



## **Devon and Severn IFCA**

# **Response to MMO Consultation on a Seasonal Closure of the Crawfish Fishery in ICES Area 7**

**8<sup>th</sup> August 2024**

The role of Devon and Severn Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (D&S IFCA) is to lead, champion and manage a sustainable marine environment and inshore fisheries within its District, which covers the area from baselines out to six nautical miles in English waters as shown in Figure 1. D&S IFCA is responding to the MMO's Formal Consultation on the seasonal closure of the Crawfish Fishery in ICES Area 7, as a small crawfish fishery exists within D&S IFCA's District.

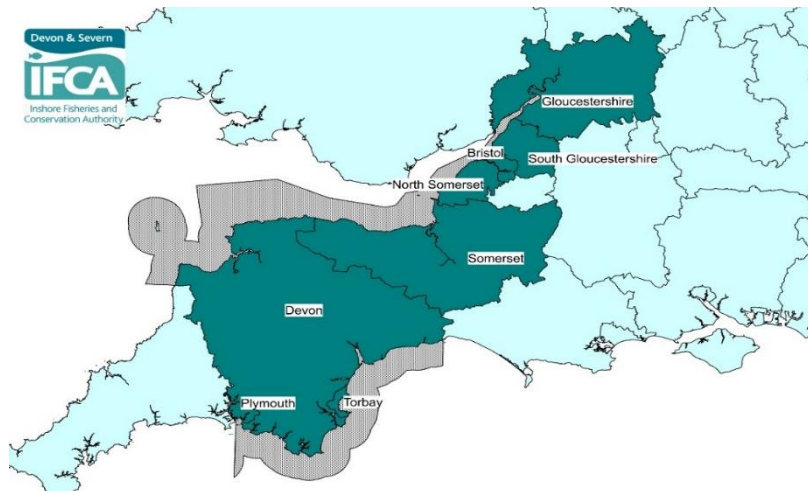


Figure 1. Map of Devon and Severn IFCA's District, showing in grey the sea area from baselines to 6nm (or the median line with Wales).

The ten regional IFCAs have a shared vision to: *“lead, champion and manage a sustainable marine environment and inshore fisheries, by successfully securing the right balance between social, environmental and economic benefits to ensure healthy seas, sustainable fisheries and a viable industry.”*

The powers and duties of all IFCAs are provided by the Marine and Coastal Access Act (MaCAA, 2009), in which the main legal duties are described in sections 153 and 154. D&S IFCA statutory duties are to :

- (a) seek to ensure that the exploitation of sea fisheries resources is carried out in a sustainable way,
- (b) seek to balance the social and economic benefits of exploiting the sea fisheries resources of the district with the need to protect the marine environment from, or promote its recovery from, the effects of such exploitation,
- (c) take any other steps which in the authority's opinion are necessary or expedient for the purpose of making a contribution to the achievement of sustainable development, and
- (d) seek to balance the different needs of persons engaged in the exploitation of sea fisheries resources in the district.

D&S IFCA is supportive of a seasonal closure of the crawfish fishery in ICES Area 7 and supports the conservation rationale for the closure outlined by the MMO. D&S IFCA has attended several workshops regarding crawfish where many fishers involved in the fishery have attended.

D&S IFCA has analysed the MMO landings data for crawfish-landed into Devon ports. Figure 2 shows the annual landings of crawfish. As can be seen the landings into Devon ports are fairly low, in comparison to those into Cornwall and Isles of Sicily (data not shown). Since 2014 the highest landings into Devon ports were in 2023 with landings peaking at 893.30 kgs.

