



**D&S IFCA's Additional  
Response to Marine Licence  
Application for a seaweed farm in  
Torbay  
MLA/2022/00183**

**24<sup>th</sup> November 2022**

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 responding to MLA/2022/00183 for a proposed seaweed farm in Tor Bay.

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 previously responded to the first consultation on the seaweed farm and provided information on the level of potting and netting activity in the site – see Annex 1. It is clear from the charts in Annex 1 that netting and potting do take place in the location of the farm. Unfortunately, D&S IFCA does not have any more up to date information on the levels of potting and any changes since 2020. The survey in 2020 did not have a good level of response – even less than those responding in the 2014 survey. It may be that the levels of netting and potting have increased since this time, as these charts are an under representation of the level of effort due to the low level of survey returns by fishers. D&S IFCA is not aware that the applicant has contacted fishers operating these gear types in Torbay - most of the fishers in this area are not members of the South Devon and Channel Shellfishermen's Association, which has been contacted by the applicant. Potters and netters operating in Tor Bay may be located not only in Brixham, but in Torquay, Paignton, Teignmouth and Dartmouth and potentially further afield. The level of netting in particular will vary depending on the when particular species come into the Bay and also depending on quota allocation of quota species.

D&S IFCA provided some charts of mobile gear (trawling / dredging) fishing activity to the applicant in early 2022. It was clear from the charts that there was some trawling or scalloping in the area. The data previously analysed were for 2019 only, and D&S IFCA did point this out to the applicant that activity may change year on year and that further information from fishers would be beneficial to assess the fishing activity in the site. The applicant, as part of their Fisheries Assessment submitted to the MMO, has included the information D&S IFCA provided. Also included are AIS data shown in Figure 8 of this Fisheries Assessment. Many of the vessels operating in the area may not have AIS fitted and therefore their activity would not be shown in the vessel density data. Figure 9 of the Fisheries Assessment also shows the movement of vessels as moderate to high in the vicinity of the proposed farm location even though the text in the document suggests that it is an area of relatively lower traffic. It should be noted that Tor Bay is a very busy area not only for fishing vessels but all other vessels operating out and into the three ports located in it. The applicant has acknowledged the potential impact of the initial site for the proposed farm on page 16 of the Fisheries Assessment and has moved the proposed site to the south (Figure 10 of the applicant's Fisheries Assessment) to try and mitigate and avoid the impact of the vessels identified as fishing in the initial site in 2019. The applicant has summarised that the proposed siting of the farm will not

significantly impact fisheries activities in the area. However, as previously highlighted to the applicant, the IVMS data charts provided to the applicant were for one year only and that is likely that the activity may differ year on year. With this in mind D&S IFCA submitted a DPA request to the MMO for all IVMS data from mid-2018 to November 2022 for its current list of Mobile Fishing Permit Holders. Some members of the fishing industry contacted D&S IFCA and requested that the IVMS data for the proposed location were analysed as these fishers expressed concerns about the proposed farm location and that the area is used by mobile fishing vessels. The MMO provided the IVMS data and D&S IFCA has analysed the data for this extended time period. The following charts show the use of the site by Mobile fishing vessels between 2018 and 2022

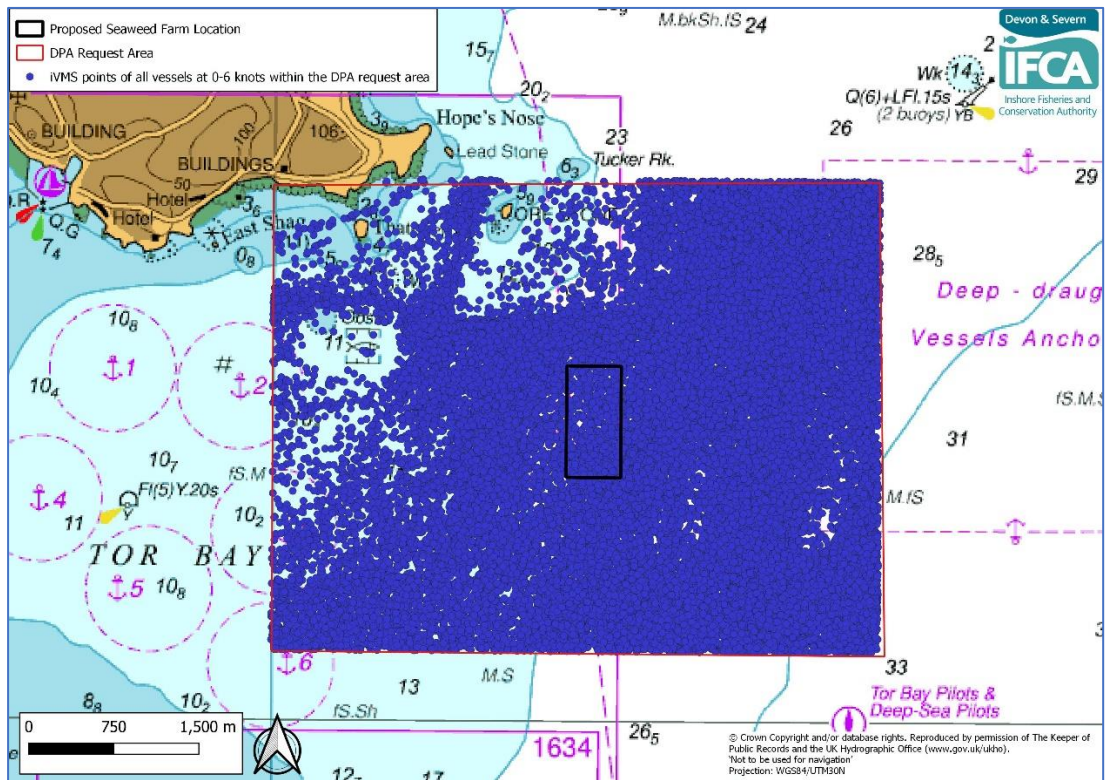


Chart A – IVMS data points of all vessels with D&S IFCA Mobile Fishing Permits travelling at speed between 0 and 6 knots within a boundary area used for a DPA request to MMO for these data

