

Fisheries in MCZ Monitoring and Control Plan

Marine Conservation Zone: Torbay MCZ

D&S IFCA MCP ID	D&S IFCA Assessment ID	Fishing Activity	Feature(s)	Sub-feature(s)
MCP_TOR-MCZ-005	TOR-MCZ-005-V.3	Pots/traps: cuttle pots	Subtidal Seagrass	Subtidal Seagrass

Iteration 1: August 2023

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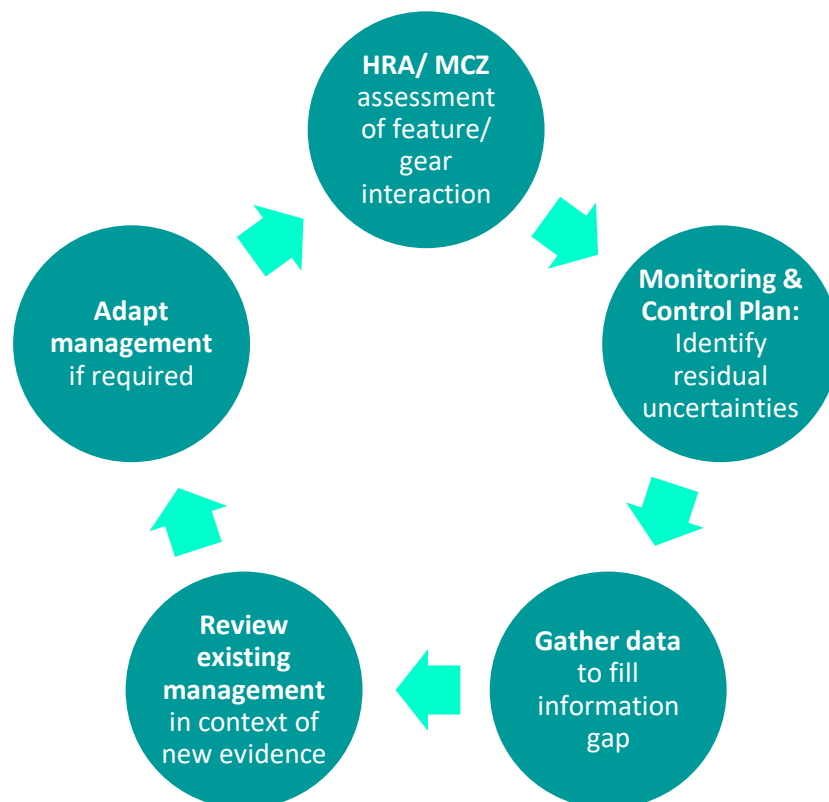
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Version	Date	Author(s)	Comments	Reviewer(s)
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1.0 Introduction

Devon and Severn IFCA (D&S IFCA) is committed to an Ecosystem Approach to fisheries management. Adaptive management is seen as a key tool for effectively implementing the Ecosystem Approach (Farmer et al. 2012). Adaptive management acknowledges the high levels of uncertainty in natural systems and the difficulties of making decisions based on this uncertainty. It provides a framework for a flexible and pragmatic approach to marine management, allowing sustainable development whilst adapting management and policies to respond to new information.

Monitoring and Control Plans (M&CPs) are being developed by D&S IFCA for certain gear-feature interactions in Marine Protected Areas (MPA) where Habitat Regulations Assessments (HRAs) or Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) assessments find large uncertainties in the scientific and/or fishing effort evidence. They will provide information on what monitoring will be undertaken, how this new information will be used, the timeframes for data collection and review of any current assessments. Crucially M&CPs will identify suitable management mechanisms, should they be required following the outcomes of the data collection. The adoption of a permitting byelaw system by D&S IFCA allows for true adaptive management which can respond effectively when risks are identified. The Monitoring and Control Plan Cycle can be seen below.



This Monitoring and Control Plan should be read in conjunction with Version 3 (2023) of the MCZ assessment for the interaction of potting and seagrass in the Torbay MCZ.

2.0 Residual Uncertainties

From past surveys it is known that potting occurs at low levels near and possibly on the seagrass beds within Torbay as recorded in past fisher survey responses. However, the exact location and extent of this potting is not clear. This potting is carried out using cuttle pots when the cuttle come inshore to spawn from around March/April to June/July.

Due to a lack of evidence on the impact of potting on seagrass, in 2020 D&S IFCA carried out research in Torbay to investigate the impact of single pots and a string of four pots on the seagrass beds (Parkhouse, 2021). The results showed that single pot remained static throughout the 30 minute soak time, settling quickly on the seabed with little disturbance. Although the single pot deployments appeared to have limited impact on the seagrass during deployment and hauling, the strings of pots caused visible impacts during both stages. This impact differed in severity depending on the location of the pot within the string. The last pot to be hauled on the string had the most visible impact. The third pot to be hauled also had a visible impact, however less severe than the last pot. The first and second pot in the four-pot strings behaved in a similar manner to the single pot deployment and typically lifted straight up off the seabed. These results would suggest that pots further along the string are dragged each time a pot is hauled, with the severity increasing the further along the string the pot is placed (Parkhouse, 2021).

