



Informal Consultation Report

Management of Pot Fisheries

A Summary of Responses from the Have Your Say Informal Consultation

(18th October 2024 to 15th November 2024)

26th November 2024

Contents

1.	Forward - This Report and its Purpose	3
2.	Executive Summary of the Informal Consultation	3
3.	Who Responded, How, and Types of Vessels	4
	3.1 Who Responded	4
	3.2 How People Responded and Concerns	4
	3.3 Types of Vessels of those Responding	5
	3.4 Vessel Base Port / Location of those Responding	5
4.	Spatial Management / Localised Management	5
	4.1 Background:	5
	4.2 The Response:	6
5.	Managing Effort (Pots)	8
	5.1 Background:	8
	5.2 The Response – Pot Limitation	9
6.	Days at Sea, Size of Vessels, and Types of Vessel	13
	6.1 Days at Sea - Background	13
	6.2 The Response – Days at Sea	13
	6.3 Management Measures for Different Types of Vessels - Background	15
	6.4 The Response – Different Types of Vessels	15
	6.5 Further Restricting Size of Potting Vessels - Background	16
	6.6 The Response – Further Restricting Size of Potting Vessels	16
7.	Seasonal Closure	17
	7.1 Days at Sea - Background	17
	7.2 The Response – Seasonal Closure	17
8.	Catch/Gear Restrictions and Use of Bait	18
	8.1 Catch/Gear/Bait - Background	18
	8.2 The Response – Catch/Gear/Bait	19
9.	What Did We Miss?	23
10.	Communications	24

Version Control

Version & Date	Comments
Version 0.1 – 19 th Nov – 25 th Nov 2024	1 st draft of report prepared. Internal review, additions, and editing.
Version 1.0 – 26 th November 2024	Report finalised for presentation to the Byelaw & Permitting Sub-Committee for use at their meeting on 5 th December 2024.

1. Forword - This Report and its Purpose

This report (26th November 2024) has been prepared for Members of the Devon and Severn Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority's (D&S IFCA's) Byelaw and Permitting Sub-Committee (B&PSC) and for all stakeholders to examine via its publication on the D&S IFCA website.

This report is part of a package of information, to further inform discussion and the B&PSC's decision making relating to the management of pot fisheries in D&S IFCA's District. This report demonstrates how the informal consultation (*Have Your Say Informal Consultation - Concerns relating to pot fisheries in D&S IFCA's District*) was conducted and summarises the responses¹ received. The informal consultation was intended to build upon information provided by some fishers in 12 port meetings held throughout the District, and other information already assembled and presented to the B&PSC.

The informal consultation was targeted towards fishers that have a current potting permit, rather than a wider audience that would have been the case for formal consultation. As of Tuesday 26th November 2024, there are 177 Category One (commercial) potting permits and 450 Category Two (recreational) potting permits that are valid for use in D&S IFCA's District. Of the 177 vessels with commercial potting permits, 18 are between 10 metres and 14.99 metres in length. Over 100 vessels are below 8 metres in length. The information set out in the informal consultation, including a questionnaire, was directly circulated to all potting permit holders.

2. Executive Summary of the Informal Consultation

A total of 29 responses were received by the closing date of midnight 15th November 2024, with some more detailed than others. This report includes extracts from selected responses that are set out in *italic purple font*. Three responses were not submitted by potting permit holders, and their details could not be verified; therefore, these were not analysed to contribute to this report. The informal consultation included background information and a questionnaire that was based around different themes to gauge the views of permit holders for their choice of management approach. "Yes/No – In favour/against" selections were included, along with further questions that aimed to gain further details and reasons for the options. The table below provides an indication of favoured approaches, and the report examines these topics, and the responses received from the sub questions relating to these topics.

Table 01 - Favoured Approaches (Yes/No/Other)

Topic	In Favour	Against	Other	Comment for Other
Localised Measures	20	6	0	
Pot Limitation	18	6	2	1 response was in favour, but only if vessels working outside 6 miles also had a gear limit. 1 response provided no answer.
Days at Sea	8	17	1	1 response provided no answer.
Seasonal Closure	15	8	3	1 response provided no answer. 2 responses contradicted their initial response of "no".

¹ Responses submitted by verified holders of a valid Potting Permit

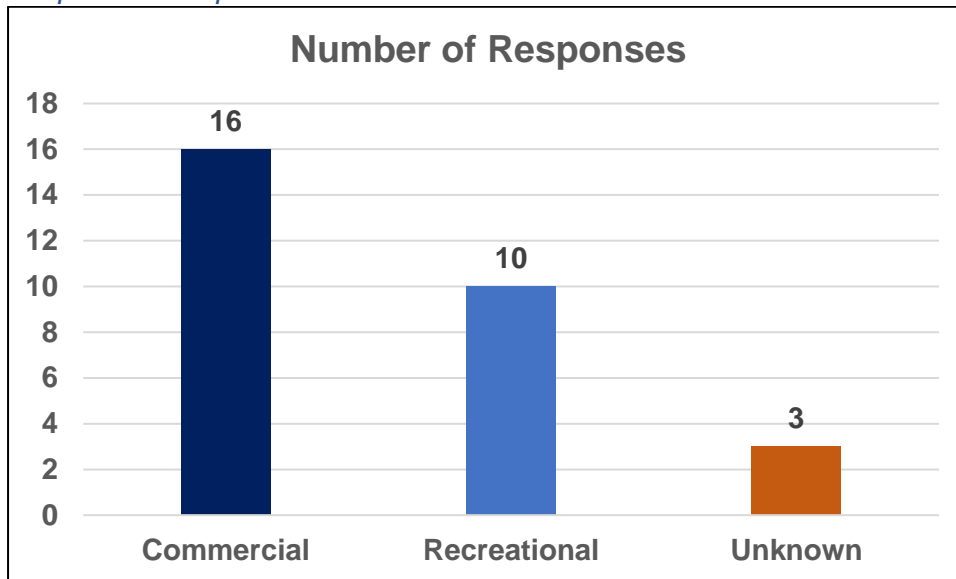
Extracting Detail from the Responses

The questionnaire provided the opportunity for fishers to select their favoured approaches for management and to provide rationale to support their views, or additional detail such as what, where, how, and when. Many responses did not include additional detail and therefore some answers within the responses were challenging to understand. Following some of the “Yes / No” selections, some follow up answers provided in the responses appeared to contradict the initial views set out.

3. Who Responded, How, and Types of Vessels

3.1 Who Responded

Graph 01 – Response Numbers/Sector



3.2 How People Responded and Concerns

Most (26) of the responses were received using the online Smart Survey questionnaire, including three that were not potting permit holders. As explained, three of these responses were not potting permit holders and therefore these responses were not analysed to contribute to this report. Three responses were submitted using paper questionnaires. The Smart Survey online tool indicated that over 70 people opened the online survey link, but did not go on to complete their questionnaires and submit their views.

Some comments were received relating to how D&S IFCA was attempting to engage with fishers to gain their views.

