Mobile Fishing Permit Conditions

Formal Public Consultation Proposals

Invitation to comment on proposed changes to the Category One Mobile Fishing Permit Conditions relating to a new Razor Clam Dredge Fishery

What is this about?

D&S IFCA is inviting you to respond to the formal public consultation on proposed amendments to existing Category One (at sea) Mobile Fishing Permit Conditions. The Permit Conditions already regulate different types of fishing with mobile fishing gear in the D&S IFCA District including scallop dredging and trawling. This formal consultation relates to proposed changes to the Permit Conditions to enable a new razor clam dredge fishery in South Devon to be regulated through a package of management measures.

To make changes to the Permit Conditions, D&S IFCA must follow a process that includes formal public consultation. We are directly contacting everyone on our (email) mailing list to set out details about the proposed changes to the Permit Conditions and how to respond. We are also writing to permit holders that have not provided us with an email address. Your view is important, and we also encourage you to forward this information or to notify others that may have an interest in the formal public consultation.

All stakeholders (for example fishermen with any type of commercial or recreational D&S IFCA permit, relevant organisations, or anyone with an interest in fishing or the marine environment) can respond to each of the proposed changes to the Permit Conditions even if they do not conduct mobile fishing within D&S IFCA's District. Information is available on D&S IFCA's website to support this formal public consultation.

The formal public consultation begins on **20th November 2026** and will end on **8th January 2027.** This formal consultation includes a privacy notice relating to the protection of personal information. After the essential background information, details are set out regarding the proposed changes to the Permit Conditions (four proposal sections) and how you can respond.

Background Information

In reaching this point in a prolonged process, Members of D&S IFCA's Byelaw and Permitting Sub-Committee (B&PSC) have considered an extensive range of information and discussed the merits of opening a new razor clam dredge fishery in D&S IFCA's District.

Gear Type:

Details about the gear type and methodology have been provided to B&PSC Members in an Officer paper (Agenda Item 8 – February 2026). The fishing gear is specialised and involves a water jet system. The razor clam dredge does not resemble or function like a scallop dredge.

Research Work:

Members have considered information set out in a comprehensive Research and Evidence Review (Agenda Item 8 – Annex C – November 2026 B&PSC meeting). It contains information regarding

habitat structure and type. Identification of suitable areas includes a need to recognise higher energy, more mobile sandy habitats with the highest potential for recovery after disturbance.

Members have considered the findings of seabed mapping work (Agenda Item 8 – Annex D – November 2026 B&PSC meeting) conducted by D&S IFCA Officers.

Natural England (the Government's Statutory Nature Conservation Body) Advice:

Members of the B&PSC have considered advice provided by Natural England (Agenda Item 8 Annex E – November 2026 B&PSC meeting):

"Natural England recommends that, if the fishery is progressed, it is done so under a clearly defined, precautionary management framework with monitoring, adaptive management, and safeguards to ensure alignment with wider environmental objectives. Robust adaptive management provides the opportunity to effectively monitor and respond to potential impacts associated with this new fishery".

Adaptive Management and Monitoring:

The use of permit conditions provides an adaptive management framework. Members of the B&PSC have agreed a Monitoring and Control Plan (Agenda Item 8 Annex A – November 2026 B&PSC meeting), setting out how the fishery will be monitored, and how the findings of monitoring will be reported to Members. The Monitoring and Control Plan includes criteria that can trigger a review of the fishery, and potential further changes in management. The fishery, and therefore monitoring, cannot begin unless the Permit Conditions change.

Scale and Expansion of the Fishery:

This is a small-scale fishery, initially only involving one fishing vessel that has developed the specialist fishing equipment that is required. The fishery cannot begin as a commercial operation without changes to the Permit Conditions to set out regulatory control measures. The fishery cannot expand to wider areas without future changes to Permit Conditions; requiring further formal consultation. Additional vessels cannot join the razor clam dredge fishery without triggering further discussion by Members of the B&PSC.

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The Proposed Changes – Detailed Information

The following information sets out the proposed changes to the Category One Mobile Fishing Permit Conditions, applicable only to the operation of razor clam dredges.

