

The Great Grid Upgrade

Eastern Green Link 5 (EGL 5)

Preliminary Environmental Information Report

Volume 1

Part 3

Chapter 23 Commercial Fisheries

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23. Commercial Fisheries

23.1 Introduction

- 23.1.1 This chapter presents the preliminary findings of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process undertaken to date for the Eastern Green Link 5 (EGL 5) English Offshore Scheme, with respect to commercial fisheries, including pelagic fish (species that live within the water column), demersal fish (species that live and feed on or near the bottom of seas or lakes), and shellfish (crustaceans and molluscs). The preliminary assessment is based on information obtained to date. It should be read in conjunction with the description of the Project provided in **Volume 1, Part 1, Chapter 4: Description of the Project**.
- 23.1.2 This chapter describes the methodology used, the datasets that have informed the preliminary assessment, baseline conditions, environmental measures, and the potential preliminary commercial fisheries effects that could result from the English Offshore Scheme during the construction, operation (and maintenance), and decommissioning phases. Specifically, it relates to the English Offshore elements of the Scheme seaward of Mean High Water Springs (MHWS) where the English Offshore Scheme makes landfall at Anderby Creek on the Lincolnshire coastline to the maritime border between English and Scottish adjacent waters.
- 23.1.3 This chapter should be read in conjunction with and considered alongside the following technical aspect chapters:
- **Volume 1, Part 3, Chapter 17: Coastal and Marine Physical Processes** due to the association with hydrodynamics and sediment transport and the potential impact on commercial fish species.
 - **Volume 1, Part 3, Chapter 19: Fish and Shellfish** due to the close association between the receptors and the potential for overlapping environmental measures.
 - **Volume 1, Part 3, Chapter 22: Shipping and Navigation** due to the close association with vessel traffic within the English Offshore Scheme.
- 23.1.4 This chapter is supported by the following figures:
- **Volume 3, Part 3, Figure 23-1: Commercial Fisheries Study Area;**
 - **Volume 3, Part 3, Figure 23-2: Pelagic Trawl and Seines, and Static Gear Effort within the Study Area;**
 - **Volume 3, Part 3, Figure 23-3: Bottom Seines and Dredge Effort within the Study Area;**
 - **Volume 3, Part 3, Figure 23-4: Beam Trawling and Bottom Otter Trawl Effort within the Study Area;**
 - **Volume 3, Part 3, Figure 23-5: Surveillance Sightings by Gear Type During 2018 to 2025;** and
 - **Volume 3, Part 3, Figure 23-6: Surveillance Sightings by Vessel Nationality During 2018 to 2025.**

23.1.5 This chapter is supported by the following appendices:

- **Volume 2, Part 3, Appendix 23.A: Supporting Commercial Fisheries Information;**
- **Volume 2, Part 3, Appendix 23.B: Outline Fisheries Liaison and Coexistence Plan;**
- **Volume 2, Part 1, Appendix 2.A: Regulatory and Planning Context;**
- **Volume 2, Part 1, Appendix 2.B: Marine Plan Policy Assessment;**
- **Volume 2, Part 1, Appendix 5.A: Outline Register of Design Measures;**
- **Volume 2, Part 1, Appendix 5.B: Outline Code of Construction Practice;** and
- **Volume 2, Part 1, Appendix 5.C: Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan.**

23.1.6 As set out in **Volume 1, Part 1, Chapter 1: Introduction**, cable installation and some associated activities beyond 12 Nautical Miles (NM), and emergency repair of the installed cable within the draft Order Limits are exempt under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 (MCAA 2009). This chapter presents a preliminary assessment of the cable route from MHWS at the Anderby Creek Landfall to the maritime boundary between England and Scotland adjacent waters. This is to ensure all likely significant effects of the English Offshore Scheme have been assessed. However, consent is not being sought for the exempt cable and only external cable protection and dredging for sandwave clearance will be included in the Deemed Marine Licence (DML) beyond 12 NM.

Limitations

23.1.7 The information provided in this Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR) is preliminary and presents the initial assessment of effects on commercial fisheries with the purpose of securing feedback from stakeholders to inform the final assessment. The final assessment of potential significant effects will be reported in the Environmental Statement (ES). The PEIR has been produced to fulfil National Grid Electricity Transmission plc (NGET) consultation duties in accordance with Section 42 of the PA2008 and enable consultees to develop an informed view of the preliminary significant effects of the English Offshore Scheme.

