Razor Clam Dredge Fishery

1. Officers' Recommendation:

Based on the information set out in this paper and Agenda Item 8 (Annexes A, B, C, D, and E), D&S IFCA Officers recommend the following:

1. **That the B&PSC approve the Monitoring and Control Plan for the Razor Clam Dredge Fishery set out in Agenda Item 8 Annex A.**

2. **If the Monitoring and Control Plan is agreed, that the B&PSC agrees to formally consult on changes to the Category One Mobile Fishing Permit Conditions set out in Agenda Item 8 Annex B.**

2. Summary of Actions and Decision Making: January to June 2026

Time	Detail	Reference Information/ Links
January 2026	D&S IFCA Officers worked with the fisher to identify potential shellfish classification areas. These areas were highlighted in Officers' papers.	Not applicable
26th February 2026 **B&PSC Meeting**	Following a presentation by the fisher, and consideration of the Officers' papers, Members agreed to formally consult on broad changes to Permit Conditions with a view to the opening of the razor clam dredge fishery.	Final B&PSC minutes from February 2026
4th June 2026 **B&PSC Meeting**	Members considered the responses to the formal consultation. Members agreed to the opening of the razor clam dredge fishery (subject to approval of a Monitoring and Control Plan). Agreement also recognised the expected location within the identified shellfish classification areas set out in the formal consultation.	Formal consultation report (May 2026) Draft minutes (V0.5) from the June B&PSC meeting
18th June 2026 **Authority Meeting**	Officers presented the first draft of the Monitoring and Control Plan. Members were informed about advice received from Natural England. Decision making regarding the efficacy of the Monitoring and Control Plan was deferred by Members until the next B&PSC meeting.	Final Authority minutes from the June 2026 meeting NE Advice: **Agenda Item 8 (Annex E)** for the November B&PSC meeting

3. Recognising Key Factors

The meetings to date have established some key factors underpinned work of Officers as follows:

Location of Fishery	Reference Information
Must be where demersal mobile fishing activity already takes place	Annex C (Section 2.4 and 3.3)
Must consist of sandy habitat types	Annex D (Full Seabed Habitat Assessment Report) Annex C (Section 3.2 and 3.3)
Must be in moderate to high wave energy areas	Annex C (Section 2.5 and 3.3)
Must be within shellfish water classification areas	Annex C (Section 2.2, 2.3, and 3.3)
Outcomes: 1. Different areas have been considered and were determined not to be suitable. 2. An alternative area has been identified for the razor clam fishery to commence under a M&CP.	Annex C (Section 3.3)

3.1 The Fishery Location

Agenda item 8 - Annex C details how several areas were analysed and ultimately discounted. Section 3.3 of Annex C sets out a new proposed area (Figure 1) and compares this location to established criteria for its selection.

It is the Officers' opinion that the proposed site is not large enough to support a viable commercial fishery in the longer term; however, it is large enough for the fishing activity to begin (under regulation) and be monitored and further assessed in accordance with the Monitoring and Control Plan (Agenda Item 8 – Annex A).