D&S IFCA concluded that potting with strings of three or more pots could have an adverse effect, and this could hinder the achievement of the conservation objectives. However, the level of potential impact is not currently known as the true level of potting and the set-up of pots, including number of pots on strings, used is not known. This uncertainty has led to this M&CP being developed.

3.0 Monitoring Requirements

3.1 Fishing effort monitoring

In the first instance, D&S IFCA will monitor the number of Potting Permit holders which could potentially fish in the Torbay MCZ. This will give officers a list of vessels which need to be monitored in the future.

Fishing activity surveys were conducted in 2009, 2014 and 2020, however the response rate has been low and the accurate level of fishing has not been established, although it is thought to be low. To establish a more accurate level of activity, including location, total pot numbers, number of pots on string, and seasonality, D&S IFCA will be carrying out face to face industry meetings. D&S IFCA potting permits and MMO sales notes will be used to identify the individuals that need to be contacted. Speaking directly with the industry will also allow D&S IFCA to understand any changes to the activity that could potentially be made to minimise the potential impact, while supporting a small-scale fishery.

The implementation of iVMS on all potting vessels will allow D&S IFCA to monitor the activity within Torbay to get a better understanding of the frequency and location of this activity in relation to the seagrass habitat to support the information gathered from the industry meeting.

4.0 Trigger points for MCZ assessment review

4.1 Fishing effort trigger point

An accurate level of effort first needs to be established via engagement with the industry at meetings and fishing effort monitoring. The results of engagement and monitoring work will result in a review of the MCZ assessment if levels are higher than currently thought, or be used as a baseline to monitor changes in effort level with a trigger point being set from the meeting results.

Monitoring activity	Gear types	Trigger	Action	Management mechanism (if required)
Effort monitoring	Pots/creels: cuttle pots	The trigger will be set once the effort level has been assessed.	<p>1. Hold industry meeting prior to the start of the 2024 season to establish current levels and location of effort.</p> <p>2. Monitor these vessels using iVMS when available. Monitor number of vessels, and effort of each vessel.</p>	<p>Voluntary measures</p> <p>Potting Permit Byelaw – permit conditions</p>

5.0 Management Mechanisms

D&S IFCA is working towards a system where all fisheries' activities are managed by permit byelaws. Those introduced so far are:

- Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw
- Potting Permit Byelaw
- Diving Permit Byelaw
- Netting Permit Byelaw

Permit based byelaws provide scope for both fixed and flexible management measures via the conditions of use within the permits issued to fishers. The scope of the flexible conditions includes catch, gear, spatial and time restrictions. D&SIFCA has a duty to review all of the flexible conditions (per byelaw) at least every three years but can review conditions within a shorter time period as considered necessary (for example following an HRA or MCZ assessment triggered by a M&CP).

