



## Morecambe Bay Cockle Fisheries 2016-17



**Cockle Fishery open to NWIFCA Permit Holders from  
November 7th 2016 to April 30th 2017**



# The Biology of the Cockle



The Common Cockle

The common cockle (*Cerastoderma edule*) grows to 5cm long and lives 2 to 4 years in NW England. It is found from Norway to West Africa in the sands of sheltered bays and estuaries. Through extended siphons (tubes) cockles filter minute plankton and organic particles for food while the shell hides buried in the sand. Crabs, fish and birds as well as people all eat cockles. Temperature changes trigger spawning between March and August in the UK. The tiny cockle larvae are dispersed in the

plankton for weeks or months until they land on suitable sand anytime from May to September. Once settled the larvae transform into tiny cockles called spat.

In Morecambe Bay, the number of cockles surviving to adulthood is highly variable and unpredictable because they are affected by many factors including climate, currents, stormy weather, food availability, geographical location and cockle density.

When stocks are plentiful, cockle gathering is of great importance to the local economy.



Traditional cockle fishing using jumbos and riddles

# This Cockle Fishery

This year, for only the second time in 8 years, there are sufficient stocks for the NWIFCA to authorise the opening of some cockle fisheries in Morecambe Bay. The NWIFCA Science Team surveyed many areas of the Bay and found enough large cockles at Pilling and Leven to allow fisheries to be opened. The survey reports are on our website. Gathering is permitted on any tide, seven days a week.



A Jumbo

This fishery has control measures to ensure small cockles are protected, the saltmarsh habitat is not damaged and to avoid excessive disturbance to protected bird populations.

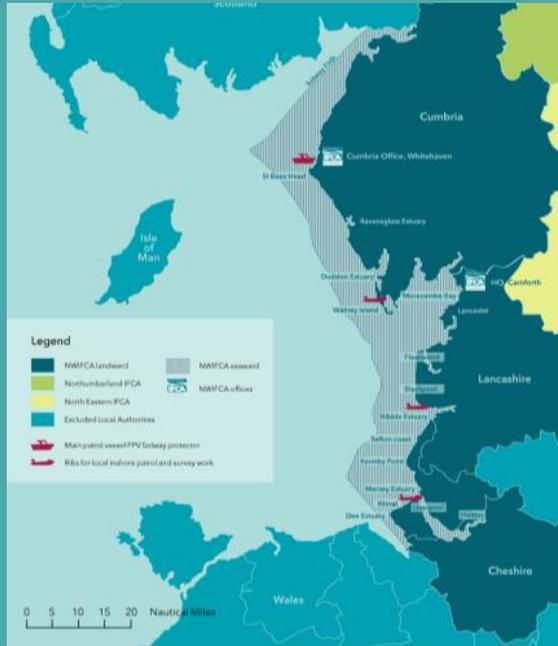
- ◆ To limit the amount of fishing, gatherers must have a permit (NWIFCA Byelaw 3). There is a strict application process and a waiting list for permits.
- ◆ The cockles must be riddled on the beach so only those big enough are removed leaving small cockles to grow and breed. The law states that the cockle must not fit through a 20x20mm square hole in an official gauge.
- ◆ Access to the beaches must be on foot, quad bike or tractor via a single access point. At Pilling Sands the access point is the slip way at Fluke Hall Lane. At Leven Island the access point is the end of Moor Lane at West Plain.

# About Us

Around the coast of England 10 Inshore Fisheries & Conservation Authorities (IFCAs) are responsible for the sustainable management of the sea. The North Western IFCA district extends from Scotland to Wales and out to 6 nautical miles offshore.

IFCA members are: Councillors from coastal local authorities who provide much of the funding and; experts from sectors that use the sea such as fishermen, environmental groups and scientists. The Marine Management Organisation, Environment Agency and Natural England are statutory members. This local management and funding

structure is designed to give decision making about how the sea is used to local people allowing them to play a key part in the protection and enhancement of their inshore marine environment.



## Contact Us

**NWIFCA**  
**1 Preston Street**  
**Carnforth**  
**Lancashire**  
**LA5 9BY**  
**01524 727 970**

**[office@nw-ifca.gov.uk](mailto:office@nw-ifca.gov.uk)**  
**[www.nw-ifca.gov.uk](http://www.nw-ifca.gov.uk)**



Authors: NWIFCA Science Team & A. Graham. Content correct as of 03/11/2016