Chart A shows the position of IVMS data points/pings (3–10-minute pings rate as requested) of all D&S IFCA Mobile Fishing permit holders that were recorded within a box used to make a DPA requested to the MMO for these data. The DPA request asked for all data for vessels at speed of 0-6 knots within the DPA box. The data records 72 vessels have travelled between 0-6 knots within the box. Some vessels recorded in the DPA box may not have pings in the proposed seaweed farm location (shown as a black rectangle). These data were further analysed to filter out those vessels that were operating at speeds less than 2 knots and over 4 knots, as the speed range of 2-4 knots suggests fishing towing speeds. Vessels operating over 4 knots may not be fishing but traversing the site instead. Vessels travelling under 2 knots are not likely to be towing but maybe be sorting or clearing trawl nets or dredges.

Chart B shows the data that has been filtered for vessel operating at speeds between 2-4 knots within the DPA request box. These data include vessels that do not have pings within the seaweed farm area.

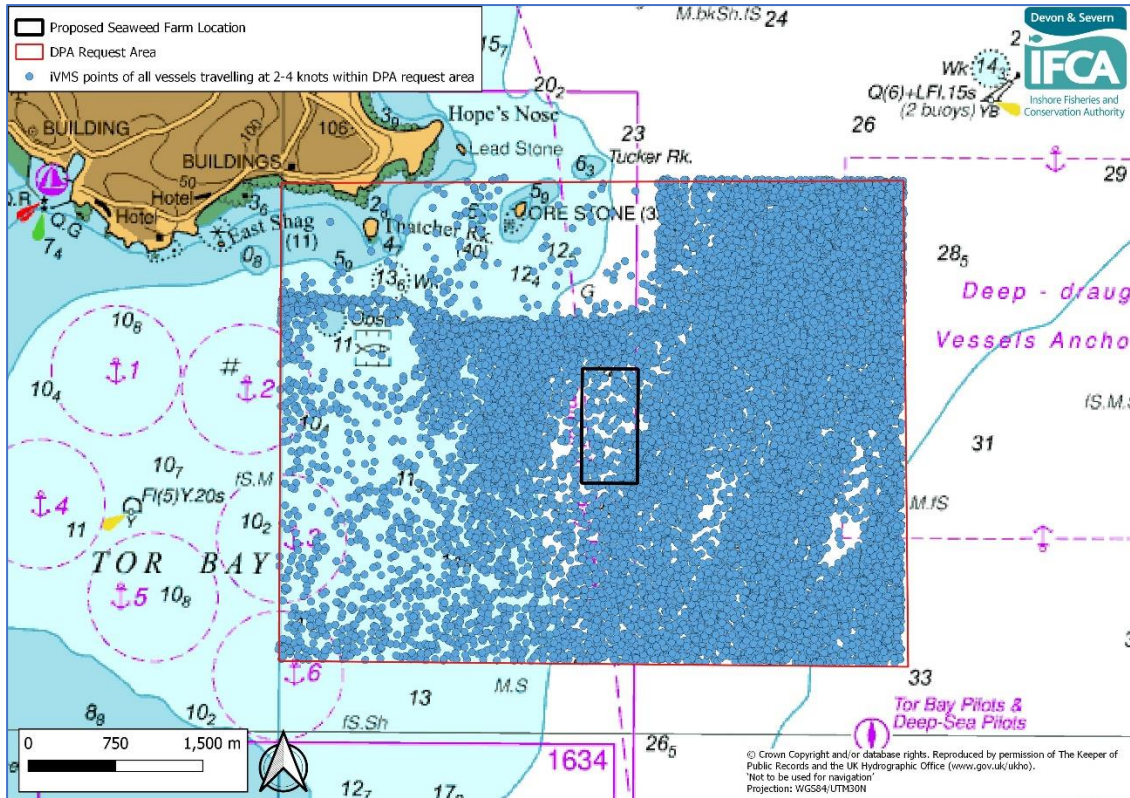


Chart B – IVMS data points of all vessels with D&S IFCA Mobile Fishing Permits travelling between 2 and 4 knots within a boundary area used for a DPA request to MMO for these data.

