

Potting Permit Byelaw

Formal review of the Live Wrasse Pot Fishery



**Supplementary report for members of the Byelaw and
Permitting Sub-Committee**

24th October 2017

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1. Aim of this supplementary report

This supplementary report has been prepared for members of the Devon and Severn Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (D&S IFCA) Byelaw and Permitting Sub-Committee and will be used for the formal review of the Live Wrasse Pot Fishery. Although several indicators were agreed by members¹ to trigger a formal review of the management measures for the Live Wrasse Pot Fishery, none other than an agreed date of November 2017 materialised.

Following the meeting of the Byelaw and Permitting Sub Committee (13th November 2017), the detail documented in this supplementary report and the outcome of the meeting will be used to amend the pre-existing report² on the management of the Live Wrasse Pot Fishery that was developed earlier this year. The merger of new (this formal review information) and existing information (already documented) will therefore complete the wrasse management process and progress report. This completed process and progress, when finalised, will then be suitable for public circulation and archiving as a single document.

At this time, it is recommended that this supplementary report should be read in conjunction with the pre-existing D&S IFCA wrasse report that documents measures already taken by the Authority to manage the fishery, the evidence base available at that time to introduce changes to the potting permits and also the policy documentation that was created as part of the development of a fully documented fishery.

It is possible that during this formal review of the Live Wrasse Pot Fishery, members may determine that changes to permit conditions are required. If so, specific provisions or alteration to existing permit conditions would require additional consultation.

2. Communication – Inquiries by stakeholders

D&S IFCA is developing a new communication strategy³ with the D&S IFCA website providing the main platform to display information and latest news. Recent developments in 2017 include the production of byelaw related process reports and the wrasse report currently on display on the D&S IFCA website is one such example. The existing report fully documents the evidence base compiled earlier this year, measures taken by the Authority to regulate the Live Wrasse Pot Fishery along with voluntary initiatives and other hyperlinked documents.

Since the implementation of management measures via changes to the potting permits in June 2017, D&S IFCA has received many inquiries into how the Authority is managing the fishery. A significant number of these inquiries were as a direct result of well circulated campaigns raising concerns over the management of the fishery with some very critical of the perceived lack of action taken by D&S IFCA. Officers were able to address many of these concerns, explaining what action had already been taken by D&S IFCA. Stakeholders were encouraged to visit the D&S IFCA website to gain a better understanding of the current

¹ Byelaw and Permitting Sub-Committee meeting in May 2017

² Potting Permit Byelaw – Wrasse report (version 3 August 2017)

³ Available upon request from D&S IFCA

situation. The existing wrasse report that documents the process and progress of the work already conducted by D&S IFCA was of significant benefit to reduce stakeholder concern and reduce criticism directed at the Authority.

3. A re-cap of the measures taken to date

The Full Authority considered five recommendations on June 15th 2017 with the minutes of the meeting now available for the general public to read.

Revised proposals:

- 1. To implement a fully documented fishery***
- 2. To implement a 120 pot limit per permit holder***
- 3. To require the marking of wrasse gear with 'WRA' and Vessel's PLN***
- 4. To establish a closed season from 1st April to 30th June for the Live Wrasse Pot Fishery***
- 5. To introduce minimum and maximum conservation reference sizes for five species of wrasse***

The above regulation and voluntary measures (as part of a fully document fishery) were agreed and have now been introduced by the Authority.

Regulation

All of the above Potting Permits were amended in July 2017 to include new conditions as follows (paragraph numbers reflect the numbering used within the permit):

Catch restrictions

- x. ballan wrasse less than 150mm or greater than 230mm, measured from the tip of the snout to the end of the tail fin
- xi. cuckoo wrasse less than 150mm or greater than 230mm, measured from the tip of the snout to the end of the tail fin
- xii. corkwing wrasse less than 120mm or greater than 230mm, measured from the tip of the snout to the end of the tail fin
- xiii. rock cook wrasse less than 120mm or greater than 230mm, measured from the tip of the snout to the end of the tail fin
- xiv. goldsinney wrasse less than 120mm or greater than 230mm, measured from the tip of the snout to the end of the tail

- 1.4.3 A Category Two permit holder or named representative is not authorised under this permit to retain on board live wrasse that have been removed from a fishery within the District.

Gear restrictions

- 2.2 A permit holder or named representative is not authorised under this permit to use any pot unless all individual pots or each string or shank of pots is clearly marked by at least one floating marker (buoy or dahn). Each of these buoys or dahns shall be clearly marked with either the relevant fishing vessels registration (port, letters and numbers) of the vessel named on the permit or the permit number.
- 2.4.1 A Category One permit holder or named representative is not authorised under this permit, for the purpose of fishing for wrasse, to use a pot unless;
- (a) in addition to paragraph 2.2 above, each floating buoy or dahn is clearly marked with the letters 'WRA';
 - (b) the maximum number of pots used does not exceed 120;
 - (c) each pot is tagged with a tag issued by the Authority; and
 - (d) the retained live wrasse comply with the sizes as set out in paragraph 1.2 above.
- 2.4.2 when tags are lost, the Category One permit holder must submit a written request for replacement tags. If the original tag is subsequently recovered or taken possession of it must be returned to the Authority and must not be used on any pot again within the District.

