

Devon and Severn IFCA News

Changes to D&S IFCA's Netting Permit Conditions

Amended Netting Permit Conditions issued that apply from 1st July 2026.

The Category One (commercial) and Category Two (recreational) Netting Permit Conditions have changed. D&S IFCA has issued these updated Netting Permit Conditions to Permit holders.

The changes were agreed by D&S IFCA's Byelaw and Permitting Sub-Committee (B&PSC) at their meeting held on 4th June 2026.

The formal public consultation, that began on 26th March 2026 and ended on 24th April 2026, set out five separate proposals.



During the B&PSC meeting, the Members discussed the responses submitted during the formal consultation. The responses were compiled in a report which can be read [here](#). The main theme of objection related to the proposal to remove the requirement to mark fixed nets with a flag on at least one end of the net.

In addition to the documented formal consultation responses, one response (an objection to four of the five proposals) was provided to and discussed by Members at the B&PSC meeting. This response had been sent during the qualifying period, but had been sent to an incorrect D&S IFCA email address. All responses were discussed at length by the B&PSC. The five Officers' papers that accompanied the consultation report that set out recommendations for Members can be read by using the links below:

- Agenda Item [6a](#) (bass authorisation)
- Agenda Item [6b](#) (shellfish entitlement)
- Agenda Item [6c](#) (number of nets and net length for non-powered vessels)
- Agenda Item [6d](#) (supply of data from operators of non-powered vessels)
- Agenda Item [6e](#) (removal of requirement to mark fixed nets with a flag).

What has changed?

The amended Netting Permit Conditions (in full) can be viewed [here](#).

Catch Conditions – Shellfish Entitlement

The Permit Conditions now set out that a Category One permit holder or named representative operating a non-powered vessel or a licenced fishing vessel without a shellfish entitlement issued by the Marine Management Organisation is not authorised to remove from a fishery within the District in any calendar day more than:

- a) a total of five lobsters, however comprised, from the species of lobster or spiny lobster; and
- b) a total of twenty-five crabs, however comprised, from the species of edible crab, spider crab, velvet swimming crab and green crab.

The Permit Condition has been strengthened and the amendment provides consistency in regulation for all Category One Permit Holders using nets from either a powered or a non-powered vessel.

Catch Conditions – Bass Authorisation

The Permit Conditions now set out that a Category One permit holder or named representative operating a non-powered vessel or a licenced fishing vessel without a bass authorisation issued by the Marine Management Organisation is not authorised to remove any bass from a fishery in the District, retain any bass on board, or land any bass.

The new permit condition results in consistent regulation across the commercial netting sector (powered and non-powered vessels). Commercial fishers operating powered vessels without a bass authorisation will see no change. Operators of non-powered vessels will have the same restrictions as commercial operators of powered vessels using nets that have no bass authorisation.

Gear Conditions – Amounts of Net and Length of Net for non-powered vessels

The Permit Conditions now set out that a Category One Permit holder or named representative operating a non-powered vessel at sea is only authorised under the Permit to use:

- a) a maximum of two fixed nets, each net not exceeding 200 metres in length;
- b) a maximum of one drift net not exceeding 260 metres in length; and
- c) a maximum of one seine net not exceeding 50 metres in length.

This new permit condition limits the amount of net that can be used by a fisher operating from a non-powered vessel. The level of net authorised reflects that there is a practical limit on the amount of fishing gear that could be operated from a non-powered vessel and that commercial fishers have differing needs depending on what vessel they have chosen to operate from.

Gear Conditions – Gear Marking with Flags

The final change is relevant to both commercial (Category One) and recreational (Category Two) Netting Permit holders. Paragraph 2.1 has been amended to remove a requirement to mark fixed nets with a flag on at least one end of the net.

Although there were twenty objection comments relating to the removal of flags as a mandatory way to mark fixed nets, Members agreed with the recommendation of D&S IFCA Officers to remove this requirement.

D&S IFCA's Byelaw and Permitting Sub-Committee recognised the challenges of fishers to meet the previous requirement and that the introduction of IVMS allows for better identification of where different gear types are set.

The formal consultation identified that some sea users (in particular divers) had the view that the flag gear marking requirement was always adhered to and therefore potential over confidence that entanglement could be avoided based on this form of identification. All nets must still be marked by at least one floating marker at either end of the net and each of the markers must display clearly the port, letters and numbers of the vessel named on the permit or the permit number. This is sufficient for D&S IFCA's enforcement purposes and D&S IFCA cannot base their decision making on health and safety considerations. Fishers can still choose to mark nets with a flag on a voluntary basis.

Additional Information

The Members did not proceed with proposal (4). The draft minutes from the B&PSC meeting are being prepared and will be published in due course. If you wish to discuss the changes to the Netting Permit Conditions please contact us, by email:

office@devonandsevernifca.gov.uk or by phone 01803 854648.