

Press release: First self-service licences issued

A number of customers have now benefitted from [the automated approach to marine licensing introduced by the MMO in mid-July](#). These include the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) in Devon and [Fathoms Free](#), a volunteer marine conservation organisation in the South West.

Where activities are a low risk to the marine environment and sufficiently consistent in nature and extent applicants may be able to get a marine licence through the new self-service online process. This new digital tool is making it quicker, cheaper and more convenient for applicants to get a licence permitting their activity.

Fathoms Free removal of fishing gear

Part of the work of Fathoms Free is clearing up marine debris including Abandoned, Lost and Discarded Fishing Gear (ALDFG). They conduct underwater litter picks, which include the removal of ALDFG.

Some litter removal activities would not normally need a marine licence, but the larger objects that do would have been subject to the normal marine licensing process which attracts a higher fee and longer processing time (potentially up to 13 weeks).

Fathoms Free obtained licences to recover ALDFG objects:

- over 12 months old
- that might affect an area or feature of nature conservation
- the recovery of which requires use of a lifting bag(s) of 100kg total lifting capacity per object or more

The objects potentially include trawler nets, monofilament nets, ropes, lobster pots, crab pots, bivalve dredging gear and other similar man-made objects that pose a threat to marine life due to being designed for, or capable of, entrapment, entangling or injury.

To make sure the work would not have any unintended impacts on wreck sites or the environment the charity agreed a method with Natural England and Historic England in advance of applying.

The licences allow the charity to remove ALDFG from 8 different wreck sites, each cost £50 and were issued instantly.

Robert Thompson from Fathoms Free explained:

We plan to remove abandoned, lost or discarded fishing gear from numerous sites which require boat access and divers for their removal. These sites have various types of gear negatively

impacting on a range of different habitats.

We were pleased to learn that the process for obtaining permission was being simplified by the MMO and that they involved us in testing the system prior to its launch.

More information about self-service marine licensing is available on [the MMO's website](#). Details of all self-service licences issued are available on the [MMO's public register](#).