

News story: Rules around removal of lost fishing gear clarified

The MMO is reviewing the marine licensing process to ensure that it is as efficient as possible, offers value for money and proportionately manages risks to the marine environment.

As part of this it has become aware that marine licensing guidance for recreational divers, in particular around removal of marine litter and fishing equipment, could be made clearer. The guidance provides interpretation on the relevant sections of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009.

The MMO has committed to working with relevant organisations and representative groups to review and improve the guidance.

In the meantime the MMO has confirmed that a lifting bag can be used to remove an object (including marine litter) up to 100kg provided the object has been there for less than 12 months. Beyond that a marine licence is required. It has also clarified that marine litter does not include abandoned, lost or discarded fishing gear (ALDFG).

Projects to remove ALDFG should be submitted to the MMO as a marine licensing application, which will allow appropriate consideration of the risks to the historic environment and nature conservation features.

In July 2017 the MMO [introduced a self-service approach](#) for marine licensing which may be relevant in these circumstances. This is making it quicker and easier for applicants in low-risk circumstances, while also enabling the MMO to reduce the licensing fee by more than half to £50. This process has already [been used in relation to fishing gear removal activities](#).