23.1.8 This PEIR has been collated based on a range of publicly available data and information only. For example, fisheries landings data published by the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) have been used to inform spatial and temporal distributions of fisheries values and landed catch weights. It is assumed that the data collated is accurate, however, it is acknowledged that there are limitations with the various data sets due to the variable nature of commercial fisheries data. As such, several data sources have therefore been used to reduce uncertainty in baseline information and assessments. This will be supplemented with feedback from stakeholder engagement where available.

23.1.9 It is acknowledged that publicly available fisheries statistics will underrepresent the inshore fleet; for example, fishing vessels <12 m length are not required to carry Vessel Monitoring Systems (VMS) and so will not show up in effort-based datasets. Landings data derived from the MMO catch statistics provide a general indication of fishing effort as fishers can sell catch directly in quantities <30 kg, which would therefore not be captured within the datasets. Public data will be supplemented with data received through consultation with the local fisheries stakeholders if available.

- 23.1.10 Variations and trends in commercial fisheries activity are an important aspect of the baseline assessment. Although statistics and consultation can identify past long-term trends, it is harder to predict future trends which may result from changes in market conditions, changes following the withdrawal of the UK from the European Union (EU) or global events such as conflict. Given the period assessed, data may also reflect potential short-term changes in activity due to the 2020 – 2021 COVID pandemic, which temporarily affected market demand and supply chains.
- 23.1.11 In the absence of data, a precautionary approach has been taken and professional judgement, based on experience of similar linear projects, have been used where required to inform the scope of the assessment.
- 23.1.12 Various technical assessments were undertaken to inform the EGL 3 and EGL 4 EIA. Where relevant (i.e., where construction methodologies are essentially identical, or where an impact pathway would occur over a similar spatial / temporal scope) the conclusions of those assessments have been used to scope ‘in’ or ‘out’ various impact pathways. These are not necessarily proposed to be repeated to inform the PEIR for this Project.

Preliminary significance conclusions

- 23.1.13 The preliminary commercial fisheries environmental assessment presented in Section 23.10 to Section 23.13 has concluded that all of the potential significant effects assessed are either Negligible or Minor effects and are considered to be Not Significant in EIA terms. These adverse effects are ones that can be adequately controlled by best practice and legal controls, with specific mitigation not being required. Further details of the methodology behind the assessment, and a detailed narrative of the assessment itself are provided within the sections below.

23.2 Relevant Technical Guidance

Technical guidance

- 23.2.1 The legislation and planning policy which has informed the assessment of effects with respect to commercial fisheries is provided within **Volume 1, Part 1, Chapter 2: Regulatory and Policy Overview** and **Volume 2, Part 1, Appendix 2.A: Regulatory and Planning Context**. Further information on policies relevant to the English Offshore Scheme is provided in **Volume 2, Part 1, Appendix 2.B: Marine Plan Policy Assessment**. Relevant technical guidance, specific to commercial fisheries, that has informed this PEIR and will inform the assessment within the ES is summarised below.
- 23.2.2 A summary of the technical guidance for commercial fisheries is given in **Table 23-1**.

Table 23-1 Technical guidance relevant to the commercial fisheries assessment

Technical guidance document	Context
Best Practice Guidance for Fisheries Liaison with Offshore Renewables Developments (Ref 23.1)	Provides best practice guidance on effective liaison, communication, and exchange of information between offshore renewable energy sectors and the fishing industry during all phases of a project.

Technical guidance document	Context
International Cable Protection Committee (ICPC) – Fishing and Submarine Cables Working together (Ref 23.2)	Reference report written by the ICPC about the cable and fishing industry working together.
Guidelines for data acquisition to support marine environmental assessments of offshore renewable energy projects (Ref 23.3)	Reference report written by Cefas on best practices for data acquisition.
European Subsea Cable Association (ESCA) Guideline 20 on vessels operating in the vicinity of subsea cables (Ref 23.4)	Reference report written by ESCA about vessels working close to subsea cables.
Best Practice Guidance for Fishing Industry Financial and Economic Impact Assessments (Ref 23.5)	Reference guidelines based on outputs from a technical workshop organised by the UK Fisheries Economics Network.
Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) MGN654 Annex 1 Methodology for Assessing the Marine Navigational Safety and Emergency Response Risks of Offshore Renewable Energy Installations (OREI) (Ref 23.6)	Reference methods written by MCA about navigational risks to vessel owners in relation of offshore infrastructure.

