

Dogger Bank scallop closure extended

Scallop fishing in the North Sea around Dogger Bank will be suspended for a further three weeks until 23:59 on 29 August following preliminary analysis of the state of the shellfish stock.

Since the initial four week closure was brought in on 12 July, sampling by Cefas using their survey ship Endeavour has demonstrated that scallops in the area are currently either spawning or about to spawn.

After reviewing the early stock samples, the four Fisheries Administrations (FAs) have determined a three-week extension is needed to finish data gathering, produce a detailed analysis of the research and to start preparing a longer term management plan for the affected sea areas.

The extension will also enable stock in a wider area to finish spawning before fishing restarts and allow for a second consultation with industry if it's required.

The closure covers ICES rectangles 37F1, 37F2, 37F3, 38F1, 38F2, 38F3, 39F1 and 39F2 in the Dogger Bank. Fishing licences will be varied to reflect the situation.

The FAs have continued to work with the UK scallop industry and appreciate the ongoing efforts of the industry to support sustainable scallop fishing around Dogger Bank.

The FAs remain committed to liaising with the scallop industry throughout the closure, during the review and in any subsequent decisions or actions that result from the data gathering.

Jim Portus is Chief Executive of South West Producer Organisation and Chairman of the Scallop Industry Consultative Group.

He said: "The scallop industry has been keen to engage with Defra and the devolved Fisheries Administrations in co-management of various fisheries, and the new Dogger Bank fishery has been no exception.

"We share government objectives to harvest all stocks sustainably for maximum benefit in the marine environment, for the good of our coastal fishing communities and to ensure the economic viability of all in the supply chain, including in the important fish processing units and among crucial exporters.

"Having been informed by Defra earlier this week that the specially commissioned North Sea CEFAS survey shows spawning still ongoing on many parts of the Dogger Bank, and is yet to begin in some areas, there was no hesitation in agreeing the Defra proposed additional three weeks closure.

"The industry would, of course, want Defra and the FAs to consult more fully with the industry and the wider supply chain if any further extension of the closure is contemplated or advised. "