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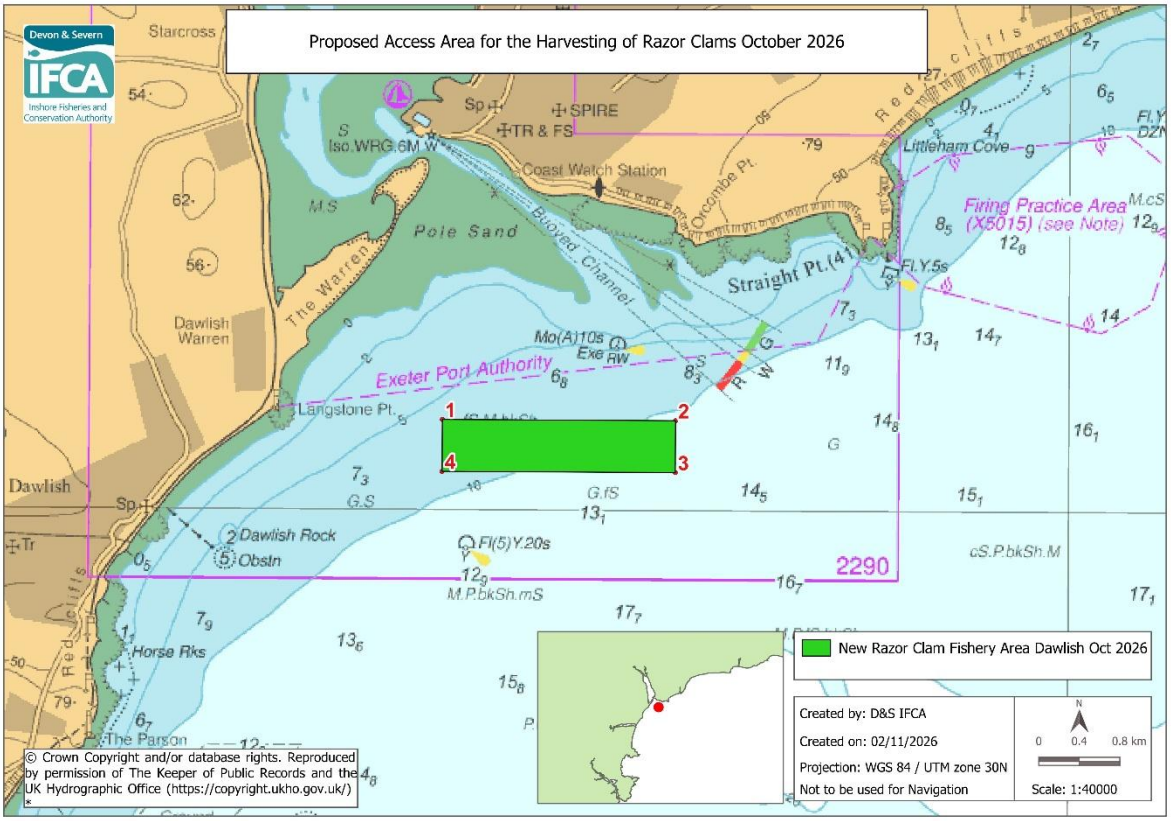


Figure 1: Proposed access area for the harvesting of razor clams October 2026.

Results arising from proposed site:	
Sandy Habitat Type	√
Fished by Demersal Mobile Fishing Vessels	√
Moderate to high energy at the seabed	√
Proposed site lies within the reviewed Classification area October 2026.	√

4. The Monitoring and Control Plan

The revised Monitoring and Control Plan (M&CP) is set out as Agenda Item 8 – Annex A. The M&CP does not consider social of economic aspects of the fishery as this is not its purpose. The revised M&CP has recognised the advice provided by Natural England in June 2026 and concerns raised by some Members. The M&CP follows guidance provided by Natural England to its staff and IFCAs. The M&CP will be used to assess the sustainability of the fishery, the impacts on the wider environment and support the use

of adaptive management and the adaptive precautionary approach. The M&CP highlights information including triggers for review and reporting commitments to the B&PSC.

- **The implementation of a M&CP and changes to the Category One Mobile Fishing Permit Conditions are needed to allow the razor clam dredge fishery to begin.**

5. Changes to the Permit Conditions

The Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw 2022 is the legal framework to manage the razor clam fishery via its associated Permit Conditions (Category One – At Sea). The Byelaw sets out the process for changes to the Mobile Fishing Permit Conditions. Changes to the Permit Conditions must be subjected to consultation. Regarding decision making, the B&PSC has delegated powers to agree to changes which are not subject to further scrutiny (and decision making) by the Marine Management Organisation or Defra.

6. Transparency and Consultation

6.1 Location

The formal consultation undertaken between 9th April and 7th May 2026 set out that the proposed location for the razor clam dredge fishery would be established somewhere within the potential classification zone in the chart (set out at the time as Figure 2) that is shown below. The exact access area for the fishery could not be defined at the time.