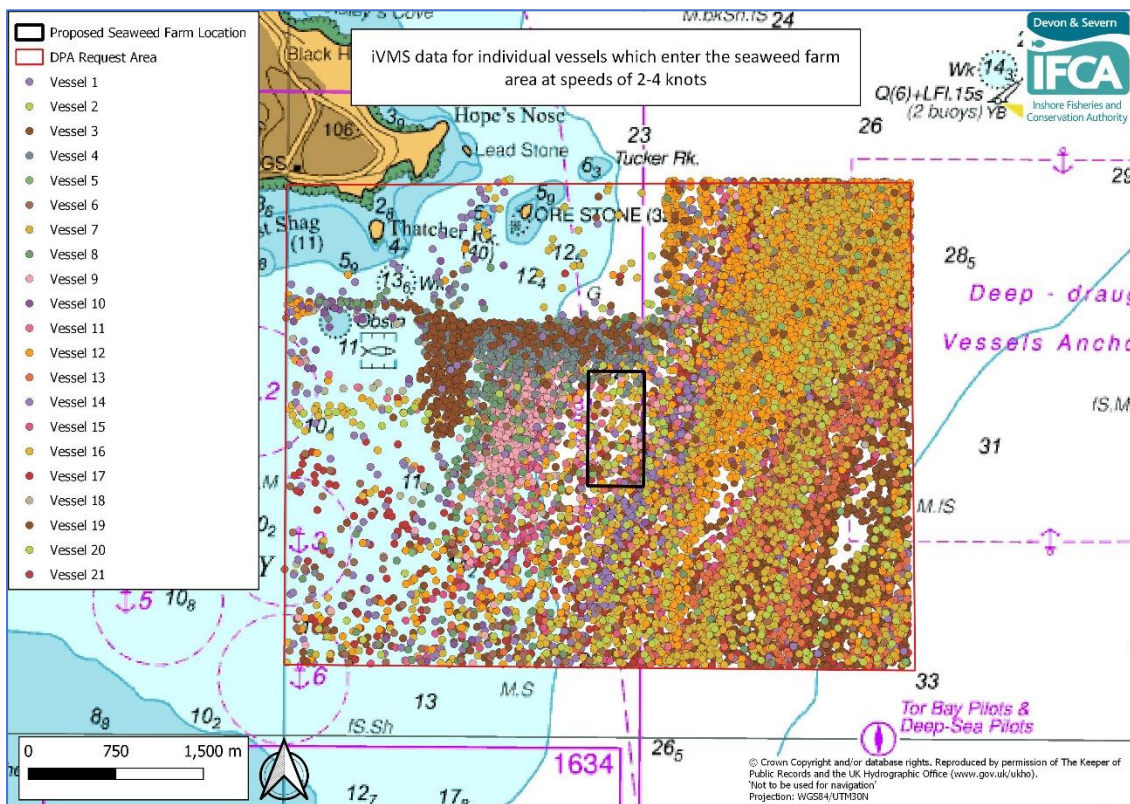


Chart C – IVMS data points of 21 individual vessels with D&S IFCA Mobile Fishing Permits travelling between 2 and 4 knots within the proposed seaweed farm location

Chart C shows that 21 individual vessels had IVMS pings recoded as data points in the seaweed farm proposed location. The data were filtered to only record those vessels in the proposed location travelling between 2-4 knots which suggests mobile gear fishing speed. The data points for these vessels are shown both inside and outside the proposed seaweed farm location to identify likely fishing activity. This chart shows clearly there is a lot of activity of vessels traveling at likely fishing speeds of 2-4 knots not only in the proposed farm area but very close to and in the vicinity of the site. It is clear from the above charts that this part of the Tor Bay is busy with fishing vessels travelling or operating within it.

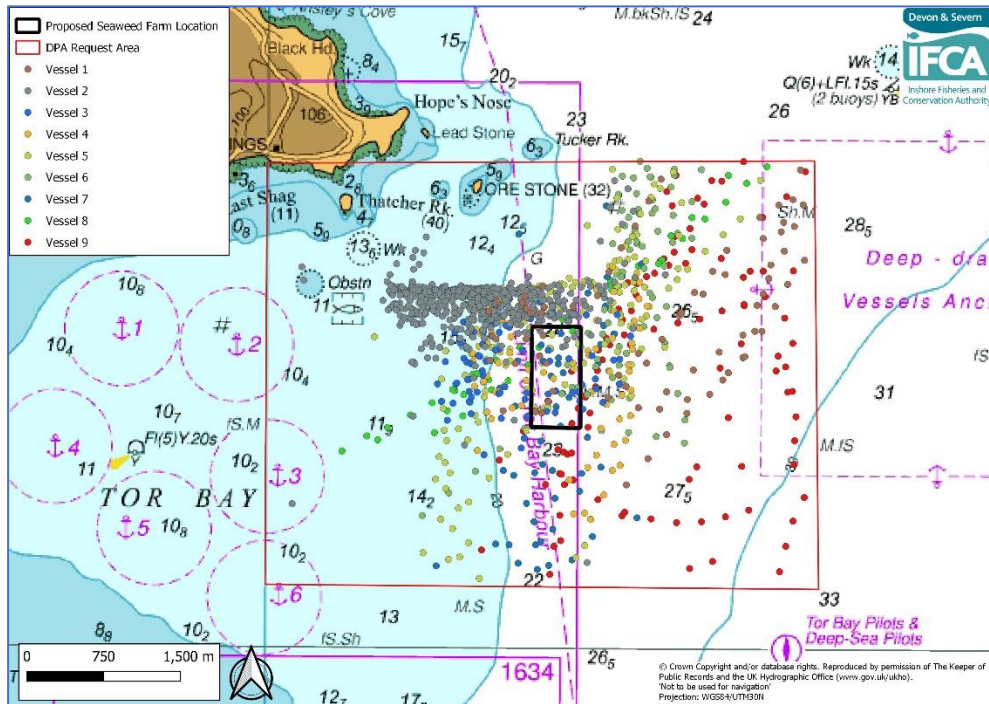


Chart D – IVMS data points of 9 individual vessels with D&S IFCA Mobile Fishing Permits on days operating between 2 and 4 knots within the proposed seaweed farm location

Chart D shows the data points of nine vessels, which on closer analysis appeared to indicate a clear pattern of fishing within the site at some point over the time period of the data. From the IVMS data some of these appeared to be fishing regularly in the site whilst other less regularly (once or twice over the period). Some of the vessels appear to have started or ended their tows within the site whilst other tow across the site having started/finished their tows outside the site.

