

# Government funding backs scallop fishing industry breakthrough

A world-first method for catching scallops which offers an alternative to damaging dredging activity has been developed using funding from the Government's Seafood Innovation Fund (SIF).

This new low-impact method, pioneered by scientists at Devon-based company Fishtek Marine, uses illuminated pots dubbed 'scallop discos' to attract and catch scallops.

Due to having 200 eyes, scallops were found to be particularly receptive to the lights and naturally moved towards them, making the lights an effective means to catch large quantities without trawling the seabed. Findings indicate this could replace traditional dredging methods which can have a damaging effect on valuable marine habitats.

The Seafood Innovation Fund, a multi-million programme funded by Defra and delivered by the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (Cefas), is supporting innovative projects across the fishing, aquaculture and seafood industries that use cutting edge technology or new techniques to limit the impact of fisheries on the marine environment.

The Seafood Innovation Fund sits under the £100 million [UK Seafood Fund](#), set up by the Government to support the long term future and sustainability of the UK fisheries and seafood sector. It will ensure industry is able to process more fish landed in the UK, create more job opportunities across the supply chain and upskill the workforce and train new entrants, to level up coastal communities across the UK.

## **Fisheries Minister, Victoria Prentis, said:**

It is great to see Fishtek Marine benefitting from our Seafood Innovation Fund, and developing a world-first method for catching scallops in an environmentally sustainable way.

The funding is supporting innovation, helping industry use cutting edge technology and protecting the marine environment. It is also an important part of levelling up coastal communities – and it is great to see Devon leading the way.

## **Suzanna Neville, Seafood Innovation Fund programme manager at Cefas, said:**

This is an important project that has the potential to make a real difference to the sustainability of the scallop fishery. The opportunity to transform commercial scallop harvesting has been made possible by providing funding for the development of early

stage ideas. This is exactly the sort of innovative project that the SIF was set up to support, helping the UK lead the way in developing a sustainable seafood sector.

**Dr. Rob Enever of Fishtek Marine, and lead scientist on the study, said:**

The support of the Seafood Innovation Fund was vital to this work. The research simply wouldn't have happened without it. The discovery that scallops can be attracted into crab pots using light is a world first. Beyond the UK, the innovation of a new low-impact scallop fishery has application in scallop fisheries world-wide. With the continued support of Defra, we look forward to developing this exciting work and hope for "pot-caught scallops" to be a consumer choice of the future!

Fishtek Marine received around £245,000 of SIF funding to collect data and trial several designs for the pots, which confirmed the illuminated light 'scallop discos' technique consistently attracts significant numbers of scallops.

Following these promising results, the next steps involve optimising the trap design and developing and manufacturing a new, low-cost light specific to the operational needs of crustacean fishers. Further sea-trials will then be conducted with the new designs, focusing on crucial factors such as fishing region, light intensity, light colour, flashing rate and trap efficiency.

Sitting under the £100 million UK Seafood Fund, the Seafood Innovation Fund brings together industry, academia and the UK's wealth of scientific expertise to help the sector become more sustainable at every level. Alongside this, the Fisheries Industry Science Partnerships (FISP) scheme is a further boost for science and innovation in the industry, together totalling £24 million.

Bids for the next round of the Fisheries Industry Science Partnerships scheme and the Seafood Innovation Fund are due to open this summer. Businesses can find out more information and how to apply to the schemes on GOV UK.

**Notes to editors:**

Fishtek Marine: Based in Totnes Devon, UK, Fishtek Marine is a unique conservation engineering company. The Fishtek Marine team develop, engineer, test, manufacture, and distribute a range of innovative fishing technologies that facilitate sustainable fishing, reducing bycatch of cetaceans, turtles, seabirds and sharks.

Cefas: Cefas is the Centre for Environment, Fisheries, and Aquaculture Science. We are an agency of Defra (the Government's Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) and world leading experts in marine and freshwater science. We help keep our seas, oceans and rivers healthy and productive and our seafood safe and sustainable, by providing data and advice

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