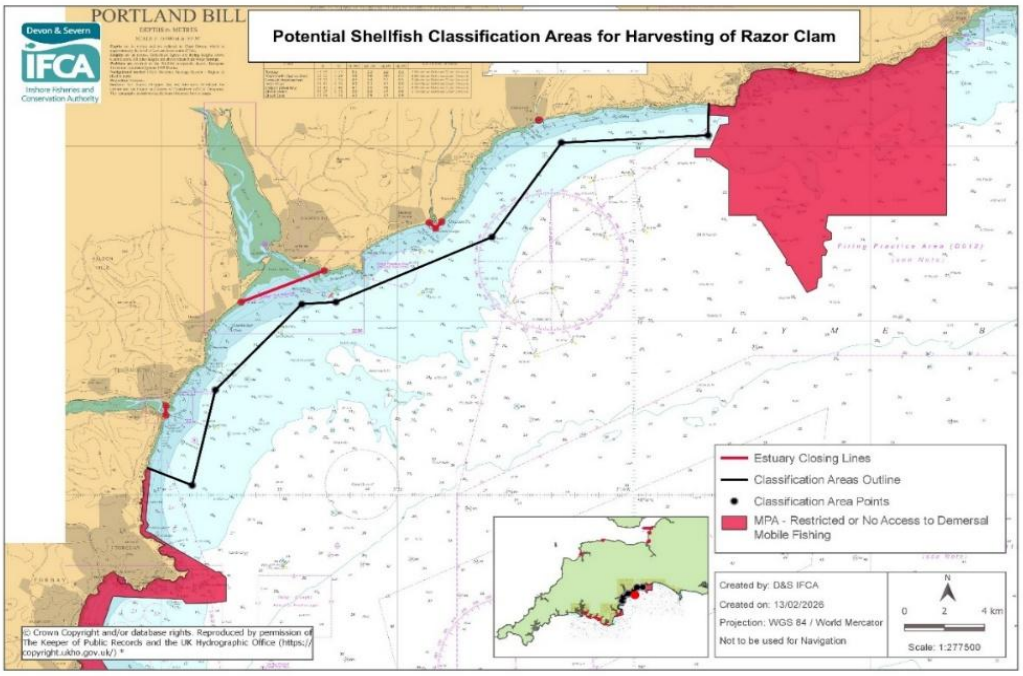


Figure 2: Initial Proposed shellfish classification areas for the harvesting of razor clams April 2026.

Based on Figure 2, the FSA and Cefas shellfish classification team further considered the classification area and reduced it to two smaller areas along the coast due to previously proposed oyster relaying areas and meeting the requirement for representative monitoring points (RMP) for shellfish hygiene purposes (Figure 3).

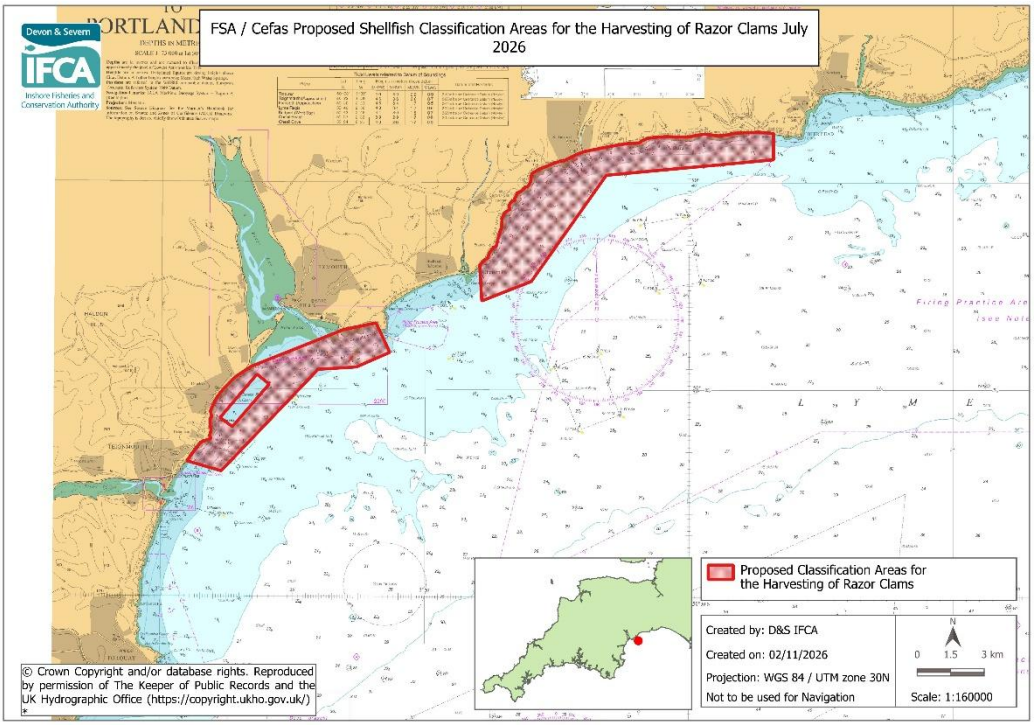


Figure 3 FSA / Cefas Proposed Shellfish Classification areas for harvesting of razor clams July 2026

After further discussion between the fisherman, D&S IFCA Officers, the FSA and Cefas, the Dawlish classification area has been slightly amended and has extended 1 km seaward to accommodate the proposed access area for the razor fishery under the Mobile Fishing Permit Conditions and monitored through the M&CP (Figure 4).