23.3 Consultation and Engagement

Overview

- 23.3.1 The assessment has been informed by consultation responses and ongoing stakeholder engagement. An overview of the approach to consultation is provided in Section 5.9 of **Volume 1, Part 1, Chapter 5: PEIR Approach and Methodology**.
- 23.3.2 An overview of the technical engagement undertaken or planned to inform the commercial fisheries assessment is provided in paragraphs 23.3.4 to 23.3.6.

Scoping Opinion

- 23.3.3 A Scoping Opinion was adopted by the Secretary of State, administered by the Planning Inspectorate, on 13 October 2025. A summary of the relevant responses received in the Scoping Opinion in relation to the commercial fisheries, and confirmation of how these have been addressed within the assessment to date, is presented in **Table 23-2**. The information in the PEIR is preliminary and not all Scoping Opinion comments have been addressed at this stage, however, all comments will be addressed within the ES.

Table 23-2 Summary of EIA Scoping Opinion responses for commercial fisheries

Consultee	Category	Consideration	How addressed in this PEIR
Planning Inspectorate	Changes in Distribution of Target Species	4.7.1: The Scoping Report explains that this matter [changes in distribution of target species] will be covered within the Fish and Shellfish assessment and where no significant effects are reported, this matter too will be scoped out of this aspect. The Scoping Report states that where significant effects are reported for this matter within the Fish and Shellfish assessment, then it will be scoped into this aspect. The Inspectorate is content with this approach.	Volume 1, Part 3, Chapter 19: Fish and Shellfish has concluded that the significance of effects is Not Significant and therefore it has not been considered in Volume 1, Part 3, Chapter 23: Commercial Fisheries .
Planning Inspectorate	Temporary Increase and Deposition of Suspended Sediments	4.7.2: The Scoping Report states that the construction methods for both EGL 3 and EGL 4 and the proposed development will be the same. It also refers to the conclusion of the preliminary assessment for the EGL 3 and EGL 4 which found that this matter [temporary increase and deposition of suspended sediments] will not be significant on mobile gear as this equipment is unlikely to be in one area long enough for suspended sediment to settle. On the basis that the ES confirms that the conclusions from this preliminary assessment for EGL 3 and EGL 4 remains valid for this matter, the Inspectorate agrees that this matter can be scoped out.	Acknowledged. Impact pathway continues to remain scoped out as agreed.
MMO	Changes in Distribution of Target Species	3.4.3: Changes in distribution of target species is ‘scoped out’ in Chapter 24 Commercial Fisheries Table 24-12: Scoping assessment of impacts on commercial fisheries, noting that “Chapter 20 Fish and Shellfish will assess impacts on fish and shellfish regarding effects from temporary and permanent habitat loss, changes in suspended sediment concentrations, and temperature increase. If impacts on fish and shellfish receptors are	The Applicant notes the MMOs comment. In line with the Planning Inspectorate’s comment 4.1.1 above, Volume 1, Part 3, Chapter 19: Fish and Shellfish has concluded that the significance of the effect of this impact is Not Significant and therefore it has not

Consultee	Category	Consideration	How addressed in this PEIR
		significant, this impact will be re-scoped in for commercial fisheries”. As Chapter 20 Fish and Shellfish does not specifically include the ‘changes to distribution’, the MMO considers that this remains ‘Scoped in’ as per 3.4.2 above to monitor if any changes occur pre and post operation.	been considered in Volume 1, Part 3, Chapter 23: Commercial Fisheries.
MMO	Consultation Engagement	and 3.4.5: Paragraph 24.7.3 notes that “Consultation with local and regional fisheries stakeholders will be conducted to help inform the baseline and obtain data on fishing vessels operating in the area, types and sizes of vessels, fishing gear(s) used, fishing effort, target species, seasonality location of key grounds, etc.”. The MMO strongly advocates a continued monitoring of fishing landings and consultation with fishers pre and post-operation to support assumptions of limited impact. The Magnitude scoring lists pre- and post-project character changes which can only be proven with monitoring pre- and post-project stages.	The Applicant will continue to engage with local fishers throughout the development of the Project. The need or otherwise for monitoring will be determined through the EIA process, with monitoring typically only required where significant effects are identified. At this stage, all impacts have been found to be not significant, and therefore, no monitoring has been proposed within this chapter.
MMO	Baseline Conditions	3.4.7: Table 24-7 Shellfish catch seasonality shows a seasonal shellfish calendar from a fish producer data source (Direct Seafoods, 2023) related to catch and landings which will be led by market demand. It should be clearly stated that this is not necessarily related to stock biological or spawning seasonality. For example, scallop (<i>Pecten maximus</i>) in the North Sea would have a spawning season from April – September, however it is fished throughout the spawning season (‘high season’ indicated in the table) as there is a preference for roe-on scallops in the marketplace.	Noted. Such text is now provided in Section 23.5.10.
MMO	Cumulative Effects	3.4.12: With respect to National Planning policy relevant to cumulative effects, it notes that “Applicants are encouraged to work collaboratively with those other developers and sea users on co-existence / co-location	The Project is committed to co-existence with fishing interests, and full details of the proposed measures to support this are set out