The IVMS data, for four of the individual vessels who operated within the site (included in Chart D) are shown as examples of the vessels' activity in the following charts E, F, G and H

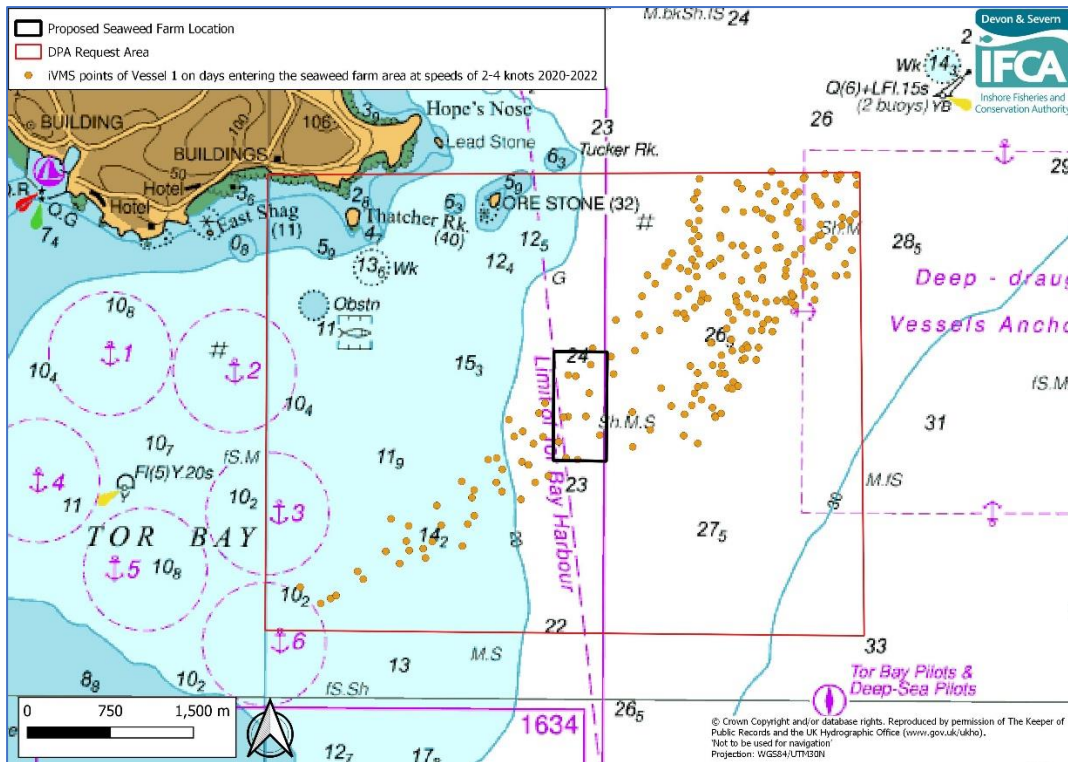


Chart E - IVMS data points of vessel 1 on days operating within the proposed seaweed farm location at speeds of 2 to 4 knots 2020-2022

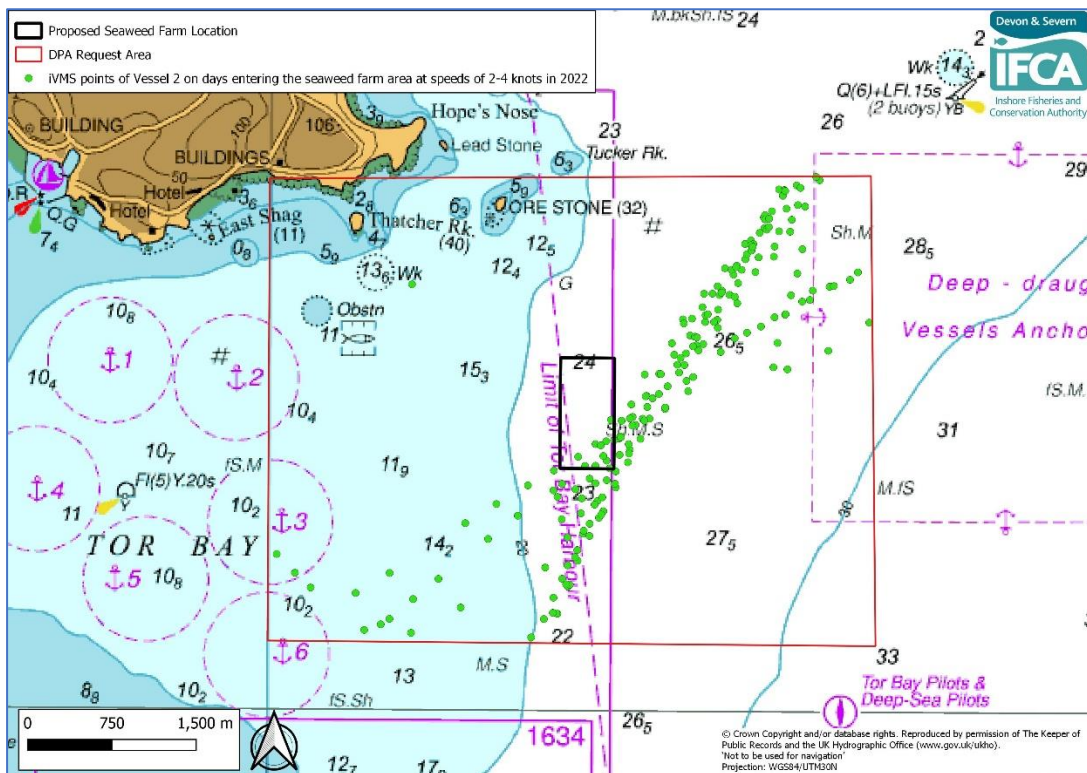


Chart F - IVMS data points of vessel 2 on days operating within the proposed seaweed farm location at speeds of 2 to 4 knots in 2022

