

Code of Conduct Review Anglers & Bait Collectors Meeting



Agenda / Notes

19:00 Wednesday 29th November 2017

Location: Starcross Fishing & Cruising Club, Brunel Tower,
The Strand, Starcross, Exeter EX6 8PR

Attendees

Stephanie Clark, Exe Estuary Management Partnership
 Rowena Garne, Exe Estuary Management Partnership
 Sarah Clark, Devon and Severn Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority
 Stephanie Davies, Devon and Severn Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority
 Jason Ingham, Local Business
 Owen Perkins, Lower Exe Crab Tilers Association
 Graeme Smith, Teignbridge District Council
 Mike Spiller, Honiton Sea Angling Club / Angling Trust Wyvern Region
 Mike Western, Crab Tiling
 Graham Wills, Lymington Fisheries and Harbour Authority
 Myles Blood Smyth, Exmouth Mussels
 Russel Thompson, Starcross Fishing and Cruising Club
 Gary Bowden, Exmouth Sea Angling Association
 Nick Chandler, Exmouth Sea Angling Association
 John Astill, Starcross Fishing and Cruising Club
 Mike Whiting, Starcross Fishing and Cruising Club
 Kevin Rouse, Starcross Fishing and Cruising Club / Torbay & Babbacombe Association of Sea Anglers
 Roy Repton, Brixham Sea Anglers Club
 Kevin Melhuish, Crab collector
 Nigel Chappell, Exmouth Sea Angling Association
 Cliff Curd, Fishing

- 1. Housekeeping from Russell Thomson**
- 2. Introductions from all attendees**
- 3. Introduction to Review of Codes**

We already have codes for the Exe, which aim to provide users with all the information they need to undertake their chosen activity safely, without creating conflict with other users or wildlife. These are particularly useful for the Exe, where there are a wide range of different users, a number of which travel from outside of the area and potentially not linked to a particular club, or where multiple activities overlap.

However, some of our codes have not been updated over the last 10 years or so, and contain out of date information.

The EEMP has received a small pot of money to update and review the codes of conduct for the Exe. This gives us the opportunity to work with local clubs and users, to invite input into the codes to ensure they capture good practice that local clubs and user groups want to promote, and to make them best work for the Exe area.

We are not looking into any new restrictions, but will be making use of content from existing codes and good practice guidelines from local clubs and national recreational bodies to best promote safe and responsible practice on the Exe.

Several meetings have already taken place around the estuary, for a variety of users to discuss a common approach to these codes. Crab tilers have already provided a lot of input into this process, which has led to the updated text for the bait collectors code which we will be discussing today.

Q: Bait diggers can't use Wildlife Refuges but crab tilers can. This may cause conflict. Why has this decision been made?

A: This decision was made due to some of the crab tilers relying on this as an income. Also issues with moving crab tilers out of this area, whilst bait diggers can collect bait on the rest of the estuary – more mobile activity.

4. Discussion

a) Crab tilers & bait diggers

- Consensus for a combined bait collection code.
- Consensus for angling as a separate code.
- The 5m boundary from mussel beds needs to work both ways, we need commercial fisheries to respect this too.
- No bait digging at slipways, moorings and commercial fisheries.
- Collect bait two hours either side of low water.
- Make sure when making reference to Byelaw 24 it says "Devon and Severn IFCA's byelaw 24" in order to make it clear who's byelaw it is.
- Photos need updating, especially the front cover.

ACTION: IFCA to provide crab tile and crab tiler photos, and see if they have any additional photos that can be included.

- Bait collectors could provide image for plate 1.

ACTION: Bait diggers to look into possibility of providing an image for Plate 1.

- Only take crabs from tiles you own unless permission has been given by the owner.
- Take out "avoid wearing dark colours".
- Replace "Avoid digging in eelgrass" to "**Don't** dig in eelgrass".
- Include information on Chinese Mitten Crab and a hotline.

ACTION: IFCA to provide hotline contact details for reporting Chinese mitten crabs.

ACTION: IFCA to check Regulating Order and closing line for mobile fishing and mussels.

- Format of leaflet – happy with current size and layout.
- Does not need to be water resistant

b) Anglers

- Suggestion of sea anglers to be included in shore code. Consensus was yes for angling to be included in shore code.

ACTION: SC to draft shore code content and get feedback from anglers.