Time restrictions

- 4.1 A Category One permit holder or named representative is not authorised under this permit to use a pot, for the purpose of fishing for wrasse, between 1st April and 30th June (inclusive).

Policy statement and guidance note

To supplement the amended permit conditions additional measures have been taken by D&S IFCA.

A policy statement was issued to clarify what is required from permit holders participating in the Live Wrasse Fishery. Under Paragraph 17 of the Potting Permit Byelaw, D&S IFCA can request relevant information to discharge its duties. In order to manage the Live Wrasse Fishery and as part of the fully documented fishery, the following information is required:

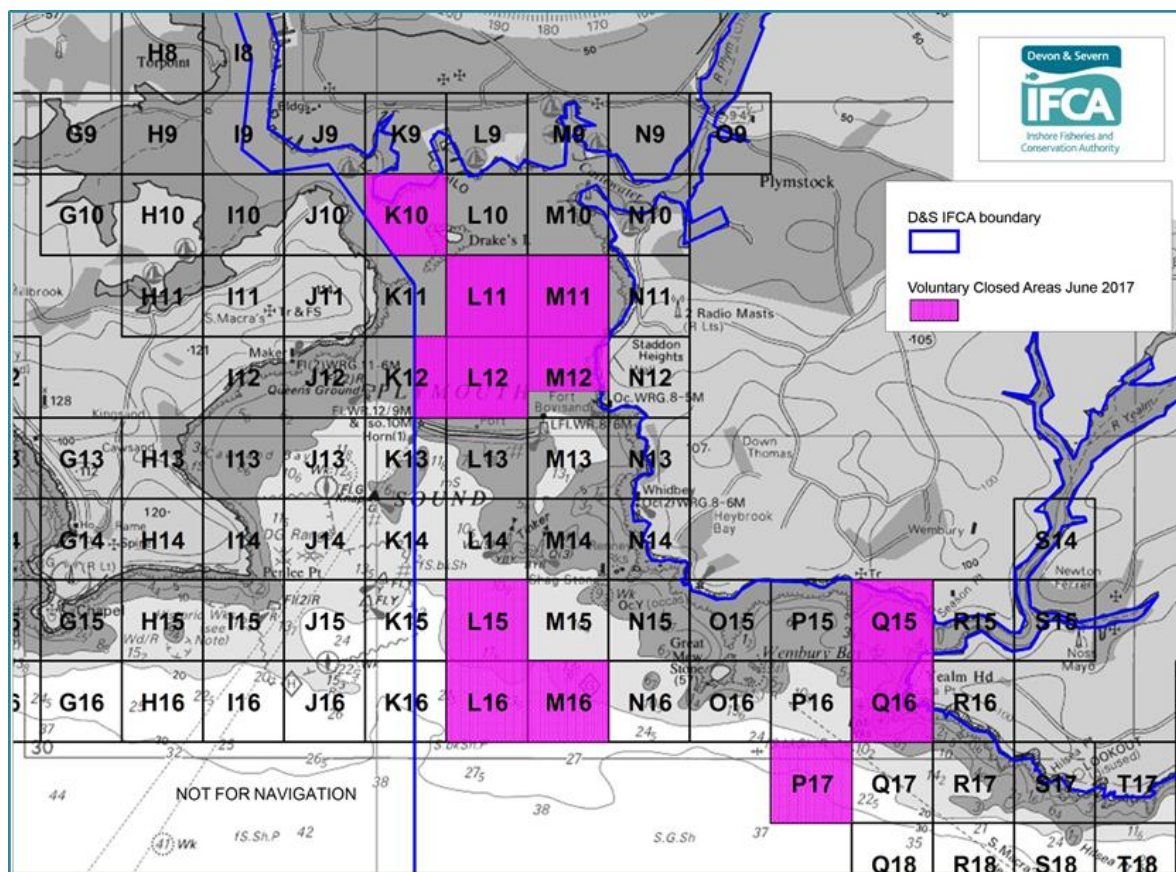
1. The name and contact details of the Salmon Farm company, agent or associated company who the fishermen are supplying live wrasse to.
2. Name and contact details of transport company.
3. Transport documents for all those consignments sent to the Salmon Farm company.
4. Number of pots actively being used in the Live Wrasse Fishery.
5. Completion of weekly returns including information on the dates and times of hauling, location of strings, number of strings hauled, number of pots hauled, and the number of wrasse retained on board per day.

Other requirements:

- Fishermen have also been required to allow D&S IFCA officers on board their vessels to collect catch data for the fishery.