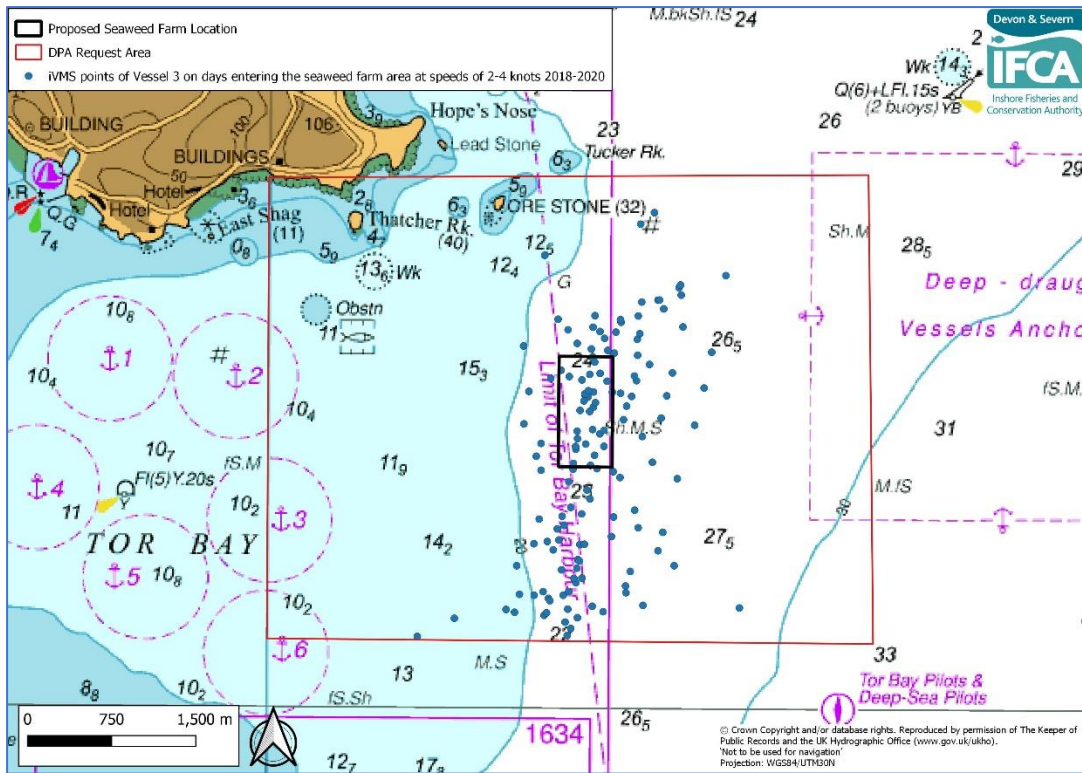


Chart G - IVMS data points of vessel 3 on days operating within the proposed seaweed farm location at speeds of 2 to 4 knots in 2018-2020

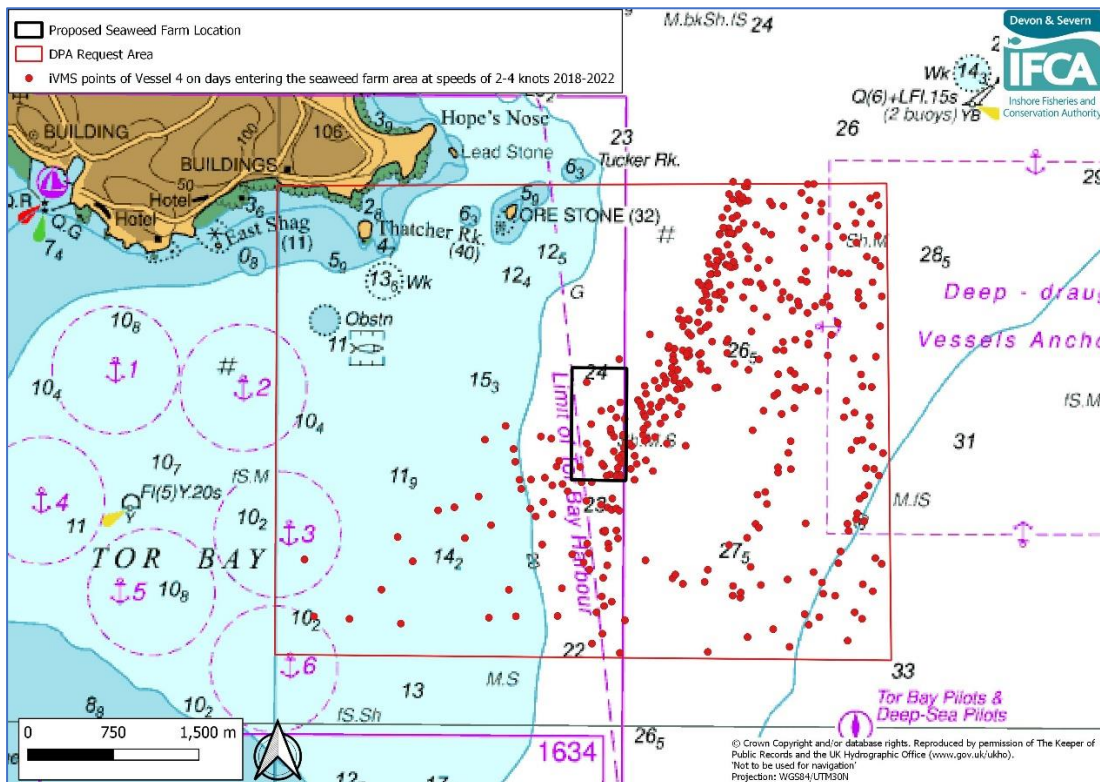


Chart H - IVMS data points of vessel 4 on days operating within the proposed seaweed farm location at speeds of 2 to 4 knots in 2018-2022

The above charts and analysis of data indicate that 21 vessels were recorded as having IVMS pings within the proposed seaweed farm location operating at speeds of between 2 and 4 knots. Some of the data points for these vessels indicate a clear pattern of mobile gear fishing

as shown for 9 vessels in Chart D and examples of individual vessel data in Charts E-H. It is important to note the regularity of likely fishing activity within the proposed seaweed farm location is different for each vessel and for each year. The data suggest that this area is important for some mobile gear vessels. There are limitations in the use of the data. By defining a DPA request area box (which helps limit the amount of data that are provided by the MMO and subsequently to be analysed by D&S IFCA) means that the full tows of the vessels cannot be mapped and joining data points in relation to vessel speed is not possible for the whole tows. This would give a clear pattern of fishing inside and outside of the site and discern more clearly the start and end of tows. However, having the increased level of data for the extended time period provided through the DPA request has allowed for further analysis by D&S IFCA and clearly suggests that fishing activity does take place in the area. The applicant looked to mitigate impacts by moving the seaweed farm proposed location slightly to the south of the original location based on the 2019 data only. The analysis of data covering an extended period shows that the new proposed location is still likely to impact mobile gear vessels as well as other fishing sectors.

