

Recommendation paper

Title: Finfish Fishery – combining licence types

Date: 3rd March 2023

Report of: Sheena Ross

1. Background:

1.1 Licence conditions across A, G and W licence, Part 2 state:

- If a vessel exceeds the 10% by-catch limit of non-permitted species, the grid square reported as the mid-day position is then closed to that vessel for fishing for 10 days and the vessel must not enter the closed grid square unless all nets and fishing gear are stowed in such a way as to be unavailable for use.

1.2 On 20th February the Fisheries Manager circulated a email to industry which essentially provided a little more flexibility with the grid square closure

- If a vessel fishing on G or W licences closes a grid square/s by way of a bycatch of an abundance of hake exceeding 10% the grid square/s remains closed for a period of 10 days for G and W licence use. It would, however, be considered acceptable for that vessel to utilise an A licence and enter the grid square/s which are closed to them under the other licence types in order to target hake.
- If a vessel is fishing on an A licence closes a grid square/s by way of a bycatch of Illex exceeding 10% then the grid square/s remain closed for a period of 10 days and this would apply to both A and W licences. It would, however, be considered acceptable for that vessel to utilise their G licence and enter the grid square/s which are closed to them under other licence types to target Illex.
- If a vessel closes a grid square/s due to high bycatch of Grenadier or Toothfish then there is no licence type available that allows them to target those species and the grid square/s remain closed across all licence types.
- For any instances of by-catch where the above examples don't apply i.e. high by-catch of mixed species with no obvious dominant by-catch species, then the grid square would remain closed for 10 clear days in the same way as has been traditionally applied.

1.3 It's also worth noting that if a vessel changes licence type to continue in the same square and we don't believe this is valid, the notification to change will be queried by FISHOPS who will continue to monitor by-catch levels.

2. Presentation and consultations:

2.1 On 2nd March at 1330 a meeting was held at FISHOPS to discuss the issues surrounding high by-catch levels in the finfish fishery and possible solutions.

2.2 During the discussion, the Fisheries Manager mentioned an idea that had been suggested some years ago that ultimately didn't come to anything but may be worth considering this year and that was if fishing companies that have effort available, wish to consider combining 2 licence types to

enable the vessel to continue fishing without the pressure of having to move squares/avoid them for 10 days?

- For example, we could consider a G+A day fishing days and create a dummy code (i.e. 'J') in the database that would allow vessels to fish for Illex and Hake and other permitted finfish species.
- This option may be preferable to vessels continually changing grid squares and remove some of the stress associated with vessels trying to keep their fishing operations 'legal'
- Clearly, no licence type allows vessels to fish for Grenadier, Toothfish, Skate (the latter due to net restrictions) therefore if by-catch levels of these species occur, the grid square closure would continue to apply.

3. Recommendation:

3.1 We therefore propose that FISHOPS continue to monitor catches on a daily basis and that they will circulate a daily update of grid squares that are closed for a particular licence type and when that restriction would expire. This will take the form of an excel sheet that is updated daily giving details of grid squares that are closed, the licence type/s which they are closed to and the date on which they reopen. These closures will apply to all vessels and would be in effect from midnight on the day that the email has been distributed and remain in force for a 10 day period, as per licence conditions. When a grid square reopens it would reopen from 00:01 on the date stated on the sheet.

Approved

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sheena Ross', written in a cursive style.

Sheena Ross
Fisheries Manager