

News story: Reduced limit for North Sea nephrops fishing explained

The Marine Management Organisation and Defra are providing advance notice of a reduction in the quarterly catch limit for North Sea nephrops for quarter 3 only. This is being reduced from 20 tonnes to 4 tonnes per vessel. The changes are part of a package of measures to cut fish mortality in the Farne Deeps and help long-term recovery of the stock.

Vessels fishing against the under 10 metre and over 10 metre pool allocations for North Sea nephrops will be subject to the new limit from 1 July to 30 September 2018.

The change is happening because the Government believes it is fair that all sectors should contribute to the reduction in overall fishing effort on Farne Deeps nephrops and to developing a sustainable nephrops fishery that will secure future stability and profitability for local fishermen.

In 2015 ICES advice showed that the Farne Deeps nephrops stock was in danger of collapse and recovery measures were introduced from 1 April 2016. ICES advice published on 30 June 2017 demonstrated that stock abundance was increasing but that catches were still notably above the stock's maximum sustainable yield (MSY).

Nephrops fishing activity in the Farne Deeps is usually highest in the winter period, however Cefas analysis identified a pattern in the last two years of unusual and significant effort targeting nephrops in quarter 3 when the inshore fleet usually engage in a mixed fishery.

The planned catch limit (20 tonnes) for the fourth quarter, when the recurring winter nephrops fishery begins, is not affected.