Voluntary closed areas

A chart of voluntary closed areas was circulated to those engaged in the fishery as illustrated below:



Management Review Process

When implementing measures to manage the live wrasse fishery the Authority clearly defined criteria to monitor the development of this fishery and review the initial decisions taken. The criterion is as follows:

- The Authority decided that if there was an increase in the number of vessels entering the live wrasse fishery this would trigger a review of the permit conditions for the Live Wrasse Fishery, and may lead to further changes to the permit conditions, which may include a reduction in the number of pots per vessel.
- The Authority decided that a review of the management of the Live Wrasse Fishery will be undertaken in November 2017. Data collected from fishermen and on-board surveys will inform the review of the permit conditions for the Live Wrasse Fishery, and may lead to changes to these conditions.

- Failure to meet all conditions set out in an accompanying policy statement may also trigger a review of the permit conditions.
- In addition to formal management under the Potting permit conditions, the Authority may introduce further voluntary measures to support the management of the Live Wrasse Fishery. Failure to adhere to these voluntary measures may lead to a review of the permit conditions.

4. Summary of D&S IFCA Survey Work and Data Analysis

Wrasse are being targeted in Plymouth Sound for use as a cleaner fish. A fully documented fishery was implemented into the permit conditions of Devon and Severn IFCA Potting Permit Byelaw to include an intensive data collection program. The report⁴ (Hyperlinked in this supplement) presents the results of the data collection from the first full season of the fishery. The two main types of data presented are from landings data recorded by fishers from April to October 2017 and 20 on-board observed surveys carried out by IFCA Officers. On-board survey effort equated to 7.5% observer coverage of boats surveyed, or 5.5% of the entire fleet.

There was no consistent decline in Catch per Unit Effort (CPUE) or Landings per Unit Effort (LPUE). There were observed seasonal fluctuations in CPUE and LPUE and these could be attributed to spatial movements of fishers, fish behaviour or environmental changes. Continued data collection in the future is vital to determine changes in LPUE and CPUE over time and space.

Spatial fishing effort varied over time across Plymouth Sound. Goldsinny and rock cook represented the majority of catch for all vessels. The proportion of species varied considerably spatially and this can be attributed to species preference for exposure and depth, for example, corkwing were found in more sheltered, inshore areas. The majority of observed spawning took place between May to mid-July. The data indicated the current closed season from 1st April to 30th June covers the majority of the spawning season for goldsinny and rock cook.

The size frequency histograms illustrated the importance of Minimum and Maximum Conservation Reference Sizes (MCRS) for wrasse. The Min CRS (12cm) for goldsinny and rock cook allows a significant proportion of the catch to be returned and to spawn. The introduction of the Min and Max CRS (15-23cm) for ballan demonstrated an increased proportion of the catch returned to the sea from 4% to 28%, protecting both juveniles and mature adults. However, the current Min and Max CRS (12-23cm) for corkwing is allowing over 90% of the fish caught to be landed. Due to the complex life history of corkwing, there is a need to amend the slot size to allow a proportion of immature and mature fish to return to sea.

The results presented in the Data Analysis report highlight the importance of a fully documented fishery and the need to continue data collection to monitor the live-capture fishery for wrasse.

⁴ Live Wrasse Fishery in Devon & Severn IFCA District – Data Analysis - (3rd November 2017)

5. Conclusions from the Research and Officer Comments

The Live Wrasse Fishery research undertaken has provided vital information and this together with data submitted by the fishers has led to a fully documented fishery. The data have been analysed fully and the following conclusions have been made from the research:

1. The on-board observer programme has been very successful and has allowed for the collection of an important dataset allowing analysis of the fishery. This should continue and should aim for coverage of 10% with a baseline of 5%.
2. The observer data and logbook data are crucial for understanding the causes of overall changes in CPUE and LPUE. Data collection must continue.
3. Further research and consideration into the ratios of R selected species (those that may be able to withstand exploitation and recover more quickly e.g. goldsinny) and K selected species (more likely to be impacted by exploitation. corkwing) may allow for the development for relatively simple measures for sustainability of the fishery in a spatially explicit area.

The analysis of data collected has allowed for testing of the measures implemented under the Potting Permit relating to wrasse fishery. The measures have been largely successful. However, there may be the need for amendments to be made to certain measures. The following observations have been made:

4. The current min CRS and max CRS for corkwing means that the majority of corkwing caught are retained and few are returned to sea. Changes to the corkwing MCRS are suggested. The fishery data analysis has included possible changes to the slot sizes and how these would influence the catches and protect more of the population. A slot size 14-18cm would protect the largest proportion of size ranges, including juveniles, females and large mature males.
5. The majority of observed spawning took place between May to mid-July, the current closed season from 1st April to 30th June protects the majority of the spawning period for goldsinny and rock cook. A possible suggestion could be to shift the closed season to further protect more of the spawning fish.
6. Whilst several of the fishermen are fully adhering to the voluntary closed areas further co-operation from fishers is required to have full compliance. Because the vessels are small open boats the fishermen often approximate their position. There is the opportunity to put small GPS units on the boats which could be used to monitor their spatial activity.

6. Further Information/recommended reading

- D&S IFCA communication strategy (available upon request)

Hyperlinks

- [Potting Permit Byelaw – Wrasse report \(version 3 August 2017\)](#)
- [Live Wrasse Fishery Data Analysis November 2017](#)