

## **NWIFCA Prospecting Policy for Byelaw 3 Permit Holders**

### **1. Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to outline the procedures and regulations for Byelaw 3 permit holders who wish to prospect closed cockle beds within the NWIFCA district to assess cockle quantities, quality and size prior to a potential fishery. This policy ensures that all prospecting activities are conducted legally and sustainably, in compliance with Byelaw 3. It includes the necessary steps for making a request for authorisation to prospect, the required information to be provided, and the conditions under which samples may be taken.

Adherence to this policy means that Authority officers will then be willing to consider whether any such prospecting activities can be exempted from the prohibition of fishing closed cockle beds under Byelaw 3, and authorisation provided accordingly. Failure to follow all aspects of this policy may result in the Authority determining that the individual(s) concerned were in breach of Byelaw 3 and, if so, appropriate enforcement action may be taken.

### **2. Authorisation Request Requirements**

Byelaw 3 permit holders must make a specific request for authorisation from the Authority prior to conducting any prospecting activities on closed cockle beds. Permit holders should submit their requests allowing for enough time for officers to receive, consider and respond to the request; it is recommended requests are submitted at least a week before the planned prospecting activity. These requests for authorisation can only be made using the designated form available on the Authority's website [here](#). Phone calls or emails to the Authority will not be accepted as form of request.

Authorisation from an officer of the Authority is required, regardless of whether those requesting it plan only to assess the state of the cockle beds or also wish to take a sample from said bed. Individuals wishing to take a sample must have strong justification for wishing to do so, and only appropriate quantities (by weight) must be requested.

### 3. Required Information

The following information must be included in a request to prospect:

- **Name of persons:** Persons involved in prospecting must only be those holding a current permit under Byelaw 3. All individuals involved in the prospecting activity must be named in the request, and must all be Byelaw 3 permit holders.
- **Proposed prospecting date and time:** The specific date, tide and time when prospecting is intended to take place. No prospecting will be authorised during hours of darkness, on weekends or on Bank Holidays.
- **Location and cockle bed:** The precise location and name of the cockle bed to be prospected.
- **Access and egress points:** The intended access and egress points for entering and leaving the cockle bed.
- **Reason for sample (if requested):** Any request to take a sample of cockles from a closed bed must be justified, and officers reserve the right to withhold authorisation for samples being taken.

### 4. Sample Collection

A request to take any cockle samples from a closed bed will only be authorised with justification for doing so. Ordinarily, a sample of a maximum of 1kg of cockles will be approved by the Authority; requests for sample sizes greater than 1kg will need strong justification and will only be approved by exception.

When authorised samples have been taken, the requesting permit holder must provide the Authority with details of the sample size collected and the GPS location of where it was collected.

Authority officers may place other conditions on approved prospecting activities as they see fit.

### 5. Movement Documents

All samples approved for collection that are over 5kg in size must have the appropriate movement documents in place, which can be obtained from relevant environmental health authority.

## **6. Use of Vehicles**

Prospectors may use of vehicles as a method of transport to and from the prospecting area. Where relevant, they must obtain a beach access permit from the relevant local authority to legally use a quad bike on the beach.

## **7. Permitted Equipment**

A Byelaw 3 permitted fisher who is prospecting under an authorisation may carry a rake or jumbo and a GPS device during prospecting. Any other equipment used or carried during the prospecting may be considered as being in contravention of Byelaw 3, and, if so, appropriate enforcement action may be taken.

## **8. Compliance**

Failure to comply with this policy, including the request for authorisation requirements, sample collection limitations, and equipment restrictions, may result in enforcement actions under Byelaw 3.

All prospectors are expected to adhere to the terms of this policy to ensure the sustainable management of cockle beds within the NWIFCA district.

*North Western Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority*

*February 2025*