“I think IFCA should have a total rethink on how it takes advice from fishers and have proper meetings with them to discuss measures rather than box ticking exercise”.

“Some of the question require further provision of evidence; to allow for informed response, this should be provided by local workshops to allow for people who may issues with understanding what is being asked of them. Even today there are issues with numeracy and literacy.”

One response highlighted their concern regarding how decision making is undertaken by D&S IFCA.

“I fully agree with (a need to manage effort) but the fishermen themselves have to be at the table when these decisions are being made. This cannot and should not be run through jo public sitting on the IFCA Committee.”

3.3 Types of Vessels of those Responding

From the responses of potting permit holders with a valid permit (26), the types of vessels they operate are shown below:

Table 02 – Vessel type of those responding

Type	Number of responses
Mono	25
Multi Hull	1
Vivier/Vivier (tanks) fitted	0

3.4 Vessel Base Port / Location of those Responding

D&S IFCA's data base was used to identify the base ports/addresses of those that responded.

Table 03 – Location/Base Port/Numbers

Base Port/Location (Permit Application data)	Number of Responses
Brixham	2
Bude	2
Clovelly	1
Dawlish	1
Hallsands (Start Bay)	1
Ilfracombe	1
Lyme Regis	4
Plymouth	3
Seaton (East Devon)	1
Salcombe/Hope Cove	3
Teignmouth	1
Torquay	2
West Hill (East Devon)	1
Woking	1
Yealmpton	2
Total	26

4. Spatial Management / Localised Management

4.1 Background:

The informal consultation information set out that at recent port meetings, North Devon fishers suggested that potting should be managed differently on the North and the South coast of D&S IFCA's District. Concerns were also raised about conflict between the recreational and commercial potting sectors along the coastal strip. The Permit Conditions allow for different parts of the District to be defined, with management measures applicable to those specific areas, for example, pot limitation (capping numbers of pots) or seasonal closures in specific places.

The questions that followed asked permit holders if they were supportive of this approach, if so, what should apply, where they should apply, and why? The question was also asked what management measures should not apply?

4.2 The Response:

The majority of responses (20) indicated they were in favour of applying localised management measures; however, the lack of specific answers to the where, and what, questions made some of the answers challenging to analyse.

Regarding zonal management, it was recognised in the responses that each area where fishers operate has its own fishing pressures, as well as shared access for commercial and recreational fishers.

Suggestions relating to Specific Areas

There was a suggestion (specific to Plymouth National Marine Park) that there should be separate recreational only areas inshore to avoid conflict between commercial and recreational sectors.

One response from a recreational potting permit holder did highlight a specific area for tailored management, (Lyme Bay MPA - between Branscombe and Devon/Dorset border) and suggested a maximum pot limit, divided by a maximum number of vessels working within a defined area.

“Maximum of 80 pots per vessel for vessels currently fishing there. If more vessels join fishery, divide total number of pots worked by current vessels by number of vessels to give a new max number per vessel. This will ensure no increase in effort, without making a closed fishery. This could be trialled in this area and if successful, possible applied in other areas”.

One response highlighted their views of excessive commercial effort in the Torbay area.

“I would say stop people working 1500 lobster crab pots back of orestone, flat rock, berry head. Over a thousand pots worked by 1 boat inside your district is a complete joke. 500 -800 sure but over a thousand !!!”

Two responses from commercial operators indicated that management should be different on the North and South Coasts, but added no detail of what should apply and why.

“Management should be different North and South – Size of vessel, Pot limitations and Seasonal closures”

Localised or District Wide Management?

Some responses set out suggestions in the “Spatial/Localised Management” section of the questionnaire before reaching the section on Managing Effort, or Seasonal Closure ; however, it was impossible to determine if these suggestions were intended to be specific to different areas of the District.

One response in support of localised measures set out that *“every area within the area is different to each other (and) what works in one would not work in another”*. However; the response did not go further and set out what could potentially work in different areas. Another highlighted a coastal zone for their suggestion, potentially the whole District.

“Within 1 mile band from the shore. No commercial potting.”

The responses indicated that many potentially consider “localised management” as that within the District as a whole compared to outside the District. Alternatively, “localised” could be where each individual operates, or within coastal zones (1 mile, 2 miles, 3 miles of the shore). But with limited additional detail in the response, where coastal zones should apply was difficult to determine.

As some suggestions and views preceded other sections of the questionnaire (Managing Effort and Seasonal Closures) some answers were expanded or sometimes repeated later in the questionnaires.

A range of suggestions provided by commercial operators:

- Boats > 10m not pot within 2 miles of shore line
- Max 20 pots per kw
- Stop potting a mile from the shore from October until April
- Pot limits inside 3 miles, with under 6m vessels set at 100 pots, 6-8m vessels at 200 pots, 8-10m vessels at 300 pots.
- There should be a seasonal winter closure of all areas for lobster.
- No more than 500 pots per boat based on previous years fishing effort for licensed commercial fisherman per boat.
- 1st March to November 31st , all pots removed off the ground to give a rest period of 3 months.
- Initially, limit or stop non-commercial potting for a limited time and limit the number of pots for each boat , not person, to a sensible number.

Balancing Sectors – Commercial and Recreational

As well as the earlier suggestion to apply recreational only potting areas in the Plymouth National Marine park, different views were offered, based more on competition between sectors, rather than localised management from a spatial perspective. Some suggestions for management are already in place District wide, suggesting there may be a lack of understanding regarding what already applies.

“Limit pot numbers for recreational and non-shellfish (entitlement) commercial vessels. Vessels are abusing the number of lobsters they can retain in one day”.

“It is obvious to me that a non-commercial fisherman catching lobsters for himself and his own consumption, and not to sell does not require more than 10 lobster pots per boat. I have personally seen some boats operating 40 and 60 pots per unlicensed boats. This cannot go on.”

“All gear to be marked with boat name and also storage pots”.

“Limiting recreational potting by pot number capping is a solution, as is a closed season for recreational potting. Many pots are left abandoned by recreational potters and remain on ground ghost fishing or as a navigational hazard.”

What should not apply in different parts of the District and Why?

The following quotations were taken from the answers provided for this section, with some not expanding to give a reason for their view. The responses indicate that some, in support of localised measures (ticking the selection), do not support localised management measures in their own area of operation as it could impact on their own business operations or their own hobby activity.

“I...do not support reducing recreational potting pot numbers as 99% of recreational pot permit holders only use their pots a couple of times a year for special occasions and are also heavily weather / time limited.”

“...(introducing) ...pot limitations in the IPA this would end the fishery for the 12 (approx.) larger vessels who fish it. Because we are limited by weather tides and seasonal variation on catches”.

“There should be no increases in MLS.”

“The IPA”. (potentially meaning no change to the IPA)

“Super crabbers working thousands of pots desecrating the stocks. Better management would create more jobs as smaller boats are more environmentally friendly and bring money to local economies”.

Some responses highlighted how some measures should be the same, not only within the District, but further out to sea and across IFCA Districts.

