



**D&S IFCA's
Response to Biome Algae
Response to MMO Data Analysis**

**Marine Licence Application for a
seaweed farm in Torbay**

MLA/2022/00183

April 2023

Devon and Severn Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (D&S IFCA) is a statutory consultee for Marine Licences submitted to the Marine Management organisation (MMO). D&S IFCA is making an additional response to MLA/2022/0183 following Biome's response to the additional consultation.

D&S IFCA statutory duties are to:

- (a) seek to ensure that the exploitation of sea fisheries resources is carried out in a sustainable way,
- (b) seek to balance the social and economic benefits of exploiting the sea fisheries resources of the District with the need to protect the marine environment from, or promote its recovery from, the effects of such exploitation,
- (c) take any other steps which in the authority's opinion are necessary or expedient for the purpose of making a contribution to the achievement of sustainable development, and
- (d) seek to balance the different needs of persons engaged in the exploitation of sea fisheries resources in the District.

D&S IFCA is supportive of mariculture developments as it fulfils its statutory duties in particular those of sustainable development, but D&S IFCA must also be mindful of the need to seek to balance the needs of all persons engaged in the exploitation of sea fisheries resources and consider the existing use of the location of any proposed development.

D&S IFCA has considered the Biome response to the MMO's discussion points relating to the RYA and MMO's analysis of IVMS data on demersal towed gear activity in the proposed location of the seaweed farm under MLA/2022/00183.

D&S IFCA has little to respond to the point regarding those raised by the RYA. The only point is that Biome has suggested that it will remove the headline and vertical risers in July and August. Whilst this may mitigate the concerns of the RYA it does not mitigate the impact to the fishers using this area throughout the rest of the year. Fishers use the area in the months where the lines will be in place for their normal demersal fishing activity. These include, amongst many fisheries, the over autumn and winter squid fishery and the spring cuttlefish fishery. D&S IFCA is aware that there are other activities that take place where the proposed site is located including netting for sole and potting, in particular whelk potting. D&S IFCA provided potting and netting fishing activity survey charts in its response in November 2022. However, for clarity the following figures 1-4 show results from previous surveys, this time including the location of the proposed seaweed farm. It must be noted that surveys such as these undertaken by D&S IFCA are a paper exercise and a less than 30% response rate was attained from the fishing industry. IVMS is not currently available for the vessels.