D&S IFCA has previously raised several concerns regarding the location of the proposed seaweed farm in the Tor Bay area especially in relation to the level of commercial fishing and commercial and recreational activities that take place in Tor Bay and has suggested further engagement with the fishing industry to inform the impact of the site to the fishing industry. Mobile gear (trawling and dredging) vessels are prohibited, under D&S IFCA's Mobile Fishing Permit conditions, from operating in large areas of the D&S IFCA's District due to the presence of many Marine Protected Areas and the designated features within them. In fact, 40% of the South Devon part of the D&S IFCA's District has a prohibition to demersal towed gear which limits the ability of the inshore fleet to be displaced elsewhere with the D&S IFCA's District.

Sarah Clark  
Deputy Chief Officer  
D&S IFCA



Annex 1

Charts 1-3 show the location of potting and netting activities (in 2014) in and around this area together with a chart of the boundary of the Torbay MCZ and Torbay Part of the Lyme Bay and Torbay SAC, current mariculture sites within the area and Annexes 1-8 of D&S IFCA's Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw which shows areas closed and open to demersal fishing gear. The netting and potting surveys undertaken in 2014 across the district (Figures 2 and 3) had an approximate 35-40% return from fishers and therefore this is not a true representation of these activities. The charts are provided below Figures 1-3.