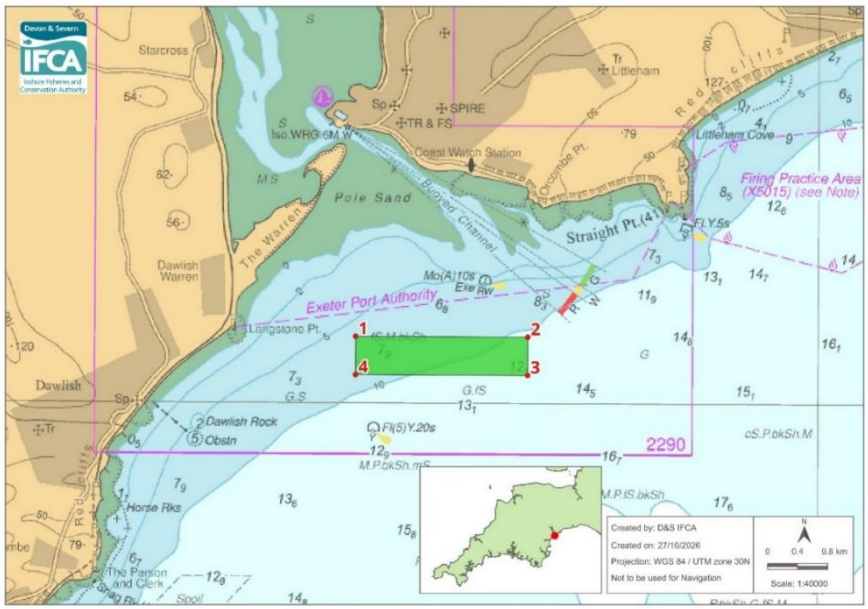
This includes:

- Location where fishing can take place using a razor clam dredge
- Required interpretations for species, the specialist fishing gear, and Remote Electronic Monitoring System (REM)
- A Minimum Conservation Reference Size of 140 millimetres for a razor clam
- A limitation on number of razor clam dredges
- Requirements for the fitting of REM, which is essential for monitoring the fishery, and action that must be taken if the equipment fails to function.

The formal consultation sets out every proposed change to the Category One Mobile Fishing Permit Conditions, along with an explanation of how the changes to the Permit Conditions function. The paragraph numbering for the proposed Permit Conditions may change.

Proposal Section 01: Razor Clam Dredge Fishery Area

A site has been selected to be regulated via the Permit Conditions.



Point 1: 50° 35.465’ N, 003° 25.240’ W

Point 2: 50° 35.465’ N, 003° 23.290’ W

Point 3: 50° 35.189’ N, 003° 23.290’ W

Point 4: 50° 35.189’ N, 003° 25.240’ W

Information about the Site (Access area shown in green):

The site (access area) is located in South Devon, approximately 1.5 km east of Langstone Point and is 1.18km^2.

- The access area recognises the advice from Natural England (the Government’s Statutory Nature Conservation Body).
- The access area is not within a Marine Protected Area.
- The access area is already fished by other types of mobile fishing gear including trawls and scallop dredges.
- Evidence indicates that the access area does not include sensitive habitat types or species.
- Evidence indicates that the access area and the habitats within it are subject to high energy due to its relative shallow depth and exposure to prevailing winds.
- The access area is within a larger proposed classification area for razor clam harvesting.

Such a small access 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 Monitoring and Control Plan.

- The access area cannot be expanded without firstly considering the findings of the Monitoring and Control Plan, decision making of the B&PSC, and further formal consultation on changes to the Permit Conditions.

The Proposed Permit Conditions:

A new Annex (Annex 13) will be prepared as demonstrated above with the green access area set out with the co-ordinates. It is proposed that new Annex 13 and the spatial restriction will be introduced as follows:

12.1 A permit holder or a named representative must not access the District with a razor clam dredge, unless:

a) the razor clam dredge gear is stowed on deck and no fishing is taking place; or

b) the razor clam dredge gear is used for fishing in the area as defined by the co-ordinates set out in the attached Annex 13 to these permit conditions.

Explanation:

Current Annex 13 (Non-Reporting of a Vessel Monitoring Device) will become Annex 14 and wording in the Permit Conditions changed as required.