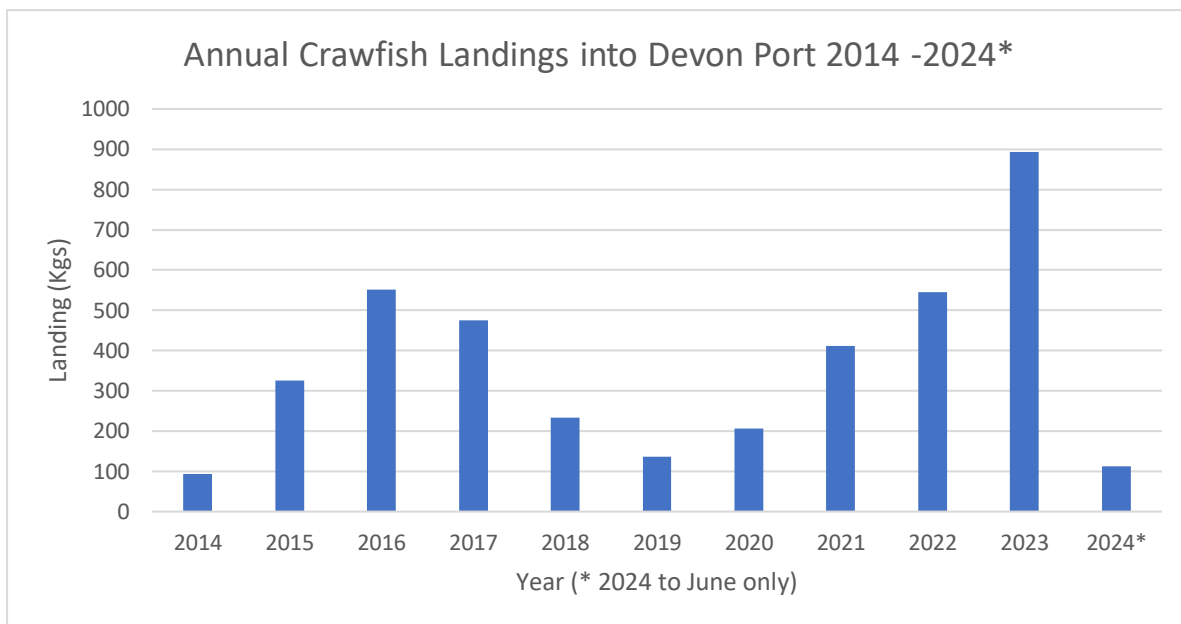


Figure 2 Annual landings into Devon Ports between 2014 and 2024 (note 2024\* landings to June only). MMO data sourced.

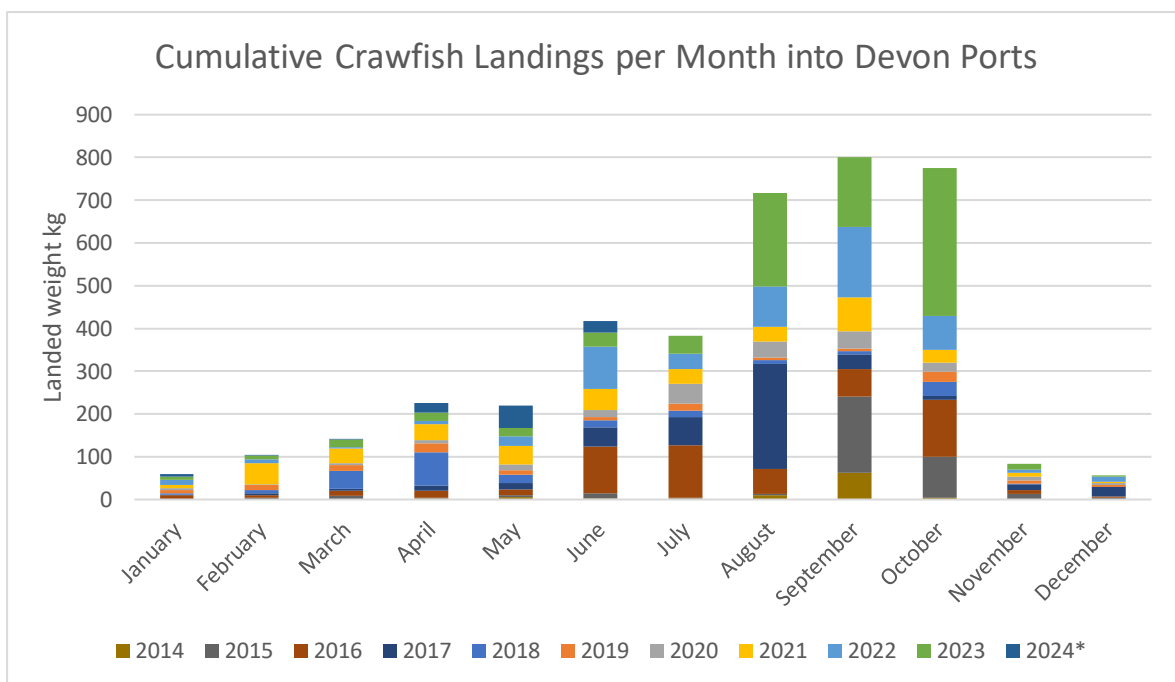


Figure 3 Landings per month per year of crawfish into Devon ports 2014-2024 (\* note 2024 landings to June only). MMO data sourced

**Consultation Questions:**

**1) A prohibition of retaining and landing crawfish (*Palinurus spp.*) in English waters of ICES area 7 for all UK and EU vessels using all gear types during the following: Tell us which option and why:**

- **Option 1: No closure**
- **Option 2: Closure from 1 November 2024 to 31 May 2025**
- **Option 3: Closure from 1 December 2024 to 31 May 2025**

### **D&S IFCA's Response to Q1):**

Figure 3 shows that the peak landings of crawfish into Devon ports are between June and October, with landings increasing in April and May after the winter months. Whilst there are fluctuations in the landings per month over the years, the peak landings of crawfish are in August, September and October.