Consultee	Category	Consideration	How addressed in this PEIR
		<p>opportunities, shared mitigation, compensation and monitoring where appropriate. Where applicable, the creation of statements of common ground between developers is recommended”. In those areas where shellfish are prevalent, fishing intensity is elevated and other cumulative project density is high such as International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) rectangles 37F0, 36F0, then the dialogue to ensure common mitigation and monitoring is promoted and documented between the projects.</p>	<p>within Volume 2, Part 3, Appendix 23.B: Outline Fisheries Liaison and Coexistence Plan (FLCP), published alongside this PEIR chapter.</p> <p>At the appropriate stage of the application process, statements of common ground will be developed between the Applicant and relevant parties.</p>
MMO	Figures	<p>3.4.18: Figures 24-2 to 24-6 do not have the Commercial fisheries study area (15 kilometres (km) either side of the Offshore Scheme Scoping boundary) as included in Figure 24-1. These maps should be updated to include this boundary to visualise interactions with the fishing activities. In addition, fishing will be restricted, and static gear is required to be cleared from the scheme boundary area during construction, and this should be clearly shown with fishing and potting activity maps.</p>	<p>The assessments are based on ICES rectangles. These ICES rectangles are displayed throughout the maps. Figures supporting this chapter such as, for example, Volume 3, Part 3, Figure 23-1: Commercial Fisheries Study Area, shows the draft Order Limits and study area.</p>
MMO	Baseline Conditions	<p>3.4.19: The potential for cumulative effects (24.4.50) includes the following projects / developments “Ossian, Morven, Hornsea 3, Dogger Bank A, B, C, D and South, Outer Dowsing and Sofia offshore windfarms. In addition, other infrastructure such as Viking Link, NU Link, Aminth and Continental Link interconnector projects and Viking and Endurance Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) pipelines. Of note are the Ossian wind farm export cables and the EGL 3 and EGL 4 transmission reinforcement projects which are planned to make landfall at Anderby Creek, Lincolnshire”. The areas in ICES rectangles 37F0, 36F0 are also intensive for fishery activity and therefore will have increased potential for cumulative impact. A</p>	<p>Cumulative effects, which include those raised by the MMO, will be assessed within Volume 1, Part 4, Chapter 27: Cumulative Effects of the ES.</p>

Consultee	Category	Consideration	How addressed in this PEIR
Eastern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (IFCA)	Design and Measures	<p>series of low impact activities could have a significant cumulative impact overall which should be noted.</p> <p>The construction of subsea cables has the potential to interact with local fishing activity due to fishers being excluded from fishing grounds surrounding the construction area. After the cables are in place, there is a risk of interaction via snagging with fishing gear and the cables become uncovered over time. The commercial vessels using trawls, pots and lines are particularly vulnerable to this activity due to the nature of their fishing gear and the risk of snagging and collisions. Construction around the landfall at Anderby Creek could also impact beach-launched vessels from this area. The Applicant is advised to advertise the location of cables on Kingfisher charts as well as issuing a Local Notice to Mariner's in advance of the construction and ensuring communication with industry via a Fisheries Liaison Officer. Due to the reliance of the commercial fishers on the area off the Lincolnshire coast for their annual income, it is important that direct liaison with local fishers is conducted to fully understand the potential impacts and to ensure appropriate mitigation is applied where necessary to prevent disruption of this fishing activity or damage to fishing gear.</p>	<p>As part of embedded environmental measures, as set out in Volume 1, Part 1, Chapter 5: PEIR Approach and Methodology. Timely and efficient communication will be given to sea users in the area via Notices to Mariners (NtM), Kingfisher Bulletins, Radio Navigation Warnings Navigational Telex (NAVTEX) and Navigational Areas (NAVAREA) warnings and / or broadcast warnings. The Project is committed to co-existence with fishing interests, and full details of the proposed measures to support this, including the use of a Fisheries Liaison Officer (FLO), are set out within Volume 2, Part 3, Appendix 23.B: Outline Fisheries Liaison and Coexistence Plan.</p>