A combination of provisions in the Permit Conditions (including those to follow) will result in the following:

- A vessel with razor clam dredges on board, must have the razor clam dredge stowed on deck when operating in the District, with the exception that when the razor clam dredge is used for fishing, it can only be within the Annex 13 access areas (the green box shown).
- When fishing in the access area with razor clam dredges, the fishing operation is monitored using a remote electronic monitoring system (REM).

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Proposal Section 02: Gear Type for Razor Clam Dredging

As highlighted in the background information, razor clam dredging is a specialist form of fishing, with specialised fishing gear. Although every technical aspect of the fishing gear will not be regulated, it is proposed to introduce an interpretation for "razor clam dredge" that underpins key aspects of the fishing gear. An interpretation is needed to enable different provisions in the Permit Conditions to function. The proposed interpretation is as follows:

"razor clam dredge" means a dredge where:

i) any part of the dredge does not exceed one metre in width; and
ii) any blade fitted to the bar of the dredge does not exceed 400mm millimetres in depth; and
iii) that the dredge uses a continuous air lift retrieval system to bring the catch immediately to the surface.

The use of the above interpretation for the "razor clam dredge" interlinks with other proposed provisions relating to the use of the fishing gear, as follows:

2.1 A permit holder or a named representative must not fish within the District with a dredge other than a scallop dredge, or an alternative dredge, or a razor clam dredge.
2.4 A permit holder or a named representative must not fish with more than two razor clam dredges at any one time within the District.
2.5 A permit holder or a named representative must not fish with razor clam dredges at any time within the District, unless in accordance with paragraph 12.1.
2.6 A permit holder or a named representative must not fish with a scallop dredge, an alternative dredge, or a razor clam dredge when used in combination.

Explanation:

The Permit Conditions contain provisions (2.1, 2.4, 2.5, and 2.6) which will be included in a section under the title of "Dredging". The changes include amendments to existing provisions, to include the words "razor clam dredge". The exact numbering of paragraphs may be subject to change.

The combination of the interpretation of "razor clam dredge" and the individual provisions limit the gear type, and combination of dredges that can be used in the District. Although paragraph 2.4 sets out that a maximum of two dredges can be used, the Monitoring and Control Plan will set out that only one dredge can be used. Paragraph 2.5 links to the spatial restriction (access area) for the use of the razor clam dredge as set out in paragraph 12.1 of the Permit Conditions and already highlighted in this formal consultation (Proposal 01).

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Proposal Section 03: Species and Minimum Conservation Reference Size

The proposal includes adding an interpretation of razor clam as follows:

"razor clam" means a razor clam of the species *Ensis* spp.;

The proposal is to expand a current section in the Permit Conditions related to Minimum Conservation Reference Sizes (MCRS). A list of species (defined in the interpretations) is currently set out, including how they are to be measured. The proposal is to add razor clams and set out a MCRS of 140mm:

1.3 A permit holder or a named representative must not remove from a fishery within the District:

- a razor clam less than 140 millimetres measured along the length of the shell;

Explanation

The current national Minimum Conservation Reference Size (MCRS) for razor clams (*Ensis* spp.) is 100mm. Members of the B&PSC recognised the advice provided by Natural England that this is too low for at least some species of razor clam (particularly *E.siliqua*), and a larger MCRS of 140mm would be more appropriate.

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Proposal Section 04: Remote Electronic Monitoring

The Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw 2022 (the legal framework for the use of Permit Conditions) already includes an interpretation for remote electronic monitoring system (REM).

"remote electronic monitoring system" means an integrated system using an array of electronic equipment, such as gear sensors and video cameras used to remotely monitor fishing activities on a relevant fishing vessel.

The proposal is to use this interpretation for remote electronic monitoring system within the Permit Conditions with specific provisions only applicable for the razor clam dredge fishery. In addition, the REM collects data (required data) which will also be defined as follows:

"required data" means camera footage, gear sensor data, and vessel positional data.

The proposal includes adding a new section to the Permit Conditions under the title "Specified Equipment (Remote Electronic Monitoring System)". The new provisions in this section are all modelled on similar provisions for the use of inshore vessel monitoring devices. The paragraph numbering shown below may be subject to change.