The classification zones maps should be published on the Cefas website in the near future, once shellfish sampling is complete and a class is given to the shellfish for public health and hygiene purposes.

The area for the proposed fishery, as previously described is only 1.18km^2. Such an area is unlikely to support a commercial fishery in the longer term but it is of a size that can be fully monitored under the M&CP and help D&S IFCA understand the operation, verify the habitat type where the operation takes place, catch and bycatch levels and the potential impacts of the fishery. Findings of the M&CP will be reported to the B&PSC, and this may lead to discussion of developing the fishery further in the future.

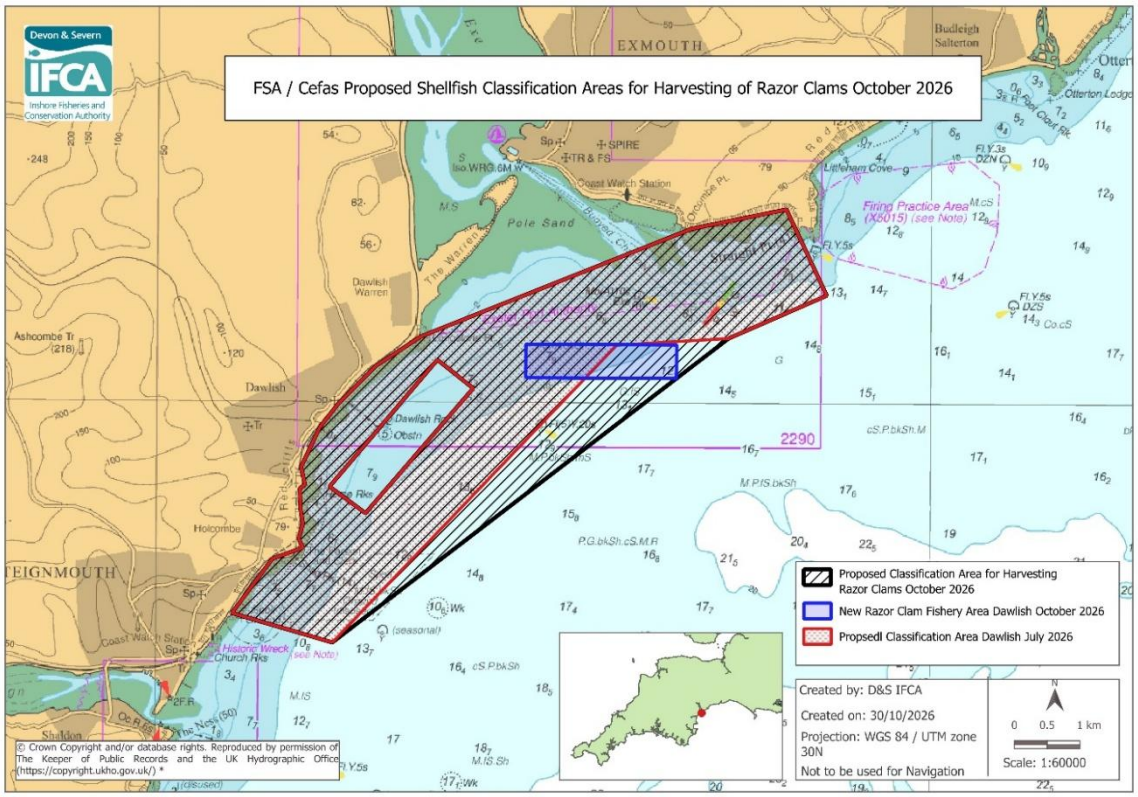


Figure 4 Proposed Fishery Area and Revised classification Area October 2026

6.2 B&PSC Decision Making – Based on Location and Other Factors

On 4th June 2026, Members of the B&PSC agreed to the following:

That subject to approval of the Authority of a Monitoring and Control Plan, Members agree that the razor dredge fishery is opened subject to:

1. Design of dredge (interpretation);
2. Areas fished (**that will be specified within the area outlined in Figure 2 as an Annex**); and
3. Installation on board of a REM system that remains fully functional at all times.