D&S IFCA attended the workshops held with fishers in both October 2023 and February 2024. It was very clear in the workshop in February that fishers attending the workshop wanted an extended closure period for 2024/2025 compared to the closure in 2024 which was from 5<sup>th</sup> February to 30 April 2024. Those fishers who attended the workshop included individual inshore fishers as well as the larger fishing companies. D&S IFCA cannot recall any fisher present voicing their opinion that this short period of closure was sufficient to protect the stock, and that all attendees preferred a longer period of closure.

From hearing the fisher's views both at the workshop, listening to the discussions held, talking to South Devon fishers and investigating the landings data into Devon ports as shown in Figure 2, D&S IFCA would support option 2 for a closure from 1<sup>st</sup> November 2024 to 31<sup>st</sup> May 2025.

D&S IFCA appreciates that further west in Cornwall, and in the Isles of Scilly in particular, there is an elevated Christmas market for crawfish, and D&S IFCA supports the fact that the fishers on the Isles of Scilly have limited income over the winter months. This might be something that needs consideration and potentially lead to some regional differentiation in the closed period. It would be useful to investigate the landings of crawfish by the Isles of Scilly fishers and the economic impact of closing the fishery just before Christmas, to evaluate whether this is an area of concern and would outweigh the benefits of a closure from the 1<sup>st</sup> November. Many inshore fishers in the South West have a reduced income during the winter months, mostly due to adverse weather conditions, and have to consider this throughout the year to make up for the shortfall. In D&S IFCA's District landings start to increase in April/May, and this too provides fishing opportunities in these early spring months before fishers target other species such as crab and lobster. Therefore, a closure extending to the end of May would reduce these fishers fishing opportunities. However, with the concerns raised by fishers and the need to introduce management measures that help protect the stock, a longer closure across ICES Area 7 to all crawfish removal would start to address the concerns.

Therefore, in summary, D&S IFCA supports a seasonal closure for the crawfish fishery from 1<sup>st</sup> November 2024 to 31<sup>st</sup> May 2025 that applies to English waters ICES Area 7 for all UK and Foreign vessels.

### **2) *Would you support a seasonal closure for 2024/2025 rolling over as the management for 2025/2026, without further consultation?***

### **D&S IFCA's Response to Q2):**

Whilst having a roll-over of the closure set in 2024/2025 to 2025/2026 would reduce the need for consultation, D&S IFCA suggests that an annual assessment of the success of the closed period may be useful to determine the most appropriate conservation measure. If the seasonal closure for 2024/2025 is different from those consulted on here, as was the case for 2023/2024, then an annual consultation would be beneficial to ensure that fishers' and stakeholders' views are thoroughly considered each year.

**3) Do you consider there should be a different closure period which has not been included as an option, and can evidence be provided to support this?**

**D&S IFCA's Response to Q3):**

No – those considered in this consultation are appropriate.

It may be necessary to consider a regional difference in the closure period for the Isle of Sicily if the small number of fishers operating there are economically reliant on crawfish at this time of the year and the 1<sup>st</sup> November or 1<sup>st</sup> December closure would severely impact them.

**4) How would the proposed prohibition of retaining and landing crawfish in ICES sub area 7 in English waters impact you and your business?**

**D&S IFCA's Response to Q4):**

N/A

**5) If you are a vessel owner, agent or skipper: are you currently actively fishing?**

**D&S IFCA's Response to Q5):**

No

**6) If yes, in which length group is your vessel; 10 metre (m) and under, 10.01 m – 12 m, 12.01 m – 15 m or the over 15 m fleet, and which is your main port of landing?**

**D&S IFCA's Response to Q6):**

D&S IFCA would suggest that the fleet métiers are broken down further into vessel type such as day boat / vivier so that the level of effort from each sector is furthered analysed.

**7) Do you have any further suggestions as to future management measures?**

**D&S IFCA's Response to Q7):**

In order to consider further management measures, it would be useful to identify any changes in the number of vessels fishing for crawfish and to monitor their crawfish landings in particular those of the larger vivier netters, as the inshore fleet has raised concerns about the level of effort of these vessels. Understanding the number and length of nets deployed and days at sea targeting crawfish will give a better understanding of the effort and may help determine whether effort controls are required on the fishery. Monitoring of the landings and changes in the number of vessels targeting crawfish, in particular in light of the zero TAC on pollack, is recommended as fishers at the workshops raised concerns that those fishers, who would have previously targeted pollack, would switch to netting for crawfish.

Within the workshop held in February 2024, many fishers suggested potential management measures relating to the mesh size and thickness of twine used in the fishery, which would reduce the number of juveniles caught and potential damage to those returned to the sea, and these may be worthy of further consideration.

Sarah Clark  
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