Specified Equipment (Remote Electronic Monitoring System)

4.4 A permit holder or a named representative must not operate a relevant fishing vessel with a razor clam dredge within the District unless:

a) the vessel is fitted with a remote electronic monitoring system; and
b) the remote electronic monitoring system is fully functioning at all times and the required data is received by the remote electronic monitoring system supplier and made available to the Authority via the supplier's platform;

4.5 A permit holder or a named representative must not operate a relevant fishing vessel with a razor clam dredge within the District unless:

a) a permit holder has provided in writing a copy of the manufacturer's approved engineer's installation report confirming that the system is fully functional.
b) subject to paragraph 4.6, the required data is received by the remote electronic monitoring system supplier and made available to the Authority via the supplier's platform, except when a relevant fishing vessel is within an area as defined by the co-ordinates set out in the attached Annex 14 to these permit conditions.

4.6 Where network coverage is lost, and the required data is not transmitted, the required data must be stored and then forwarded to the remote electronic monitoring system supplier when network coverage is restored.

In addition, it is proposed to introduce permit conditions related to the failure of REM and action that must be taken in the event of failure. The paragraph numbering shown below may be subject to change:

Failure of a Remote Electronic Monitoring System

6.1 Unless paragraph 4.6 applies, if the remote electronic monitoring system installed in accordance with paragraph 7.2 has failed to transmit the required data, for whatever reason, a permit holder or a named representative must ensure that:

a) the relevant fishing vessel, if at sea, immediately ceases fishing and returns to one of the areas as defined by the co-ordinates set out in the attached Annex 14 to these permit conditions or leaves the District; or

b) if the relevant fishing vessel is already in an area as defined by the co-ordinates set out in the attached Annex 14 to these permit conditions, the relevant fishing vessel remains there in accordance with paragraph 6.2.

6.2 If, as a result of a failure of the remote electronic monitoring system to transmit the required data and in compliance with paragraph 6.1, a permit holder or named representative must not sail the relevant fishing vessel in the District, unless:

a) the remote electronic monitoring system vessel has been inspected, repaired, or replaced by the manufacturer's approved engineer, and an approved engineer's report has been received by the Authority in writing that contains the information specified in Paragraph 7.2; or

b) a written authorisation has been issued in respect of the relevant fishing vessel under paragraph 4 of the Byelaw.

The REM related proposals also include Permit Conditions to ensure correct fitting and potential replacement of a REM device that fails to function correctly. The Permit Conditions will include a new section under the title "**Installation, Inspection, Repairs, or Replacement of a Remote Electronic Monitoring System**". The new provisions in this section are all modelled on similar provisions for the requirements relating to the installation, inspection, and replacement of an inshore vessel monitoring device. The paragraph numbering shown below may be subject to change:

Installation, Inspection, Repairs, or Replacement of a Remote Electronic Monitoring System

7.2 A report by a manufacturer's approved engineer for the installation, inspection, repair, or replacement of a remote electronic monitoring system vessel must contain the following information:

Installation or replacement:

a) the name of the engineer;
b) the engineer's employer (if applicable);
c) name of the relevant fishing vessel;
d) port letters and numbers of the relevant fishing vessel;
e) date of installation;
f) geographical location of installation;
g) time of installation;
h) serial number of the REWIRE vessel monitoring device;
i) confirmation that the required data is received by the remote electronic monitoring system supplier and made available to the Authority via the supplier's platform;
j) image of the location of the REWIRE vessel monitoring device;
k) image of the camera locations on the relevant fishing vessel.

Explanation:

Members of the B&PSC consider the fitting of, and use of REM, as essential to enable the fishery to be monitored effectively under the Monitoring and Control Plan.

The above provisions (within proposal 04 Remote Electronic Monitoring) will ensure that a vessel cannot operate razor clam dredges without REM being fitted, and that the fitting of the equipment meets D&S IFCA's requirements.

The proposed provisions ensure that REM must be fully functional, and that the required data (for monitoring) is available to the Authority. Annex 14 (Annex 13 currently) will be the harbour areas where the transmission of IVMS and REM is not required.

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Your Response

This is not a questionnaire. Your response can be as detailed as you wish and relates to one or all the proposal sections (1 to 4).