“Yes - I am supportive of applying localised management measures” “All measures should be equal in management strategies to combat the cross borders and outer limits fraud that goes on now with 6-mile differences in lobster size landings. Equal size limits and berried lobster equality throughout stops the fraudulent activity of saying catches in and out of the 6-mile limit.”

5. Managing Effort (Pots)

5.1 Background:

The informal consultation information set out that excessive effort, and a need to tackle it, was something raised in port meetings, along with concerns about over regulation or current restrictions not being adhered to.

To underpin the questions surrounding the topic, the questionnaire set out that effort can be limited in a range of ways using the Potting Permit Conditions, without limiting the number of permits issued. Effort can be managed by applying restrictions throughout the whole District, or potentially in various parts of the District. Pot limitation (capping the numbers of commercial pots that can be used per vessel in the District) is one way, and further limiting recreational pots (current maximum is five pots per permit holder) is another. The questionnaire highlighted that officers have confidence that pot limitation is enforceable.

For this large topic on managing effort, it was explained that effort can be managed in a variety of ways other than pot limitation, that led into further sections of the questionnaire.

Questions and answers relating to managing effort potentially by way of a days at sea allowance, seasonal closures, time at sea per day, vessel size (setting a maximum size for potting vessels lower than the current size limit of 14.99 metres), and the type of vessel authorised to operate within the District are covered in other sections of this report.

Effort Levels – For Context

Potting effort levels vary considerably within the District and different types of pots are used. Recreational potters are limited by the permit conditions to operate a maximum of five pots per permit holder. There is no legal limit for commercial vessels, and although application forms to gain a permit (data base) provide an estimate of “declared” pots to be used, this may not be an accurate reflection on how much gear is in use.

Based on legal limits (recreational) and “declared” numbers within applications for commercial potting permits (data base), the numbers of inkwell and parlour pots used in the District ranges from five pots per permit holder to 1800 pots per vessel. There are 17 vessels over 10 metres

in length and these vessels are estimated to operate on average 1,010 pots (inkwell, creel and parlour) (range 100 - 1,800). The majority of all commercial vessels work less than 900 inkwell, creel, and parlour pots. The numbers of “declared” whelk pots for vessels over 8m ranges from 50 to 1500. Some vessels work a mixture of pot types, including whelk and cuttle traps.

Although there was strong support for pot limits, there were not many suggestions on what levels to set as a maximum. Those that did suggest a maximum level would potentially base this on their own circumstances or business plans. What would seem to be an excessive number of pots for some, may be seen as essential for others to maintain their existing income level.

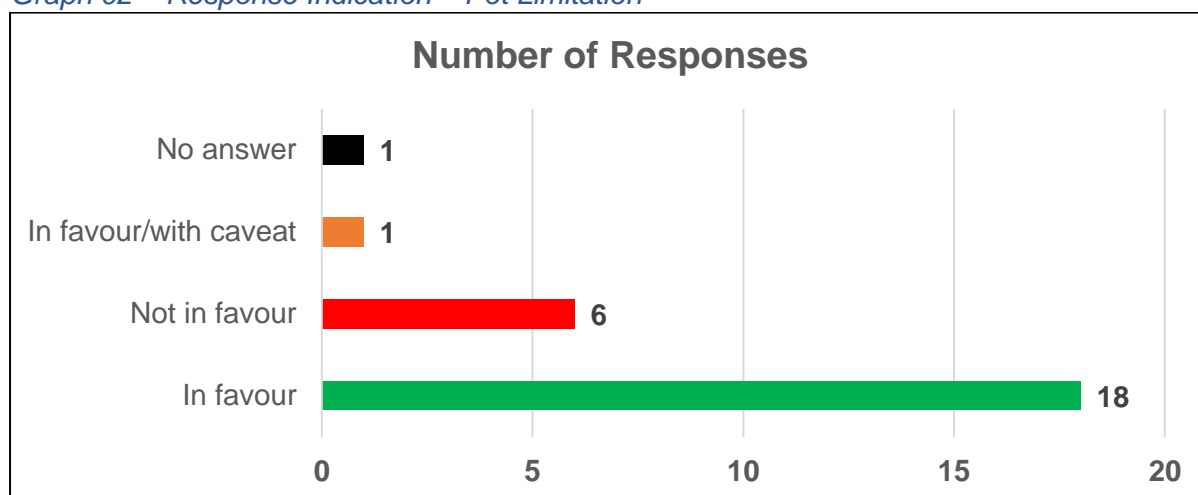
The Questions relating to Pot Limitation:

- What are your views about applying additional management to control potting effort within the District? Please provide details to support your view.
- What are your views about pot limitation (setting a maximum number of pots operated by a vessel)?
- If supportive of pot limitation, what should be the maximum number of pots that can be used by a vessel in the District and why?
- If supportive of pot limitation, should differently types of pot (e.g. parlours, creels, inkwells, whelk pots) have a maximum limit that can be used by a single vessel, and if so, why and what should the limit be?
- What are your views about further restricting the numbers of recreational pots used per permit holder and if you support a reduction to what level and why?

5.2 The Response – Pot Limitation

There was strong support within the responses for pot limitation in different forms.

Graph 02 – Response Indication – Pot Limitation



Based on responses received, controlling the number of pots used within the District is a popular choice. Different reasons were put forward why this is supported, rather than for example a “days at sea” approach.

“Control on pot numbers is probably a better method than days at sea restriction, weather plays a significant part in any small boat fishery, pots fish every day they are baited on the seabed. Forcing small boats to sea to get the days in in poor weather is not a good idea”.

One response answered yes/no for pot limitation (marked orange in the graph 02) – with the caveat being that they support pot limitation but only if pot limitation also applies to vessels working outside of the 6-mile limit.

Others were supportive of pot limitation, but potentially not if it was applied to all, or if it was the only form of management to be introduced.

“..supportive, but not for under 6 meter (as a) lot of under 6 metre like me work pots 6 months of the year”.

(I am supportive of pot limitation).....*”As long as it stays at 5 for recreation use”.*

“The reason for this (support for pot limitation) being the over fishing by the bigger vivier boats fishing inside the 6-mile limit. They are working a huge number of pots and in my opinion, the damage is already done inside the 6 (mile limit) by these vessels. This is going to take a substantial amount of years before this regenerates. This is my personal view”. Management has to be put in place first on the size of vessels working in the 0-to-6-mile region before pot limitations can be effective.”

.....
Not in Support

The difference in management across boundaries led to some responses not in support of pot limitation with the point highlighted that if offshore vivier vessels have no pot limitations, why should vessels working within the District have pot limitation - as they are limited more by weather, tides, and space. Another, not in support, highlighted their own concern relating to their own business model.

“Any additional management needs to be across 6nm. Control of Viviers is key.”

“NO WAY - This would end the fishery in the south of the area (IPA) - we work the amount of pots to make the business viable.”