Impact on Decision Making:

A section of the proposed new location sits outside of the area considered in the formal consultation. The responses to the formal consultation were collated in a report (A Summary of Responses from the Formal Consultation – 20th May 2026) and presented to the B&PSC on 4th June. Concern was raised about not knowing the exact location of the fishery. The proposed location of the fishery now being discussed may have a bearing on the views of stakeholders when this is consulted on.

6.3 Other Changes

Officers have drafted the necessary new permit conditions. Agenda Item 8 – Annex B sets out the detailed permit conditions that would be used if Members agree to go forward with the formal consultation.

In addition to the draft Permit Conditions, the rationale for changes to the Permit Conditions would be included in the formal consultation information. The Monitoring and Control Plan will not be subject to formal consultation but will be available to view on D&S IFCA's website.

6.4 Process and Outreach

The proposed formal consultation will be open for four weeks and will only focus on changes to the Permit Conditions. D&S IFCA will utilise its contact data base, and the direct circulation of information will reach over 2000 contacts including (but not limited to) Permit Holders, stakeholders with various interests, academic organisations, and Natural England. The D&S IFCA's website will be used to support the formal consultation.

The findings of the formal consultation will be summarised and presented to the B&PSC in January or February 2027.

7. Other Relevant Information

7.1 D&S IFCA's Statutory Duties

In reaching this point in the process, it is the view of D&S IFCA Officers that the Authority has complied with its Statutory Duties. Different stakeholders interpret information in different ways and take different views as to how balance can be achieved. D&S IFCA's Officers' view is that the new razor clam dredge fishery is consistent with Section 153 MaCAA.

Regarding Section 153 (1) & (2), the application of Permit Conditions, and the supporting M&CP, are designed to support the sustainable development of the razor clam dredge fishery.

As well as Section 153 MaCAA, the Authority will be mindful of Section 172 (1) MaCAA:

"An IFC authority may take such steps as it considers necessary or expedient for or in connection with the development of any new fishery for any sea fisheries resources."

In performing its statutory duty under Section 153 to balance socio-economic benefits with sustainability, the decisions of D&S IFCA must be viewed within this judicial framework and this enhanced margin of appreciation and wide discretion.

7.2 UK Environmental Principles Policy Statement (Defra 2023)

The Policy states that policymakers should take a proportionate approach in the application of the policy statement. They should balance social, economic, and environmental considerations in making policy. They should consider the potential environmental effects of a policy and any mitigating actions. They should consider this in the context of the associated costs and benefits to society of the policy's primary objectives, including the financial and economic costs and benefits to society.

Uncertainties do exist; however, it is the view of D&S IFCA Officers that the approach being taken towards the fishery is proportionate and that the uncertainties are sufficiently mitigated by the management proposal for the razor clam fishery, coupled with the use of a comprehensive M&CP.

It is the view of D&S IFCA Officers that the risk of serious or irreversible environmental harm resulting from the new razor clam dredge fishery is mitigated by regulation and the M&CP. Specialised equipment is required for the fishery and only one vessel with one 1m wide dredge will be participate in the fishery in specific restricted areas. The M&CP will have triggers in place, so that (through a decision-making process of the B&PSC) the fishery can be stopped if the triggers are exceeded. The fishery cannot expand beyond the initial, restricted area until the outcomes from the M&CP are known and considered.

7.3 UK Precautionary Principle

It is the view of D&S IFCA Officers that the Authority has correctly applied the precautionary principle through its adaptive precaution approach.

In 2017, D&S IFCA produced a document – Devon and Severn IFCA: Decision Making and the Precautionary Principle. This can be read **here**. As set out in the document, precaution is not an all-or-nothing commodity: different approaches can be precautionary to different degrees and prohibition (strict precaution) is not a requirement, in particular where alternatives exist.

Due to its fishing activity-based Permit Byelaw approach, D&S IFCA is equipped with a flexible management model that can adapt. An M&CP, coupled with the flexibility provided by the permit-based approach is a form of adaptive precaution. D&S IFCA has experience of introducing M&CPs as part of its management approach.

Adaptive precaution is the preferred option where:

- the activity is one which can be undertaken at different levels of intensity;
- it is technically feasible to establish a feedback monitoring regime; and
- institutional frameworks are sufficiently robust to guarantee that monitoring and feedback controls future mortality.

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LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

Background Papers

Papers, reports, and meeting minutes – Section B of the D&S IFCA Resource Library