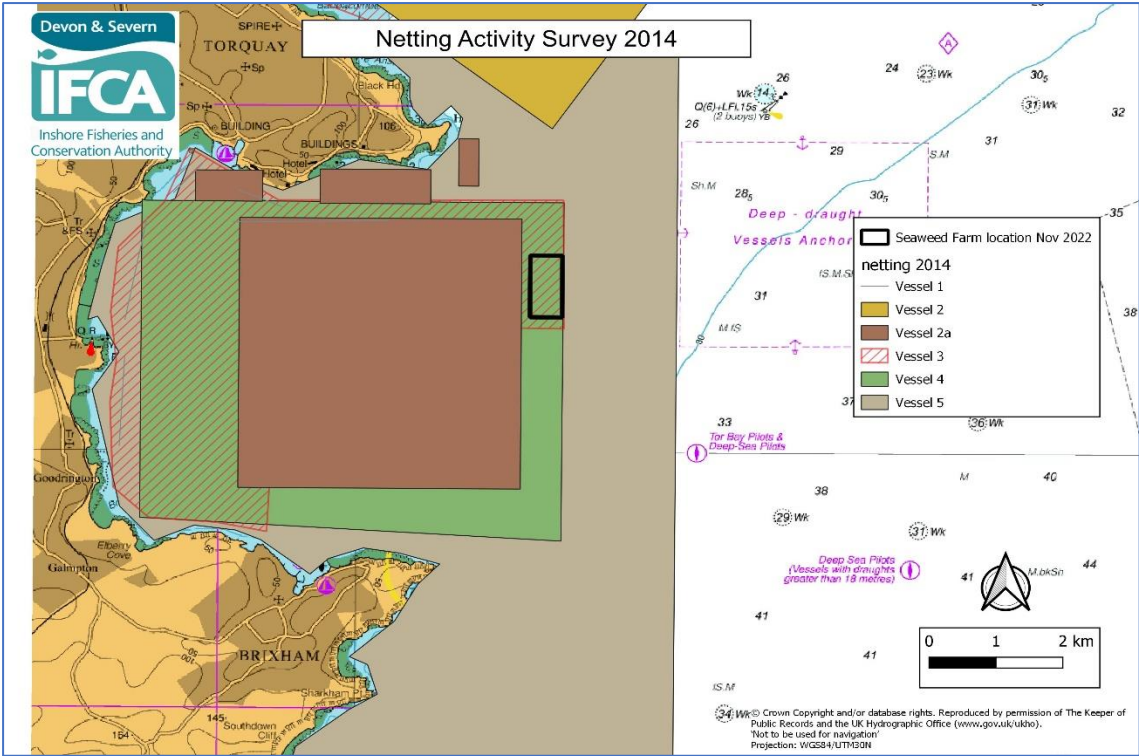


Figure 1 Netting Activity 2014

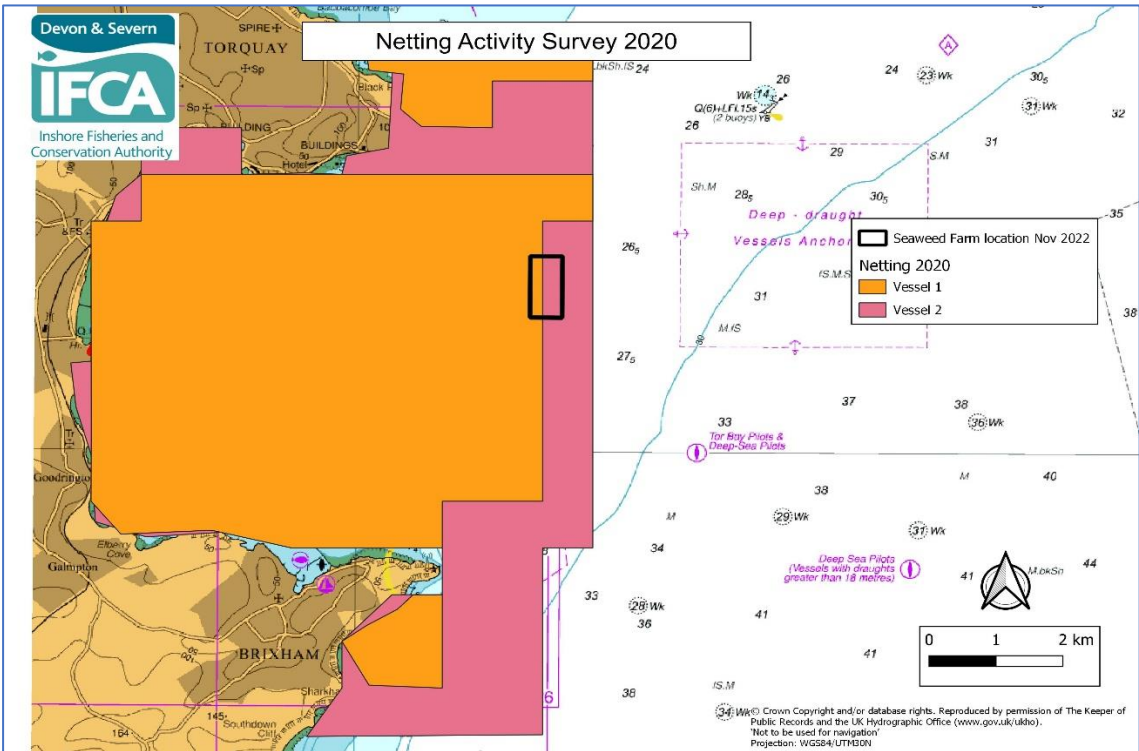


Figure 2 Netting Activity 2020

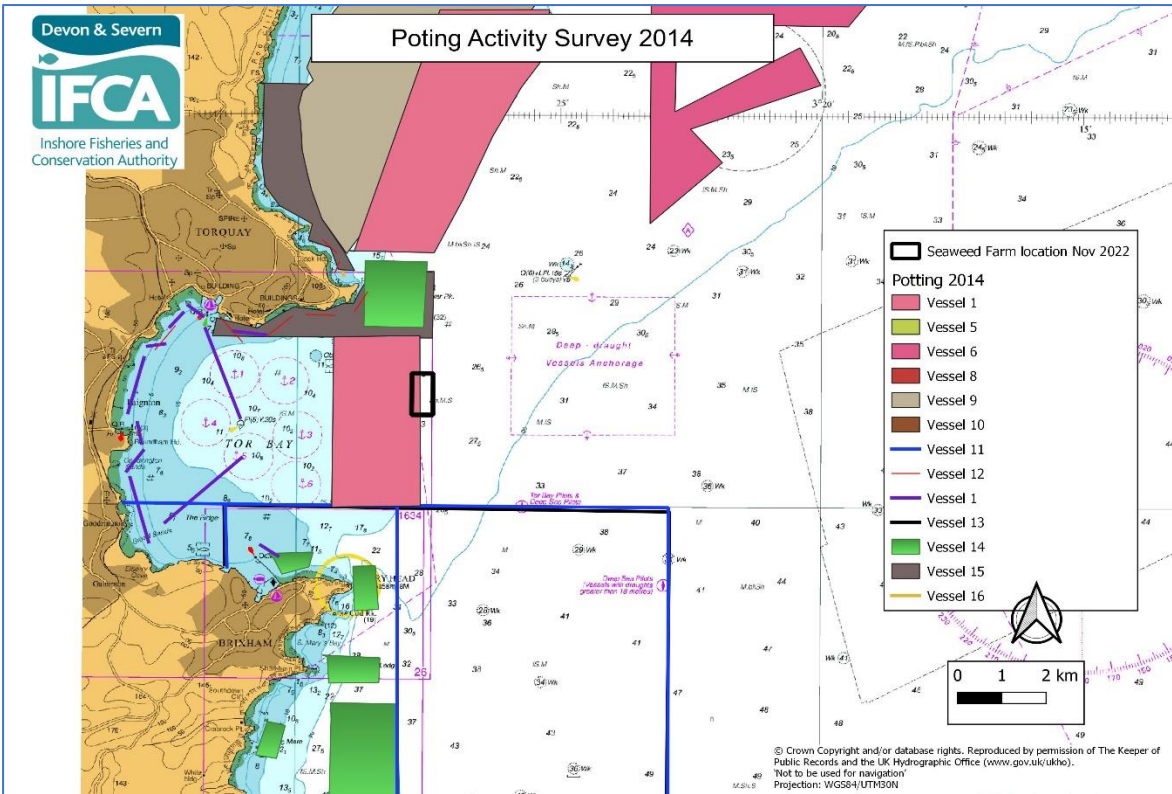


Figure 3 Potting Activity 2014

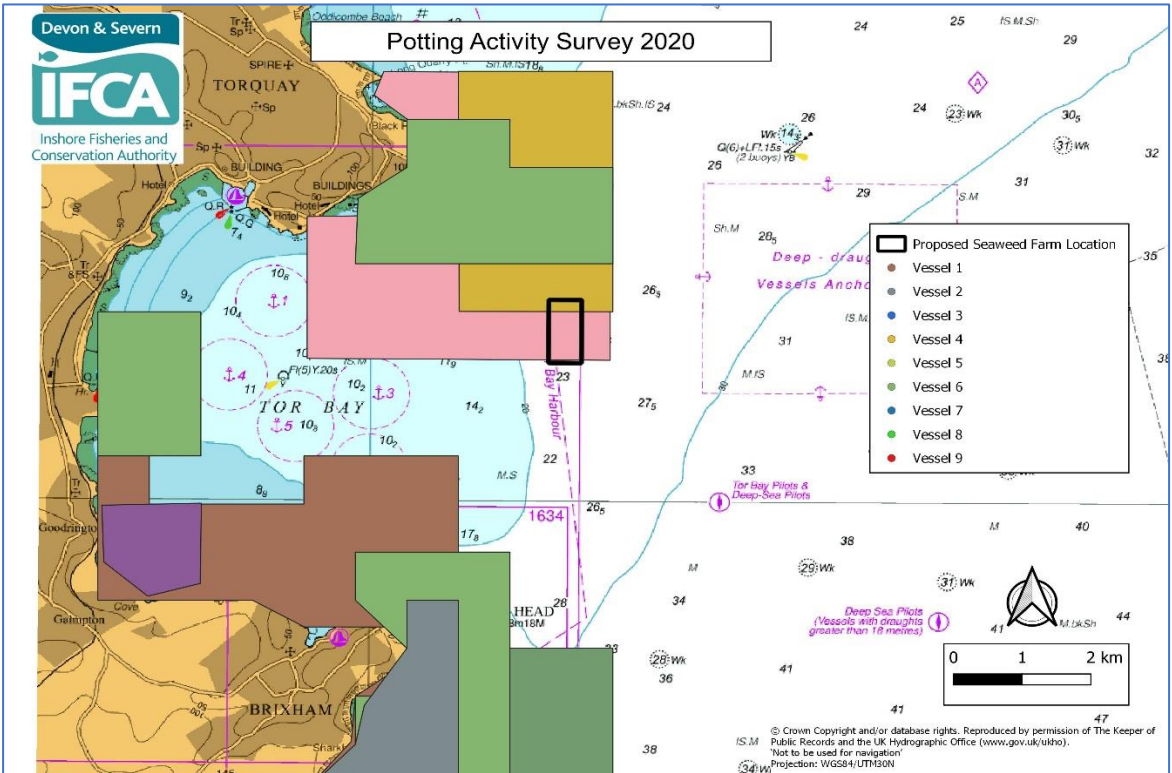


Figure 4 Potting Activity 2020

D&S IFCA notes in Biome's response to the MMO analysis, Biome discusses Figure 1 presented in that document. This is a chart produced by D&S IFCA and shows pings of vessels travelling between 2-4 knots and therefore indicative of fishing. Biome's response claims that 'the pings can more likely to be attributed to transiting vessels (above 4-6 knots)'. This is not in fact the case as they show 2-4 knot pings.

Figure 5 shows slightly zoomed in version of this chart (Figure 1) in Biome's response for vessels travelling between 2-4 knots. It is very clear that there is a great deal of demersal towed gear activity in South Devon. The areas without pings inside D&S IFCA's District are those not accessible to demersal towed gear such as areas where demersal gear is prohibited under D&S IFCA's Mobile Fishing Permit conditions and areas where wrecks are located. (It should also be pointed out that some vessels who use demersal gear may also use pots or nets and some pings may appear in closed areas for these vessels). It is very clear that inside the 6 nm boundary of South Devon demersal fishing is very important and displacement from one area to another is difficult and sometimes not possible.