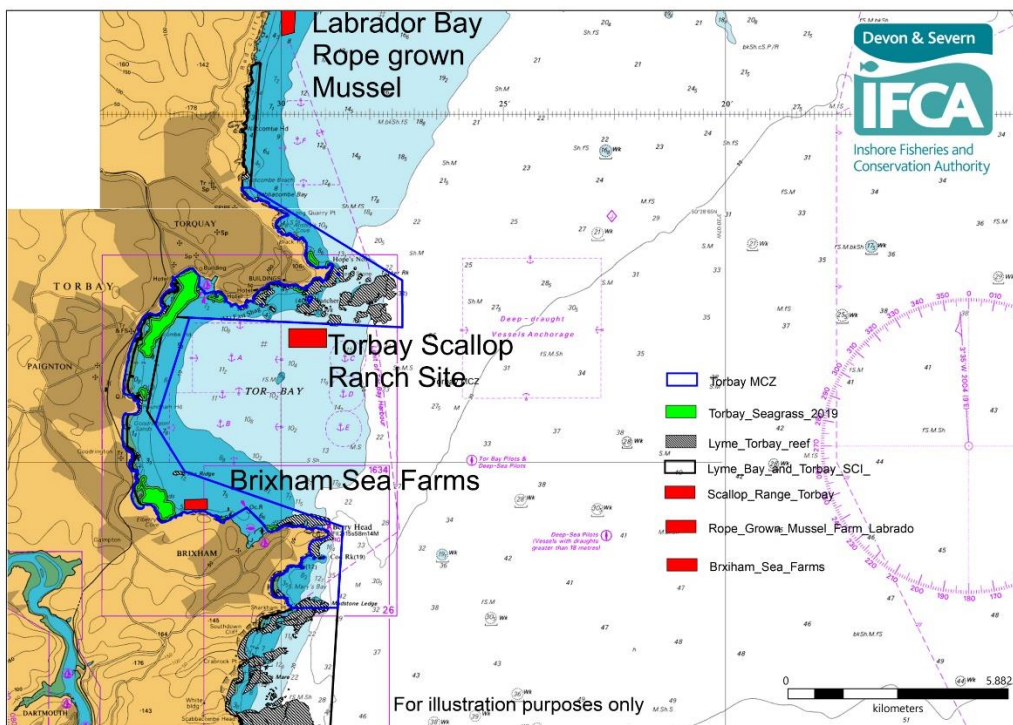


Figure 1 Mariculture sites and MPA boundaries in Tor Bay

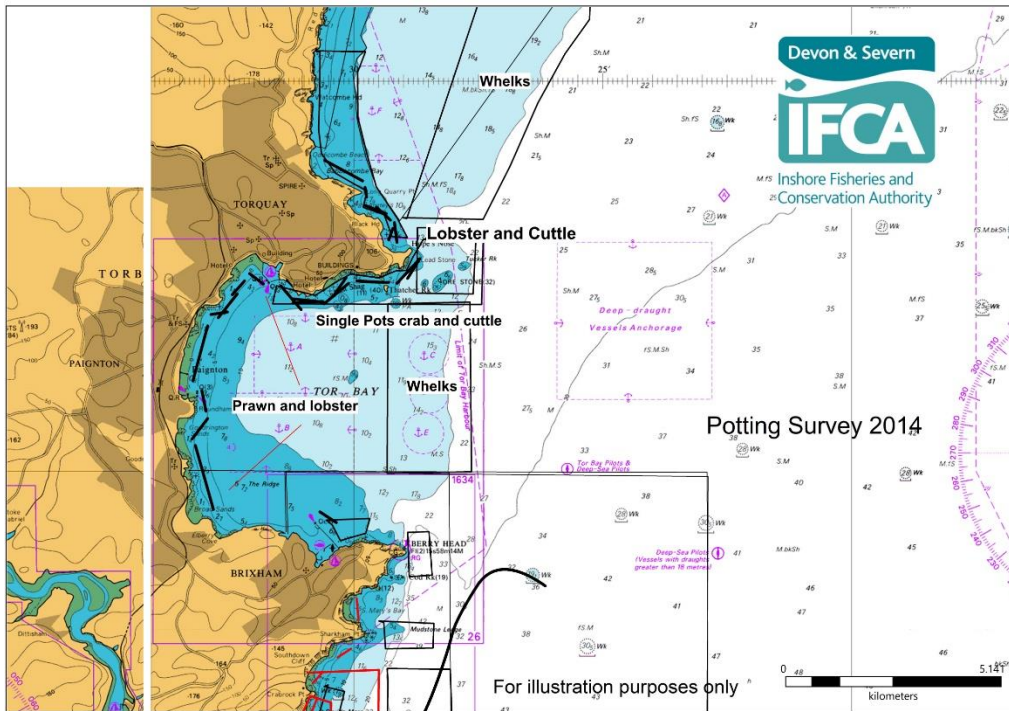


Figure 2 Potting Effort Survey 2014

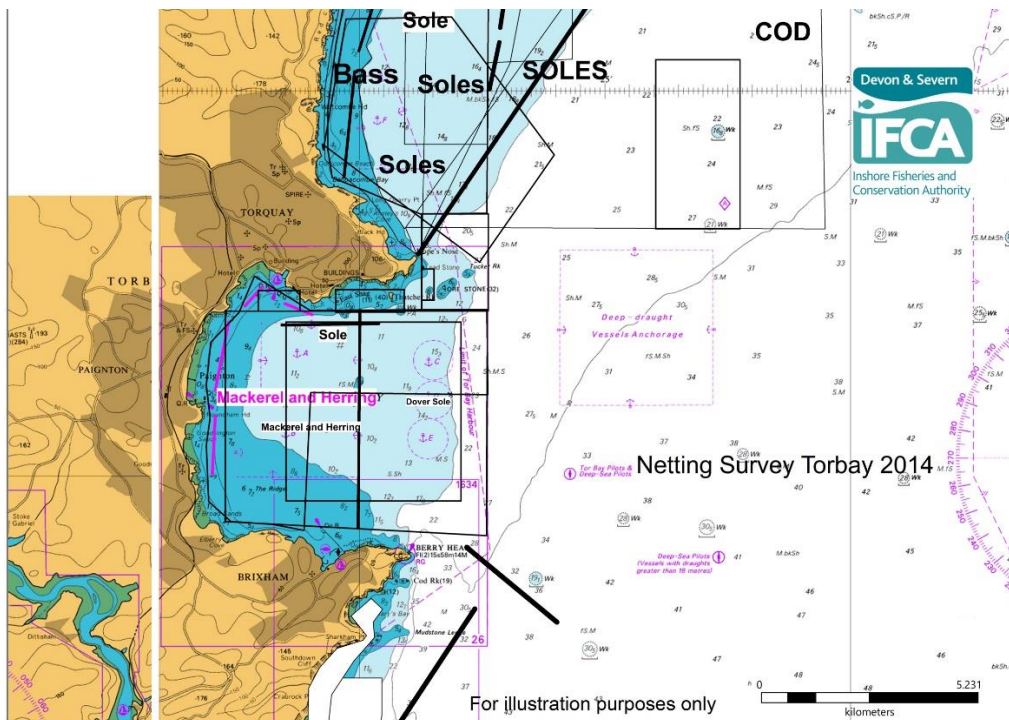


Figure 3 Netting Effort Survey 2014



Annex 1-8 July  
2020.pdf

D&S IFCA Mobile Fishing Permit Annexes:

Charts 4 & 5 show a follow the results of information from fisher on their fishing activity in 2020. Unfortunately, the response to this survey was less than that in 2014.