- Dog walking has been suggested as separate code.

c) Shellfish collection

- Oyster Collection at Generals Lane Slipway is causing issues.
- Would like information on policing commercial aspect of shellfish collection.
- To text regarding hand gathering and commercial gathering in shore code. Something along the lines of: "No commercial collecting of shellfish (or oysters, mussels and cockles) without permits OR permission from IFCA / relevant bodies".
- Include necessary contact details.
- Oysters are considered non-native species by Natural England.

Myles Blood Smyth Discussion

- There is a commercial aspect to my business.
- Employ nine people.
- Don't want to get any bigger as I feel my business is an appropriate size for the estuary.
- Maywater in 2014 wiped out shellfish on Exe.
- Attempted to work with RSBP and Natural England to reinstate mussel beds in some areas.
- The conflict in my opinion between the mussel business and crab tilers is accidental – I will rake the mussels back if you let me know where they are.
- The mussels seed I plant in the river does eventually provide food for the peeler crabs.
- Aim to keep 500-1000 tonnes of mussels.
- Have slight issue with some bait digging when lugworm holes are left and the muds is chucked back over the mussels that have been laid there, however this is mainly just annoying.
- An issue I have are the fires on the warren.

Q: The mussel beds up by the old bird hide have been wiped clean – it is now just coarse sand and boulders.

A: That is because the mussel bed has not been re-seeded.

Q: Oysters have taken over and 1 foot of silt/mussel mud.

A: All mussel beds are ephemeral, I am not allowed to put seed in certain areas.

Bull Hill has died naturally. I would like to put mussels in certain intertidal areas – not necessarily to harvest but I am not authorised to do so.

ACTION: SC to speak to RSPB about mussel issue.

ACTION: SaC (IFCA) to have a meeting with Myles and Natural England to discuss.

5. General feedback from meetings so far

- 2 general codes should be produced: one for shore-based users and one for water users
- A code for Dawlish Warren
- Kite / windsurfing
- PWC (Jet Skiing)
- Bait collection (crab tiling & bait digging)
- Dog walking

The format for each code may be different for each activity, dependant on what would work best for each group. However, the designs of codes will be all similar, for a consistent approach and message.

5 codes size A3, folded to the size of a tide table. General feedback has been that they may not necessarily need to be water resistant, to save on print costs.

Kite/windsurfing and PWC users requested A5, one-sided sheet with map on one side, summary of best practice on the other. Probably be water resistant and small enough to carry in a buoyancy aid (so maybe folded).

All codes have been requested as both printed & electronic versions.

Users particularly like the design and size of the Poole Harbour code, will be a similar design to this.

Details can be found on EEMP website, Minutes of meetings will be uploaded.

6. Next steps:

- Will roughly draft text of all codes and contact key representatives for feedback – volunteers for this?
- Draft designs will be on the EEMP website for six weeks during Jan-Feb.
- Feedback will be invited during this six-week period.
- Additional meetings can be organised for specific activities during this six-week period.
- Final designs to be endorsed by the EEMP Management Group in March.
- Promotion on the ground through officers, through local clubs, on signage, websites.

7. Permitting

Steph Davies:

The Hand-Gathering Byelaw is still in the first stages of development. In June 2017 members of the Authority identified hand gathering as the next fishing activity that should be subjected to a review of management by the D&S IFCA Byelaw and Permitting Sub-Committee. It is therefore likely that a byelaw would not be in place for another year yet. Because of this timescale, developing the voluntary permits would be a good idea. As long as the crab tilers would be ok with sharing their contact details with us so we could inform them of any consultations about management in the future. We can discuss the byelaw process further with them during the meeting later this month if needed.

Permitting Discussion

- Lympstone Fisheries and Harbour Association already has a permit system in place, for approx. 7-8 years. Has 7-8 crab tilers. £5 for locals, £10 for others.

ACTION: GW to send SC information about LFHA permit system.

- If we do implement a permit system who would be managing it?
- Would be best if the owner of the land managed the permits which in this case would be Devon Wildlife Trust.

- The Drone survey done by IFCA of the crab tiles could help to map out the areas and give an indication to commercial fisheries of the extent of the tiles.
- Crab tilers could provide map showing designated areas for crab tilers, give this to IFCA so that commercial fisheries are aware.
- Considering potential daily limit for hand gathering?

ACTION: SC to look into providing IFCA with a map of crab tile area – make sure all tilers are happy before going ahead. OP to check.

ACTION: SC to raise with DWT and SEDHRP the possibility of managing the permit system.

ACTION: SC to draft text regarding hand gathering and commercial gathering – focus on mussels, oysters and cockles.