.....
Suggestions for Pot Limitation

Suggestions based around controlling numbers of pots varied from simple suggestions of a fixed maximum number to a system of track records of pot use, multi-tiered approaches intertwined with coastal zones, or a system of basing pot limits on KW of engine power. One response based their suggestion on pot limitation specifically for one area of the District, with a view to it becoming a district wide approach in the future.

“Inside MPA , Between Branscombe and Devon/Dorset border, maximum of 80 pots per vessel for vessels currently fishing there. If more vessels join fishery, divide total number of pots worked by current vessels by number of vessels to give a new max number per vessel. This will insure no increase in effort, without making a closed fishery. This could be trialled in this area and if successful, possible applied in other areas”.

Suggestions for maximum numbers of pots came from both commercial operators and those fishing recreationally having a view about commercial activity. Some responses offered by recreational fishers, for example limiting commercial operators to using 30 pots and aiming for 12 crabs and 12 lobsters per day were unrealistic, and other recreational fishers offered suggestions to manage the commercial effort with higher limits of pots.

“I agree (with pot limits) ...limit on pots 500 per boat based on previous years fishing effort... in other words, if you fished 200 pots previous years then that would be your allocation - if you used previous years 1,000 pots then 500 would be your allocation.”

Restrictions for Commercial Operations – Suggested by Commercial Operators

Some suggestions were put forward by those with a Category One Potting Permit to apply to those with a Category One Potting Permit.

Table 04 – Suggestions for Pot Limitation

D&S IFCA Ref	Suggestion/Comment
3	Maximum limit of 500 pots (of any type)
10	Maximum of 5 pots for those with no shellfish entitlement
11	Maximum limit of 1000 pots (if pot limits outside 6 miles also apply)
12	20 pots per KW of engine power
13	Maximum of 500 pots
14	Maximum of 200 parlours for under 7m vessels, maximum of 300 parlours for 7m to 10m vessels, vessels over 10m should be prohibited working pots within the District
19	Maximum of 100 pots for under 6m vessels, maximum of 200 pots for vessels between 6m and 8m, maximum of 300 pots inside 3 miles of the coast
C (letter)	10 pots per foot (of vessel) was something suggested in the past - but you would leave no viable business at these numbers.

Restricting Different Types of Pots

Pot limitation/capping based on different types of pots was not strongly supported, and most responses contained little or no information about pot type and what should or should not apply. Most responses were “no response”, or clarified that pot limits should apply to all types.

Concern was raised that separation of gear type could lead to frequent switching of gear. Another highlighted that if this became the chosen option the IFCA should at least phase it in over an extended period to allow fishers time to adapt. One commercial operator from the North Devon area provided a view as follows:

“If you are targeting lobsters, parlour pots are acceptable as there are a lot of the younger generation who would not know how to net a pot. These should have sacrificial panels in the parlour. In my view, if you are fishing lobsters and crabs, you should not have whelk pots in the water and vice versa”.

A recreational fisher stated the following:

“Yes it should be different as different types target different species, if you out a simple max then people will only target high value species.”

Further Restricting Recreational Pots

Views differed between sectors and amongst sectors and around half the responses had no strong views regarding the topic – with answers of “no response”, or keep things the same. Some from the commercial sector did not view 5 recreational pots as excessive.

“My evidence is anecdotal, but I think recreational potting has a very low impact and I would like to see this allowed as is.”

Several commercial operators had a different view and raised concern about pot numbers and what is caught; therefore, there was some mixing of answers between different sections/topics of the questionnaire. One commercial operator suggested an increase to 10 pots for recreational users, but per recreational vessel, not per permit holder. Some commercial operators had the view that all recreational potting should be prohibited, to *“leave it to the professionals”*, or a reduction should be imposed making the maximum three pots, or one pot per permit holder.

“Initially, limit or stop non-commercial potting for a limited time. Limit the number of pots for each boat, not person, to a sensible number, someone has all the data as to each boat declared landings. Possibly close all ground for say a month, when fishing is at its heaviest, to allow a bit of a rest. There is little doubt that the effort is having an effect”.

“It is in the word “recreational”, as opposed to commercial where it is done for a living, with all the boat and gear, harbour dues and lots of other expenses that it entails.”

“I totally disagree with a recreational person having 5 pots, they should only be allowed 1 maximum. If they were lucky enough to catch 2 lobsters per day plus the brown crab to go with it, this amounts to a substantial amount of shellfish per week. This would only lead to the person trying to sell on their surplus.”

“Yes, there should be reductions or higher prices for recreational permits. We as full-time fishermen buy our licenses in which shellfish is or isn’t included, and still pay the extra permit price”.

Views of Recreational Potters

Some responses from recreational potters, felt that no changes were needed, as weather and time to pursue their hobby already restricts their activity, as well as a daily bag limit being in place.

Ido not support reducing recreational potting pot numbers as 99% of recreational pot permit holders only use their pots a couple of times a year for special occasions and are also heavily weather / time limited.....recreational are ALREADY LIMITED ON TWO PER DAY so reducing the pot number would make no difference and unfairly disadvantage the lowest impact area of the fishery.”

A more extreme view was that the recreational limit on pot numbers (5, per permit holder) is not adequate, and it should be increased to 20 or 30 pots.

Competition for Space

Some responses from both sectors highlighted the competition for space that exists in coastal areas, that can lead to conflict. The suggestion to apply a recreational only potting area has already been highlighted in this report, whereas commercial operators highlighted the following:

“Additional management is required on inshore grounds by pot limitation. These grounds are only fished for a few summer months but are subject to abuse by recreational fishers and non-shellfish licensed boats. (Apply restrictions)Recreational 1 pot, Non shellfish 5 pots.”

“Recreational potters are combining licences to aggregate potting effort and catches . These vessels inshore can outnumber commercial vessels and do not have to comply to any mca regulations.”

Enforceability:

Some raised concern about D&S IFCA’s ability at this time to enforce existing and potentially new restrictions, including pot limitation.

“As far as I am concerned, all the paperwork exercises are a total waste of time ,unless enforced, which cannot be done sat at office desk.”

Pot limitation is not enforceable, commercials will just leave untagged pots to soak or work around this limit in other ways, they are already laughing at this sort of restriction in the pub. That said I support this sort of measure if it is backed up by video cameras on every boat and other enforcement actions.”

“Buy a vessel capable of removing gear that is not identifiable, this gear which I regularly see all over the place, which I was told would be removed this year, does not appear to have happened, or if it did, you missed a lot.”

“Recreational potters are abusing the rules - More inspections of recreational vessels when coming ashore”.

“(it should be)Policed better and see where the catches are going.”

6. Days at Sea, Size of Vessels, and Types of Vessel

6.1 Days at Sea - Background

The questionnaire included these questions:

- Are you supportive or not supportive of limiting the number of days a vessel can operate, within the District, to manage effort. (Please explain your view)
- If supportive, how many days would be appropriate and why?

6.2 The Response – Days at Sea

Most responses did not support introducing “Days at Sea” management measures.

