these areas. We feel that we have achieved the right balance and avoided being overly precautionary in our approach. The permit-based model gives us flexibility by providing the opportunity to review our decisions if required and is therefore of benefit for D&S IFCA and all those with an interest.”*

### **Further Information**

The Diving Permit Conditions (July 2022) and the accompanying Annexes can be viewed using the links below.

- [\*\*Diving Permit Conditions \(July 2022\)\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Annexes \(1-5\) for the Diving Permit Conditions\*\*](#)

All Officers' papers and reports presented to the B&PSC are available on the D&S IFCA website ([\*\*Resource Library\*\*](#)), along with the minutes taken at B&PSC meetings.

Details regarding [\*\*active\*\*](#) and [\*\*completed\*\*](#) consultations can be found on the D&S IFCA website.