We very much encourage you to explain the reasons for your views and provide supporting information, if you have any, so that all the information can be considered in the decision-making process.

Responses sent by email or letters are preferred, however you can also telephone us or meet with us in person if you prefer.

It is useful for us if every response contains the following information:

A) Your name and contact details as we may wish to contact you directly with the outcomes of the process.
B) What interest do you (or your organisation) have in fishing and/or the marine environment – for example are you a permit holder, or represent an organisation?
C) How were you made aware of this formal public consultation? (e.g., by this circular, D&S IFCA's website, D&S IFCA Facebook, from someone else, or other source).

Sending in your response/contacting us

1. Contact us via email – consultation@devonandsevernifca.gov.uk
2. Write to us: D&S IFCA, Brixham Laboratory, Freshwater Quarry, Brixham, TQ5 8BA.
3. Call us to find out more about the formal consultation – 01803 854648 (Extension 856)

This formal consultation begins on 20th November 2026 and will end on 8th January 2027.

The Process for Change

The D&S IFCA's Byelaw and Permitting Sub-Committee (B&PSC) has the responsibility of reviewing the management of fishing activities and byelaw permit conditions. A list of B&PSC Members can be found on D&S IFCA's website or by clicking **here**.

Responses to the formal consultation will be summarised in a report in preparation for an anticipated B&PSC meeting in late January 2027 or early February 2027. The B&PSC will determine if there will be changes made to the Permit Conditions.

What do we do with your information – Privacy Policy.

We protect any personal data that you may provide. Any personal data submitted in this formal consultation will not be shared with other organisations or placed in the public domain. The content of responses will be summarised and anonymised where appropriate for documenting in reports that will be presented to the Byelaw & Permitting Sub-Committee and published on our website.

D&S IFCA has a privacy policy which can be found by visiting our website (home page) www.devonandsevernifca.gov.uk

- You can change your preferences at any time.
- We have a duty to consult with D&S IFCA Permit Holders.
- You can manage your preferences by contacting D&S IFCA.

Background Reports & Papers (Links) and keeping you informed.

Reports, Officers' papers, and minutes of meetings of most significance to this review of the Mobile fishing Permit Conditions are available on D&S IFCA's website:

- The Authority Meetings Tab
- Section B of the D&S IFCA Website Resource Library

Hyperlinks to specific information have been included in this formal consultation. These are also set out below using the full https address for those that may read this information in hard copy format:

1. Officers paper - Agenda Item 8 (presented at the B&PSC Meeting in February 2026), including background about the razor clam dredge fishery, including the method and trials undertaken in CIFCA and D&S IFCA's District.

   https://www.devonandsevernifca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/Agenda-Item-8-Razor-Clam-Fishery-South-Devon.pdf

2. Research and Evidence Review 30th October 2026 (presented as Agenda Item 8 – Annex C at the November 2026 B&PSC meeting).

   https://www.devonandsevernifca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/11/Agenda-Item-8-Annex-C-Research-and-Evidence-Review.pdf

3. D&S IFCA Seabed Habitat Assessment (presented as Agenda Item 8 – Annex D at the November 2026 B&PSC meeting).

   https://www.devonandsevernifca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/11/Agenda-Item-8-Annex-D-Seabed-Habitat-Assessment-Razor-Clam-Fishery.pdf

4. Advice provided by Natural England (presented as Agenda Item 8 – Annex E, at the November 2026 B&PSC meeting)

   https://www.devonandsevernifca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/11/Agenda-Item-8-Annex-E-Natural-England-Advice.pdf

5. Draft Monitoring and Control Plan (presented as Agenda Item 8 – Annex A at the November 2026 B&PSC meeting).

   https://www.devonandsevernifca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/11/Agenda-Item-8-Annex-A-Monitoring-and-Control-Plan-for-the-Razor-Clam-Fishery.pdf

We regularly post information about our work on our website/Facebook. Direct communication is often the best way to help you stay informed about our work and to highlight the opportunities for you to have your say on a range of topics or issues.

If you are not already on our mailing list, you can get yourself added by contacting D&S IFCA and you will then be directly notified about all our consultations.

End.