Graph 03 – Response Indication – Days at Sea

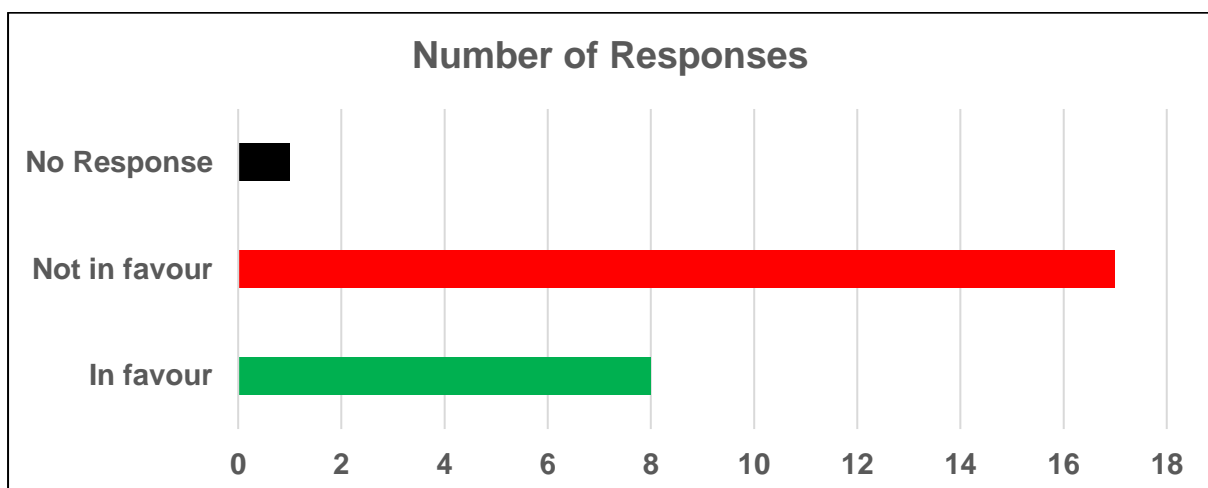


Table 05 – Comments – Days at Sea (other than no response or no detail to explain)

Supportive Y/N	Comment/Suggestion
No	I assume the deployed pots are fishing whether the boat is at sea or not.
No	Weather dependant for smaller vessels.
No	Not a professional. This is a question for the experts
No	Can't see how it can work in an already heavily regulated fishery.
Yes	Absolutely yes, but must be consecutively run days to limit excessive soak times killing stock crabs and fish while they are left for the next run to sea on available days. 7 consecutive days per month means four days shooting three days recovering and then enough time to rest the area harvested.
No	As in shore we are mainly small boats the weather restricts our days at sea
No	In Hope cove weather dictates
No	No – that is a joke – (suggestion) 365 days
Yes	Bigger boats don't stop for weather. Smaller boats cannot operate in rough weather. They also work seasonal and let the ground rest. 200 days at sea for over 15m Vessels. 10m and under are weather dependant
No	Not supportive, i and my local friends catch a limited number of shellfish, i keep around 10 lobsters a year.
No	Smaller inshore boats are limited by weather anyway
Yes	I am supportive of this measure providing the overall size limit for vessels is reduced inside of the 6. Weather restricts my operation – but with these modern under 15 m vivier vessels and catamarans, the days at sea situation would allow the bigger vessels to put more effort in over a 12-month period and leave the smaller mono hulled boats tied up alongside the quay. I think all shellfish catching ability should be seasonal based. This would be weather dependant on a lot of small boats, and this would be impossible to put a figure on.
No	An 8m vessel is limited by the weather. For bigger vessels definitely a limit will help reduce over fishing
Yes	Daily for six months
Yes	Days at sea are a good way to manage effort. Inshore vessels will rarely get close to 200 days because of the weather and tides. The IFCA could look at the number of days vessels operate inshore to get a limit. Offshore vessels also need to be limited. There is no point them keep getting additional days when they have used up there set amount. This is not management. This is probably the best way to police the effort limitation because of reporting when you go to sea. Vessels would need to come into port within the 24-hour period.
Yes	Modern vessel design has changed considerably over the last 25 years allowing vessels to work worse weather therefore allowing them to work more gear in much worse weather, therefor increasing effort on the ground. – Suggestion of how many days - This would vary on size/ type of vessel, and gear worked.
Yes	Depends how it is applied, it could end up with lots of pots left at sea, for unhealthy periods of time, and also the possibility of having a lot of ghost fishing gear about, due to bad weather, and losing gear. Suggestion of how many days - Far too complicated to try and answer with the vast spectrum of boat sizes, crew numbers, and boat capability.
No	Tides and weather are enough of a restriction.
No	Think this is a bad idea. Limiting days at sea doesn't stop the pots on the grounds still catching, working longer days means you can process more pots each day, i cannot see how this will change anything.

6.3 Management Measures for Different Types of Vessels - Background

The questionnaire included this question:

- What are your views about applying different management measures to different types of potting vessels operating in the District e.g., mono-hull ; multi-hull; vivier and why?

6.4 The Response – Different Types of Vessels

Many responses were “no response”, and some highlighted answers already provided to control effort – including pot limitation, or days at sea. One responded that regulating different types of vessels would be too difficult, and another commented that this type of management approach is irrelevant if it can't be policed. Some answers provided by potting permit holders related more to restricting size of vessel, rather than type of vessel.

Table 06 – Comments Received from Sectors – Restricting Different Types of Vessels

Sector/Potting Permit	Comment/Suggestion
Commercial	No views although smaller vessels restricted by sea conditions should be favoured over larger vessels.
Commercial	Vivier means they can stay at sea longer but if pots are limited to 500 a boat those boats would not
Recreational	Hull type is only an issue if you restrict vessel length. All potting boats should be mono hull and max length so that deck space is limited thus reducing the number of creels able to be run by the boat, that's the whole point isn't it...! Multi hull short boats can be extremely wide and fish more pots than a single.
Commercial	I don't believe multi hull or vivier restrictions would make much difference - I think there should be a ten meter over all limit inside six as this would allow weather etc to restrict effort
Recreational	Vivier Vessels are over fishing
Commercial	Inside 3 miles there wouldn't be any Vivier boats
Commercial	For different types of vessels this is pointless. The only way it can work is on size of vessel. A small boat can't carry the weight of gear / or catch or do the days at sea. A large boat has no such restrictions. Some u10 boats now days are bigger then 12m boats.
Recreational	It would be too difficult
Commercial	Vivier boats inside the 6-mile limit should return to port each day, this way they become inshore day boats. The vessels in south Devon who have vivier tank only fish as day boats currently.
Commercial	Ban all vivier boats - day boats only.
Recreational	The mono hull is fine up to 30 feet. Multi hull and vivier should be three miles offshore.
Recreational	Mono hull and small vessels
Commercial	Can't see how this will help, people have multi-hulls for safety and ease of working, because of the deck space, viviers support quality of catch. These vessels make up most of the inshore fleet as it stands today. What you don't need is to issue a new permit to a 14m vivier tanked, fully sheltered in multihull operating 3000 pots in all weathers, when all of the above are tied up in port due to poor weather.