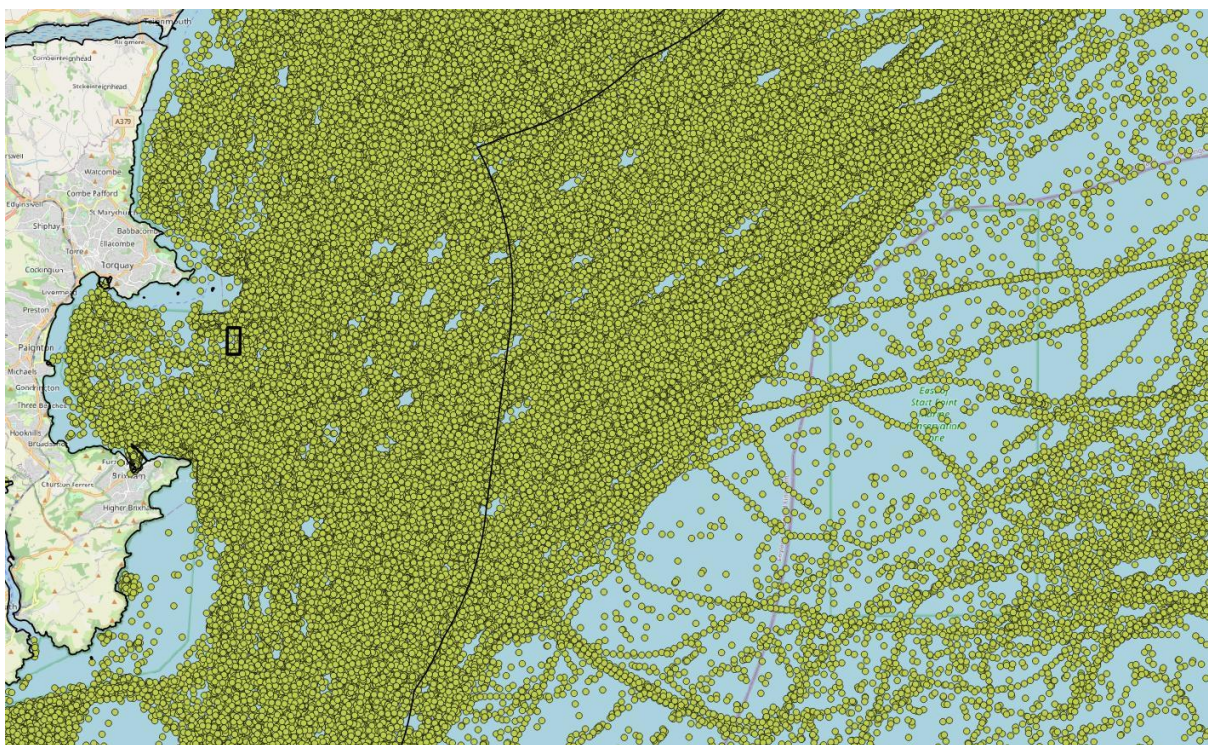


Figure 5 – IVMS pings 2019 for vessels travelling at 2-4 knots indicative of fishing

D&S IFCA appreciates that the size of the proposed farm is small compared to the size of the District or in fact the size of D&S IFCA's south Devon area, but South Devon is the busiest inshore area around England (of all the IFCA's) for demersal towed gear activity. D&S IFCA, through its analysis, identified 21 vessels using the proposed seaweed farm and travelling at 2-4 knots indicative of fishing activity. The response by Biomes appears to be suggest that the MMO's analysis and D&S IFCA's analysis is an overrepresentation of activity. D&S IFCA disagrees with this and in fact would say it is likely to be an underrepresentation and is based only on 4 years' data (August 2018 - November 2022) (not five years as stated in Biome's response), which included the COVID months/years. D&S IFCA would reiterate that fishing areas are returned to year on year by fishers and there will be changes in the level and exact

location of tows. Fishers will log their previous tows and return to the general area where they have found fishing productive. This fact has been largely overlooked by the applicant.

Biome's response – point 5 - suggests that D&S IFCA has only used 0-6 knots to indicate fishing. This is not the case and D&S IFCA has maintained its use of IVMS pings of 2-4 knots to indicate fishing and using these parameters has identified 21 mobile gear vessels that use the area. Biome states that charts showing the analysis of data by MMO show transiting of vessels. This may be the case in some areas and vessels will travel at speeds over 4 knots and likely over 6 knots. The analysis for IVMS across the site shows that vessels were travelling at slower speeds indicative of fishing. Biome has also raised concern that an area larger than the farm site was shown in charts produced by the MMO and D&S IFCA. It is important to show an area larger than the site to show the pattern of fishing.

D&S IFCA appreciates that Biome is keen to locate a seaweed farm just outside the harbour limits of Torbay, and that Biome highlights the infrastructure available to service the farm. However, D&S IFCA does not agree that the location in this part of South Devon is appropriate due to the impacts it will have not only on the demersal fishing fleet but on other fishing sectors as highlighted in Figures 1-4. D&S IFCA has spoken to the applicant and suggested an area south of the Breakwater in the Plymouth Sound. The applicant is keen to locate a farm in the area suggested and this is supported by the Interim Chief Executive of the Plymouth Marine Park, Elaine Hayes. This area would be more appropriate than Torbay as there is no demersal towed gear in this area and limited potting away from the Breakwater. There is also very good infrastructure in the port / harbours of Plymouth to service the site and the academic institutions of the University of Plymouth, Plymouth Marine Laboratory and Marine Biological Association, who may be interested in research opportunities around the farm, are located in Plymouth.

Biome has suggested potential changes to the aspect of the farm to be rotated 20 degrees. D&S IFCA does not believe this mitigates the impact of the farm on the fishing industry as it suggests that demersal vessels will always only follow exact tows on each fishing trip. The level of impact is likely to be the same to the fishers for a rotated farm location. With the knowledge of demersal gear vessels' fishing patterns and behaviour, D&S IFCA does not think it is appropriate to analyse the data to arrive at the fishing days per hectare to be used to calculate a reduction in the size of the farm that would mitigate the impact on the fishing industry.

Biome has pointed out that it received the information on fishing activity late in the process. D&S IFCA provided information from IVMS and submitted this as part of the consultation responses and therefore was available for consideration by the applicant.

D&S IFCA is also aware of the importance of the SW Marine Plan and that it is an enabling mechanism to find efficient use of space and the opportunities for co-existence in areas of high concentrations of activity. However, with the proposed location being in such a busy area with many different marine users using the space, in particular the fishing industry and the concerns regarding the impact to the different fishing sectors using the area, D&S IFCA reaffirms that it does not consider the location proposed for a seaweed farm as a suitable opportunity for co-existence.