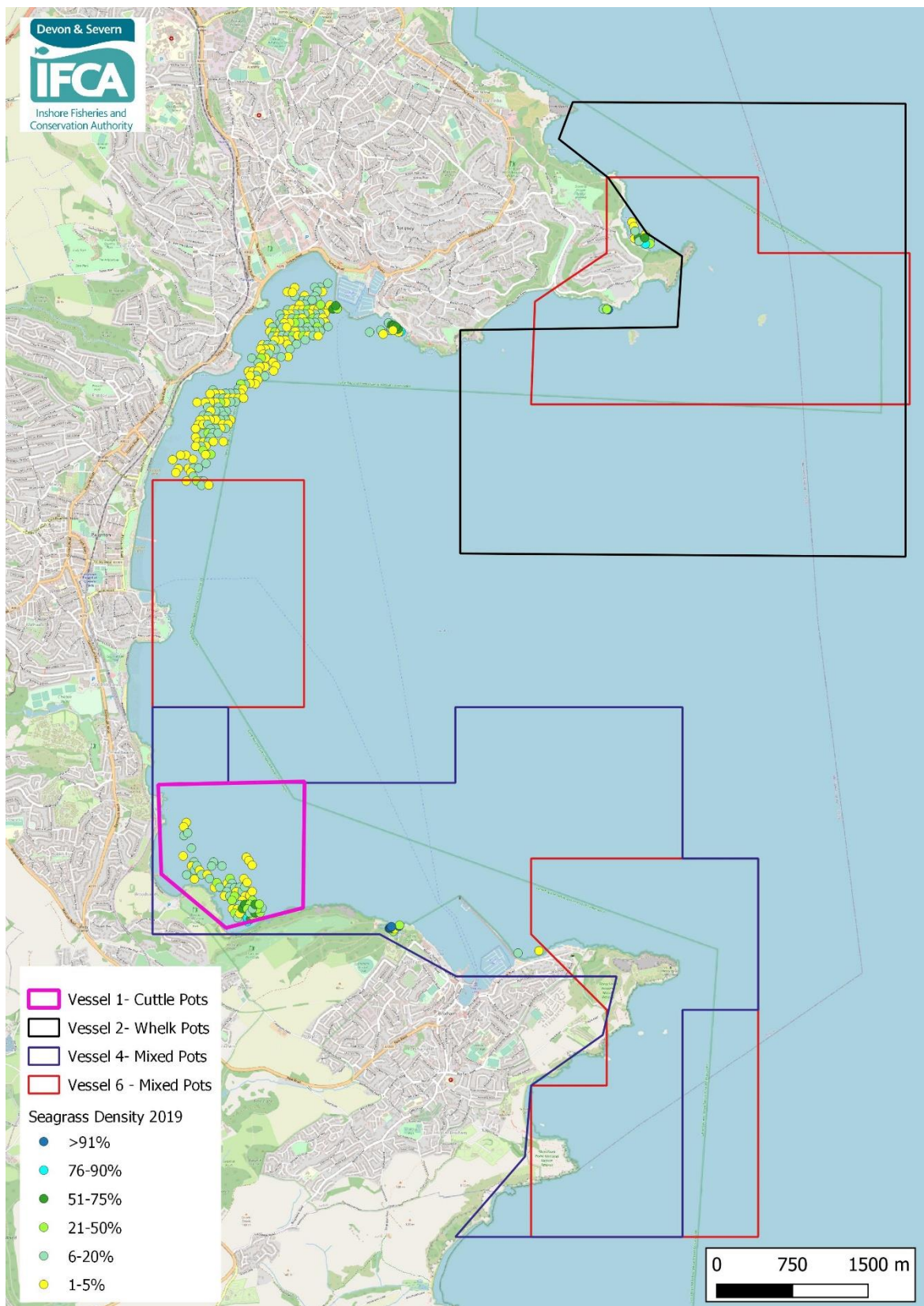


Figure 4 Potting Activity from fishers returns 2020

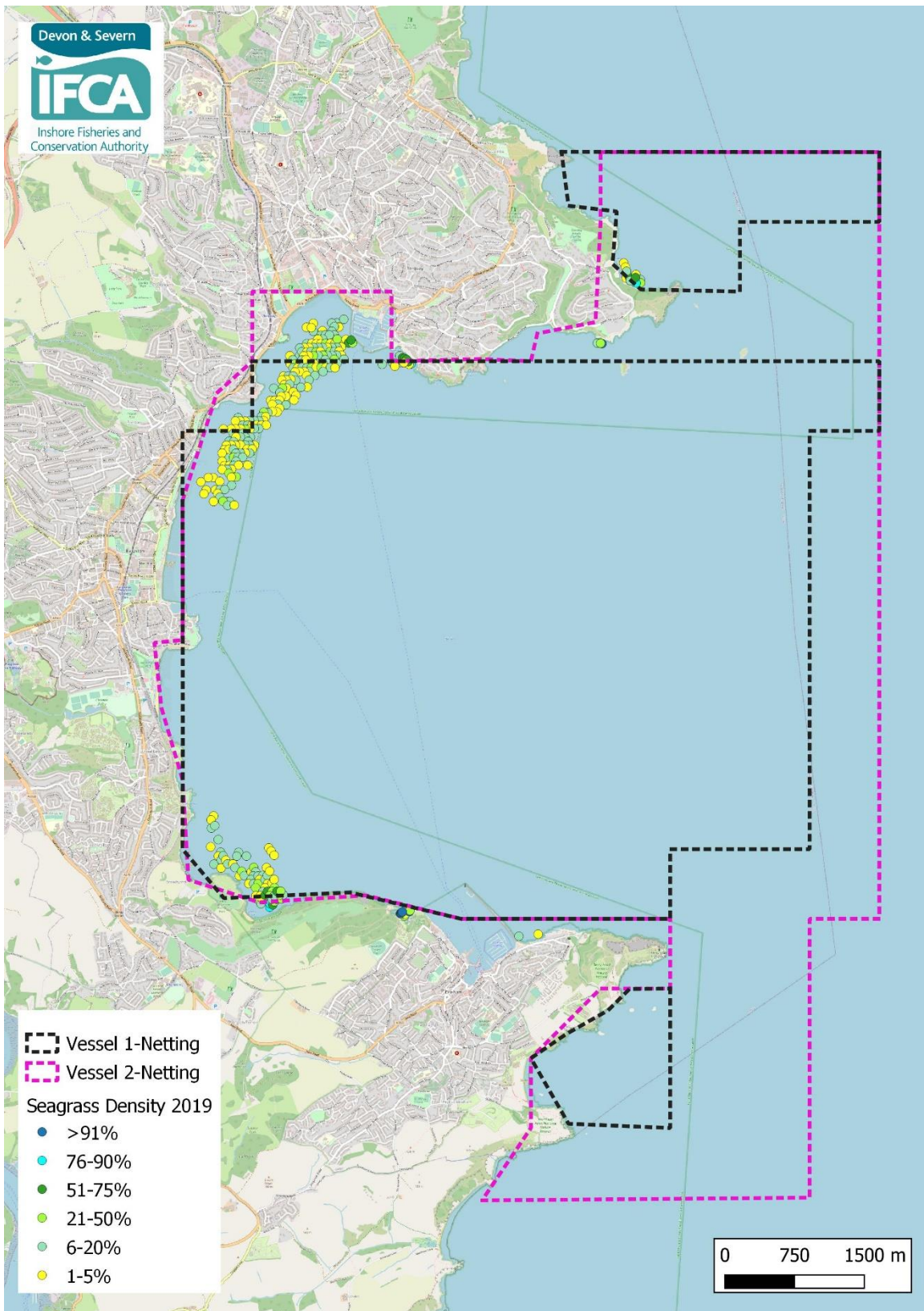


Figure 5 Netting Activity from fishers returns 2020