6.5 Further Restricting Size of Potting Vessels - Background

The text preceding effort control questions highlighted that the current maximum size for commercial potting vessels working in the District is 14.99 metres. questionnaire included this question:

- What are your views about further restricting the size of potting vessels within the District or in parts of the District?

6.6 The Response – Further Restricting Size of Potting Vessels

This topic provided more responses from the commercial sector compared to the question regarding vessel design, with some answers in the previous section also relating to vessel length, not vessel type. All responses, other than one, provided by commercial potting permit holders, operate potting vessels below 10 metres in length, and therefore this is likely to have a bearing on what these operators view a size suitable for conducting potting activity within the District. Of the 177 commercial potting permits² issued by D&S IFCA, over 100 vessels are below 8 metres in length.

Table 07 – Comments Received from Sectors – Further Restricting Size of Potting Vessels

Sector/Potting Permit	Comment/Suggestion
Commercial	Over 10 metres should not be inside 3 miles where the smaller inshore boats work.
Recreational	Fully supported. We should aim to give small local boats run by individuals' priority over large boats run by networks of non-locals who take the money out of the local economy.
Commercial	I'm all for ten meter overall as maximum size inside six miles
Commercial	No boats over 8-10m should be inside district
Recreational	More gear creates conflicts between owners as they spread out and over fish the ground
Commercial	No over 10 metre vessels
Recreational	I see no reason in my area
Commercial	Yes - no over 10m boats inside 3 miles
Commercial	100% agree with a restriction. As far as I am concerned, nothing over 10 m's. Even in this modern day and age, some of the 10m and under are very capable vessels
Commercial	8m and under in one less restricted category, 8-10m in another, 10m+ in the most restrictive
Commercial	Under 10 metre vessels only
Recreational	It would be too difficult
Commercial	I do not think further size restrictions should be applied to potters. All vessels must be 14.99m or under. The IFCA does not have further restrictions on size for any other fleet, such as trawlers in different parts of the district so potting vessels which do less damage should not be penalised further. This would decimate my business and many other vessels.
Recreational	Possibly restrict inside the 6 nm to 8m and under, (this should be considered for all forms of static gear)
Commercial	Ban all vivier boats - day boats only.
Commercial	It should not be about putting existing vessels out of business by size reductions, it should be stopping new vessels entering the fishery.

² Category One Potting Permits valid - 26th November 2024

7. Seasonal Closure

7.1 Days at Sea - Background

The questionnaire set out that some fishers have suggested the use of seasonal closures for potting vessels. D&S IFCA has applied seasonal closures to other fisheries in the District.

The questionnaire included the following questions:

- What are your views about introducing a seasonal closure? Please provide details to support your view.
- If you support the use of seasonal closures, how would they be applied and to which shellfish (crab, lobster, whelk) fisheries? Please provide details to support your view.

7.2 The Response – Seasonal Closure

There was high support for introducing seasonal closures; however, many responses were challenging to analyse, with some making no sense at all. Some responses indicated that they were not in favour of seasonal closures, but then followed up their answer by selected a species that should be subjected to a seasonal closure.

Some potentially did not understand the questions. It is likely that some stated dates when the fishery should be open, rather than closed?

Some stated that they were not well informed enough (for example having scientific evidence available) to help inform their view. Another commented that a seasonal closure would *“need to be aligned with science research and the soft-shell period and eggs period”*.

Some others highlighted that they already have a seasonal closure, without regulation, due to weather and tidal restrictions impacting on their fishing operations.

Those in favour tended to favour a closure in winter months, with some stating that they don't fish in the winter months (October to March), so this would be a good time to apply this management measure. Based on the responses, the introduction of a seasonal closure for crab and lobster was more popular than a closure for whelk

Responses not in favour, or mis understanding the question

“A seasonal closure for what, crab , lobster ??”

“I don't believe this would be a good idea as some vessels only have a shellfish licence so there for you would be bankrupting them via the back door”.

“I don't support thiswe already operate under a seasonal closure due to the weather - in the last few years from October to March there have been many days that I haven't been able to go to sea due to the weather- the last summer has been no better.”

“No. (not supportive)seasons are changing so are fishing patterns - who knows where we will be with global warming that's already happening.”

“No, not support (of) an enforced seasonal closure, what do you do with the gear on the grounds? Many inshore grounds see gear removed/reduced over winter periods anyway to protect gear from storm damage.”

“Yes – 1st March to 31st November - The crab and lobster caught between the above dates is so minimal gear should be taken of the ground.”

Table 08 – Comments Received – Support for Seasonal Closure (and species selected)

Suggestions for Times of a Seasonal Closure	Species Selected
No well-informed views although a seasonal closure for crab might be useful post moult.	Crab
Yes, i support this - smaller vessels do not fish the winter period	Lobster
Definitely in favour. Can never a bad thing. The more the demand is created for the current "any fish (at) any time of year" the harder it will ever be to withdraw from it.	All
Yes, absolutely no potting for six months a year at least. You need the rest period to offer sufficient time for a lobster to berry, recover moult then move location. Only a 6-month period offers that for the long-term sustainment of the fishery.	All
Bigbury bay closed to potting November to March	Crab & Lobster
A seasonal closure for what, crab , lobster ??	Crab
Definitely it is proven way to help fish stocks	Crab & Whelk
No views on a seasonal closure	Lobster
Closing the whelk fishery in October November and December will do good. Raising the size in Dorset will kill the fisheries you don't catch whelks over 55mm in Dorset	Whelk
I would agree if it were proved to be good for sustainability	All
Yes - 1st March-31st November - The crab and lobster caught between the above dates is so minimal gear should be taken of the ground	Crab & Lobster
100% agreement - Through the course of a 12month period, all these species breed. Lobster and crab breed at a very similar time. These fisheries inside of the 6 that you as IFCA's police should be closed from the end of October through to the beginning of May. Whelks could then be fished from October to the end of June.	All
We are made not to fish for species in seasonal closures all ready. By having sole trawlers combing out ground wiping out any and all static gear on the ground. This is something you know about but cannot manage. Apply closure July to January to allow for ground rest.	Whelk
Positive as I only fish 6 months anyway – it would help them to replenish.	All
Not for extended periods at a time. I will mention that a few whelkers are already limited by the seasonal changes, e.g. scallop type potters dragging over the whelk grounds, therefore they change fishery, or all the whelk pots will not be there tomorrow.	Crab & Lobster

8. Catch/Gear Restrictions and Use of Bait

8.1 Catch/Gear/Bait - Background

The questionnaire set out that minimum conservation reference sizes (Min CRS) already apply to the crab, lobster, crawfish and whelk fisheries within the District, but suggestions for change can be considered. There were five questions as follows:

- What are your views about a change in the Min CRS for these species (crab, lobster, crawfish and whelk), and what Min CRS should apply? Please provide details to support your view.
- What are your views about introducing a Maximum CRS for any of these species? Please provide details to support your view.