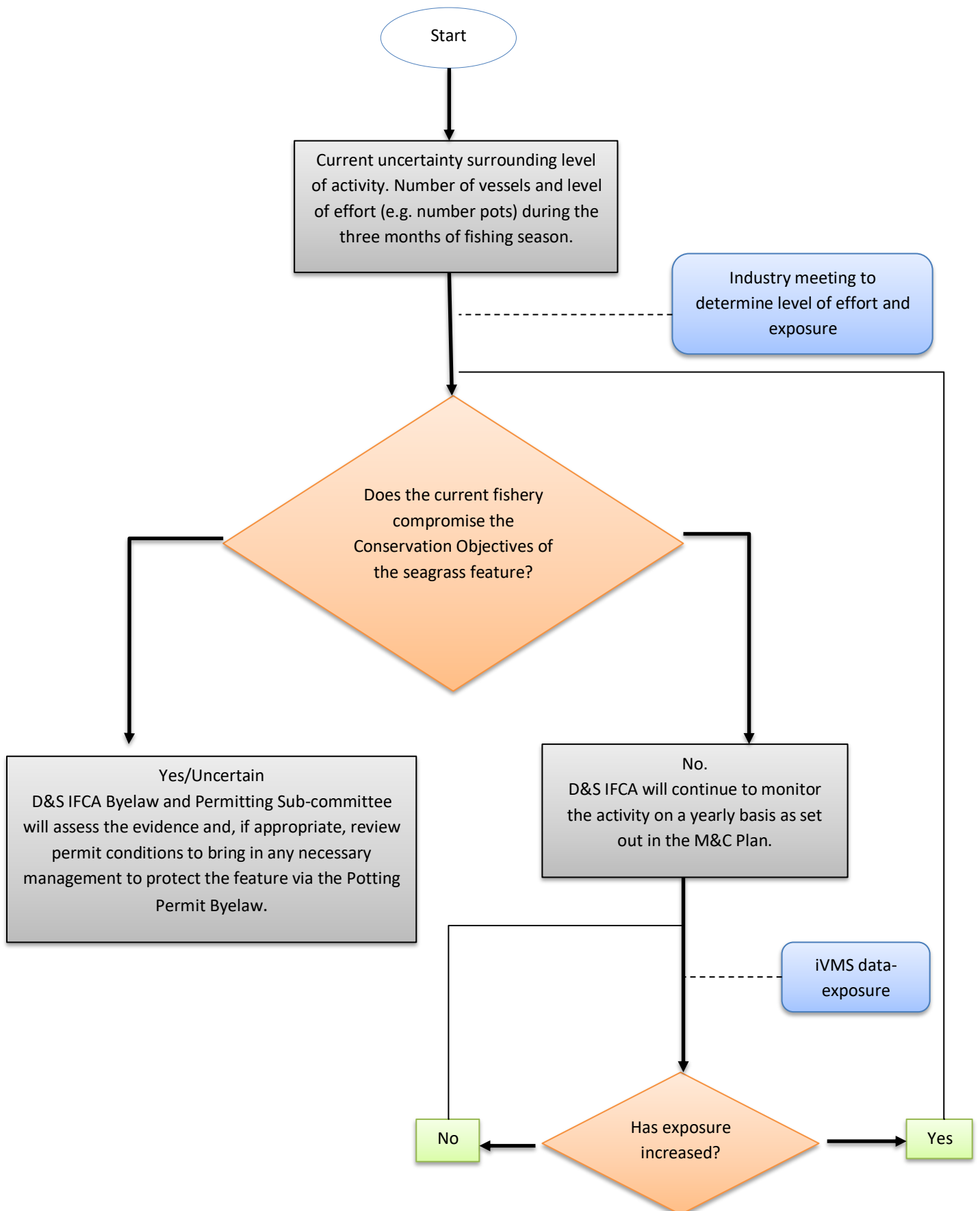
Permit-based byelaws allow separation of different users (fishers) or slightly different types of fishing activity managed by a single byelaw. Separation is achieved by the issue of separate categories of permits dependent on the activity being managed. The permit byelaws often separate commercial fishers and recreational fishers, with the permit's

conditions of use proportionate to their needs. By permitting fishers, D&S IFCA has a very direct way of monitoring effort. The permitting byelaws also allow for D&S IFCA to request any additional information for the management of the fishery.

The permit byelaw system can therefore fully accommodate the adaptive management approach being outlined in this Monitoring and Control Plan. D&S IFCA will review the information from the M&CP and will consider whether voluntary or legislative management is required to reduce the pressure of the feature. Any formal management of the commercial fishing industry would need to be proportionate, in particular in relation to the level of recreational anchoring taking place on the seagrass beds and documented as having an impact on this feature. D&S IFCA suggests that the Marine Management Organisation develops a M&CP to monitor the level and location of recreational anchoring in Torbay, and undertake an MCZ assessment of this activity and use this to determine appropriate management measures for this activity.

Any management measures which may be recommended from the outcome of the M&CP would go to the D&S IFCA Byelaw and Permitting Sub-Committee for them to assess the evidence. If changes are required to be made to the Potting Permit from the sub-committee review, they will go out to public consultation.

6.0 Flow Diagram of Monitoring Process



D&S IFCA interaction ID	Specific gear types	Stage of submission	NE Advice reference	IFCA MCZ Conclusion	NE Advice summary	Inclusion in this Monitoring and Control Plan?
TOR-MCZ-005-V.3	Pots/creels: cuttle pots	Formal advice received from NE 12/12/2019 on Version 2 of MCZ assessment (TOR-MCZ-005-V.2). Version 3 of the MCZ assessment is being submitted along with this M&C Plan.	292528- TOR-MCZ-005-V.2	<p>Full conclusion can be read in assessment V.3.</p> <p>Due to the evidence that potting with strings of three or more pots could impact the seagrass, more information needs to be gathered to understand the fishing behaviour in the site. In order to establish the level of impact that may be occurring, D&S IFCA plans to gain a more detailed level of the potting activity that may be happening on the seagrass beds. This is currently thought to be at low levels, but more information needs to be obtained from fishers including number of pots, the exact location potting is taking place, and the makeup of strings being used currently. D&S IFCA will develop a Monitoring and Control Plan and arrange a meeting with the industry in order to establish the level of activity and gather views from the industry on potential voluntary changes to fishing practices. Alongside information gathered directly from the industry, iVMS will be used to monitor the activity once the roll out of the systems is complete.</p>	Assessment V.3 has been sent to NE with this M&C Plan. No advice currently available.	Yes

Table 2. Audit trail summary for MCZ Assessment and Natural England’s advice for potting on the subtidal seagrass feature of the Torbay MCZ