

Date: 11/04/2019

Our ref: 278974

Your ref: D&S IFCA – HRA Tamar Estuaries Complex SPA & Plymouth Sound and Estuaries SAC Digging with forks vs seagrass, saltmarsh and rock



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## BY EMAIL ONLY

Dear Sarah,

Re: Fisheries in EMS Habitats Regulations Assessment: Assessment for European Marine Site: Tamar Estuaries Complex SPA UK9010141 and Plymouth Sound and Estuaries SAC UK0013111

Fishing Activities: Digging with forks

Natural England is a non-departmental public body. Our statutory purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.

In 2012, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) announced a [revised approach to the management of commercial fisheries in European Marine Sites \(EMS\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/revised-approach-to-the-management-of-commercial-fisheries-in-european-marine-sites-overarching-policy-and-delivery).<sup>1</sup> The objective of this revised approach is to ensure that all existing and potential commercial fishing activities are managed in accordance with Article 6 of the Habitats Directive. This document states that for 'amber/green' risk activities a site level assessment will be required to assess whether management of an activity is required to conserve site features. The Department's strong preference is that site level assessments be carried out in a manner that is consistent with the provisions of Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive. Appropriate management measures should be put in place to ensure that the fishing activity or activities either 1) have no likely significant effect on a site in view of its conservation objectives or b) following assessment, can be concluded to have no adverse effect on the integrity of the site.

Natural England has considered the Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) prepared by D&S IFCA for the purposes of making an assessment consistent with the provisions of Article 6(3). Please accept this letter as Natural England's formal advice on the assessment including the conclusions reached in the assessment. Assessment has been made of the effects of digging with forks vs avocet and little egrets supporting habitats saltmarsh spp., annual vegetation of driftlines, coastal reedbeds, freshwater & coastal grazing marsh, intertidal seagrass beds in the Tamar Estuaries Complex SPA and saltmarsh, intertidal seagrass and intertidal rock sub-features in the Plymouth Sound and Estuaries SAC European Marine Site (EMS) qualifying features (**Appendix 1**: gear feature interactions).

We are content that the best available and most up to date evidence has been used to carry out the HRAs by D&S IFCA officers, to determine whether management of an activity is required to conserve site features, and thus to ensure the protection of the features, from direct and indirect impacts from the collection of marine fisheries resources.

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(1) <sup>1</sup> Defra revised approach: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/revised-approach-to-the-management-of-commercial-fisheries-in-european-marine-sites-overarching-policy-and-delivery>

**It is Natural England's view that through the HRA, D&S IFCA officers appear to have appropriately identified those activities that are not likely to have a significant effect in view of the site's conservation objectives and whether management measures are required in order to ensure that the assessed fishing activity or activities will have no adverse effect on the integrity of the EMS.**

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or require further information.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ruth Porter', is positioned above the printed name.

Ruth Porter

Marine Lead Adviser  
Natural England

Tel. 020802675

## Appendix 1: List of gear feature interaction for which TLSE have been undertaken

### Tamar Estuaries Complex SPA

D&S IFCA Interaction ID	Fishing Activity	Feature(s)	Supporting habitat
HRA_UK9010141_AE40	Digging with forks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avocets</li> <li>• Little Egrets</li> </ul>	Saltmarsh spp.
HRA_UK9010141_AF40			Annual vegetation of driftlines
HRA_UK9010141_AG40			Coastal reedbeds
HRA_UK9010141_AU40			Freshwater & coastal grazing marsh
HRA_UK9010141_D40			Intertidal seagrass beds

### Plymouth Sound and Estuaries SAC

D&S IFCA Interaction ID	Fishing Activity	Sub-feature(s)
HRA_UK0013111_AE40	Digging with forks	Lower-mid saltmarsh
		Mid-upper saltmarsh
		Pioneer saltmarsh
		Transition & driftline saltmarsh
		Upper saltmarsh
		Atlantic salt meadows
HRA_UK0013111_D40		Intertidal seagrass beds
HRA_UK0013111_W40		Intertidal rock