- What are your views about the existing daily restrictions of five crabs and two lobsters for recreational potters? Please provide details to support your view.
- What are your views about applying further restrictions on the use of crab (soft or hard shelled) as bait in the whelk fishery? Please provide details to support your view.
- What are your views about escape gaps and their effectiveness? Please provide details to support your view.

8.2 The Response – Catch/Gear/Bait

Minimum & Maximum Conservation Reference Sizes (CRS)

Several responses didn't agree with change or the introduction of a maximum CRS for any species. Some provided responses such as "leave as they are", "already adequate", "I don't agree", or "no sizes should be lowered". The table (08) below shows the other responses received.

Table 08 – Comments Received – other than “no response”

Ref No.	Views for Min CRS	Views for Max CRS
2	No informed view	Slot size by having a maximum CRS would be sensible
7	Absolutely support Crab, Lobster, crawfish - increase by at least 25% and have a maximum take size too!!!! The Canadians have got it right!! Whelk - increase by 5%	Absolutely support!!! The larger breed exponentially younger so, once they get big enough, we should keep them in the fishery to breed!
12	90 mm lobster fine	Maximum - 125mm
14	Yes, definitely it will help like the minimum size for lobsters - Brown crab will be wiped out	
17	Instead of upping the sizes perhaps have a maximum size for lobster	
18	I have consistently found that berried lobsters can be undersized but would not support and reduction in size of allowed catch. Smaller lobsters would only provide limited amounts of meat.	Not in favour
19	No, if you raise the minimum sizes any more, half the fishery will be bankrupt, as it's only a short season	No, if you make seasons that will regulate the fishery
20	Absolutely no changes as lobsters breed within the 90mm life span, female brown crabs breed inside of the 150mm life span and according to yourselves i.e. the IFCA, the 65mm on whelks, covers that breeding period. You have raised the whelk fishery from 45mm and the brown crab female MLS to 150mm from 140. In relation to crawfish, these should come under the same seasonal recommendations as I would put on crab and lobster.	Totally disregard that in my view. All as you'll get if you went down that road would be damaged, crippled and diseased lobsters and crabs.
21	It is hard to agree or disagree. Upping sizes will dramatically destroy fisheries that are really important to our survival.	Same again hard answer a larger lobster caught in a net is going to struggle to recover and return to the sea in top condition.
24	I do not support an increase in min CRS - our district has the largest sizes than any other IFCA and nationally.	Not necessary. We put back the big lobsters because there isn't a market for the really large ones

Table 08 Continued - Comments Received – other than “no response”

Ref No.	Views for Min CRS	Views for Max CRS
25	What is the scientific evidence for this, this should be given to all permit holders to consider before asking for them to make a decision. Possibly holding numerous workshops throughout the area.	Would certainly agree to max size for Lobster.
C	Min CRS sizes are probably appropriate as they are today, whilst increasing them would be beneficial long term, the short term hit in reduced landings and hence earnings would cripple the industry that is struggling already.	See no point in max CRS for crabs as largest are most valuable, however may be some mileage in a Max CRS for lobster as prices drop off for very large specimens, but that would need to be over 2.5-3 kg range, not something that can enter a pot due to its size.

.....

Recreational Bag Limits:

Six of the commercial operators that responded (from a total of 16) provided no comment or accepted the current level of recreational bag limit as acceptable.

“I don’t see this as a problem because the true recreational potters rarely catch this amount per day.”

Ten others from the commercial sector, had a different view. There was some cross over between the answers provided on bag limits and those provided for limiting pots. Several responders highlighted that the bag limit level is too high per day, producing an excessive amount for personal consumption, and that these levels are likely to lead to excess shellfish being illegally sold. One suggested that there should be no recreational potting at all, others suggested bag limits being set far lower (and per week), and others highlighted that in their view D&S IFCA can’t manage the activity effectively, or enforce the current restrictions. A selection of quotations demonstrates these points:

“It’s a joke, we have to buy our shellfish licence and extra permits ,they pay £20 and can catch 14 lobsters a week estimated value £200, 35 crab a week, estimated value of £200,and that’s what’s happening there not eating that lot!!!!

“What does a recreational fisher do with up to 5 crabs and two lobsters per day, am I correct in thinking per permit holder, thus 3 people - 15 crab, 6 lobster !”

“These numbers are ridiculous, this is personal consumption remember. I couldn’t eat that quantity per day, any then every day after that. Reduce to 2 crabs per day and a lobster per week from a max of 3 pots. This provides a business opportunity for many recreational potters to fund their sport. If it can’t be effectively policed, it relies on good will and trust, little of that on offer when you get £50 for a couple of lobster and 5 crabs from a non- registered buyer.”

“Recreational potters are allowed to take far too much catch per day, personal consumption is just that you and your household, not neighbour, brother, sister, man down the pub, landlord of the pub. Limiting number of pots will help reduce the clutter of pots in coastal inshore areas to may be 3 pots per permit, limiting take to 1 crab per day, 1 lobster per week”.

Not surprisingly, those with recreational potting permits offered a different view. Most took the view that the daily bag limit is set at a reasonable level and reported that the level is higher than their own typical take per day. One response reported that some recreational potters do illegally sell their catch, but didn't suggest a reduction in daily catch limits. One recreational fisher offered a more extreme view – that there should be no recreational catch limitation (only minimum sizes) and the numbers of pots authorised should be increased to 20 to 30 per permit holder.

"I think these are sensible. 5 pots rarely yields more on a regular basis"

"Never ever got 5 crabs or 2 lobsters in one day".

"I think this is a good balance, just enough for a family BBQ but not too many. Recreational fishers hardly ever soak their pots anyway. If anything, increasing to x3 lobsters per day would be much more fair split of the stocks. I've never seen a recreational have their full quota from x5 pots."

"Not supportive (of a reduction), i and my local friends catch a limited number of shellfish, if i keep around 10 lobsters a year."

Crab as Bait in the Whelk Fishery

- What are your views about applying further restrictions on the use of crab (soft or hard shelled) as bait in the whelk fishery? Please provide details to support your view.

Some responses offered no views, but more had something to say, with many indicating that, in their view, a problem exists. Some responses provided short answers such as "depends on species used", "ban it", "viviers kill crab for whelk bait". One response highlighted where bait comes from; a by-product from processors. The slightly longer answers are set out in the table below.

Table 09 - Comments Received – Views on Bait

Ref No.	Views on Crab as Bait
7	This is wrong and should be banned. Spent fish carcasses can easily be used letting small crabs breed or grow bigger and maintain the hygiene of the reefs.
11	I think brown crab should not be allowed to be harvested for whelk bait no matter what the quality
17	If it's a buy catch from Scotland and Ireland because there is a huge abundance of crab then it's not an issue
19	It shouldn't be allowed there's 100s of tons of crab being landed by beamers etc for whelk bait that doesn't get the chance to harden and breed again
20	This should never even have come into being. This has come about because incompetent fishermen have been landing inferior product. The processors had to move this product on and it was an easy out to supply the bait/whelk trade.
21	If it's a dead buy catch from deep water crabbers then it's better it gets used
24	This should be banned especially using brown crab as this leads to poor quality crab being landed in huge quantities especially by the viviers. This should be prohibited. Currently I am in two minds about spider crab as there are so many on the ground and no market for human consumption or export market.

Views on Escape Gaps

There were mixed views on escape gaps and their effectiveness. Recreational fishers (Rec - highlighted in yellow) were more support regarding the fitting and use of escape gaps. Six of the commercial operators (Com – marked in dark blue) raised issues with escape gaps.

Sector	Views on Escape Gaps – Recreational Fishers
Rec	Seem to be effective
Rec	Almost irrelevant
Rec	Keep them, seem to be working fine, small lobster definitely get out.
Rec	Great but should be made much bigger
Rec	Great idea
Rec	I catch very few small lobsters and assume that they are able to escape through the hatches provided
Rec	They are effective so wouldn't want to see it changed
Rec	Since using escape gaps, have had less damaged smaller lobsters, also less small crab also.
Rec	The gaps work well for size release
Rec	I have small crab release in my pots
Com	Don't work
Com	No response
Com	Waste of time . Small shellfish is returned when clearing pots . Lots of damaged lobsters due to claws being ripped of during hauling.
Com	Awful law which finished our velvet crab fishery over night
Com	Makes life easier clearing pots
Com	Escape gaps are a waste of time. We get loads of Nelson lobsters with fresh tissue so the claw came off in the pot. The lobsters stick their claws out and get ripped off by seals. The seal population is a joke, maybe you want to do something about this too? We still have to pick out all the small velvet, green crab ect out the pot they don't go out the escape gap. So that is a waste of time. And money.
Com	No response
Com	They work well it should be law in all areas
Com	There fine - the size and type are perfect
Com	I wholeheartedly agree with them. They do work but they also create crippled lobsters when they get their claws jammed in the escape gaps.
Com	No response
Com	Fine as they are
Com	The only problem i have is that lobsters can get their claws caught in them and these get knocked off or they drop them when the pots are hauled and hit the side of the boat.
Com	Mine work ok.
Com	Carry on with them
Com	Escape gaps seem good unless you want to catch velvets as a bycatch, reduces the amount of small shellfish to be emptied upon hauling.

9. What Did We Miss?

The questionnaire provided the opportunity for those responding to say more and over half the potting permit holders did say more. Not all comments were related to additional suggestions for management and these “additional comments” covered a range of topics, some already incorporated into this report. A selection of the “What Have We Missed” answers is set out below:

Commercial Potters:

“Most of it has been covered but implementation of restrictions and up to date management cannot come soon enough. This is why we have seen a decline in the inshore fishery. You are now getting fisherman taking full time jobs ashore and working pots high days and holidays. This does not help as I can personally vouch for the fact that parlour pots are being left in the water far too long and the shellfish trapped are killing and maiming one another.”

“Action is need NOW. I hope this survey is not going to sit on a shelf and gather dust as we have already explained, the industry will collapse totally without effective management measures being put in place very soon.”

“Please leave the IPA alone for the current larger boats”.

“(Do) more inspections of recreational vessels when coming ashore.”

“Whatever happens this is not a tool to kill the industry off, but to support it in the short term primarily, with long term goals. No good having a long-term vision, if all the boats are out of business by the short-term goals. There is little opportunity to divert to other fisheries as restriction on these is just as bad.”

“I think IFCA should have a total rethink on how it takes advice from fishers and have proper meetings with them to discuss measures rather than box ticking exercise.”

“I have no more suggestions but feel that we are very well regulated and abide by the regulations but outside the 6-mile limit there is little management.”

Recreational Potters:

“Some of the question require further provision of evidence; to allow for informed response, this should be provided by local workshops to allow for people who may issues with understanding what is being asked of them. Even today there are issues with numeracy and literacy.”

“Quota has not been mentioned and is the ultimate measure of catch. If initial measures to limit catch fail this should be the next step.”

“Keep local boats for local areas and stop other Vessels often bigger wiping them out.”

10. Communications

Direct Communications

The Informal Consultation (Have Your Say) began on 18th October 2024 and ended on 19th November 2024. Information was directly circulated to all Category One and Category Two Permit holders. This amounted to 626 people. The majority of potting permit holders were provided the information via email, with a minority receiving hard copy information in the post.

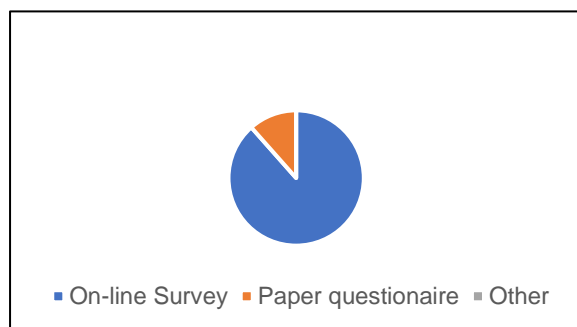
The responses indicated that all but one of the respondents found out about the informal consultation due to being directly contacted by D&S IFCA. One response indicated that they found out about the informal consultation by visiting D&S IFCA’s website.

The informal consultation made use for the first time, on a paid on-line survey platform that was made available as a link within the communication material. A QR code was also used as a way to access the survey.



As some potting permit holders had not provided an email address, the questionnaire was produced in hard copy format and enclosed in envelopes. Stakeholders were informed that they could contact officers, and potentially respond in other ways – letters or email.

Graph 04 – How responses were submitted



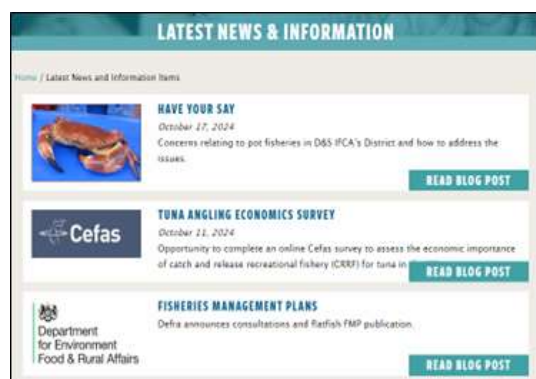
The Smart Survey platform indicated that the on-line survey was opened (and potentially partially completed) by 100 people; however, only 27 responses were submitted using Smart Survey, with one of these a test by officers.

Website and Facebook

Both the D&S IFCA website and Facebook were used to support the informal consultation.

The website “[Engagement & Have Your Say](#)” display page was populated with information.

A news item was produced which was duplicated on Facebook



News Scroll:

The news item was posted for the duration of the informal consultation on the news scroll and on the website’s [Latest News](#) page. The archived news item (in pdf format) can be read [here](#).

The circulated information included a privacy notice explaining how personal data is protected and how it would be used.

End of Report.