Technical engagement

- 23.3.4 In respect of the commercial fisheries assessment, key consultees have been identified and focussed engagement (through both informal and formal consultation) is being undertaken and recorded throughout the pre-application stages of the Proposed Scheme. Key consultees identified are:
- MMO;
 - National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations (NFFO);
 - IFCA – Eastern;
 - IFCA - North Eastern;
 - IFCA - Northumberland; and
 - Local fisheries organisations and individual fishers as appropriate.
- 23.3.5 Key areas of consultation include engagement on fishing grounds, methods and seasons to supplement publicly available fisheries data and information, impact assessment conclusions and proposed mitigation, which is detailed within this PEIR.
- 23.3.6 Additional fisheries stakeholders will be contacted should they be identified as part of the ongoing data collection and assessment process, or if requested during consultation.

23.4 Data Gathering Methodology

- 23.4.1 This PEIR has been collated based on a range of publicly available data and information only. It is assumed that the data collated is accurate. The data will be supplemented with additional information acquired as part of the stakeholder engagement process. The sources of data used is noted in **Table 23-3**.

Study area

- 23.4.2 The study area for commercial fisheries is illustrated in **Volume 3, Part 3, Figure 23-1: Commercial Fisheries Study Area**. The study area includes the draft Order Limits plus the fisheries management rectangles set by the ICES through which the English Offshore Scheme passes. The English Offshore Scheme intersects 12 ICES rectangles: 35F0, 36F0, 36F1, 37F0, 38E9, 38F0, 39E9, 39F0, 40E9, 40F0, 41E9, and 42E9. Each rectangle is approximately 30 NM wide and is 30 min latitude and 1° longitude in size and is used to record and collate statistical fisheries data. These rectangles are further characterised in Section 23.5.

Desk study

- 23.4.3 Data sourced for the baseline characterisation are presented in accordance with relevant guidance for the topic. A desk-based review of publicly available data sources (literature and GIS mapping files) has been undertaken to describe the baseline environment, and considers information gathered from stakeholders. A summary of the organisations that have supplied data, together with the nature of that data is outlined in **Table 23-3**.
- 23.4.4 A desk-based review of catch and effort statistics has been undertaken to inform the PEIR. AIS data from UK and European fishing vessels over 15 m in length and VMS data from registered commercial fishing vessels over 12 m in length has been obtained and

interrogated to assess the distribution of fishing effort. Information has also been sought from the MMO; this PEIR considers MMO sightings data to show vessels via nationality along the draft Order Limits over the most recent five-year period (years 2020 to 2024), to examine gear / nationality types used to ICES rectangle spatial resolution (Ref 23.7). Consultation with fisheries stakeholders is ongoing which will help reduce uncertainty in spatiotemporal dynamics of vessels under 12 m in length not currently using VMS.

Table 23-3 Data sources used to inform the commercial fisheries assessment

Organisation	Data source	Data provided
IFCA	IFCA	Website with information about fishing and the species in the different regional IFCAs.
MMO	MMO (Ref 23.7)	UK Sea Fisheries annual statistics report 2019 – 2024 and accompanying 2024 datasets which includes species catch list for the relevant ICES rectangles. The MMO publish new data every September for the previous year, meaning the 2024 data are the most recent.
MMO	Fisheries surveillance data	Surveillance data for the period 2024 – 2025.
European Marine Observation and Data Network (EMODnet)	EMODnet (Ref 23.8)	EMODnet VMS for period 2019 – 2020 (Ref 23.8).
NGET	Eastern Green Link 2 - Marine Scheme	PEIR for the sections of the Project in English waters (Ref 23.9).

Survey work

- 23.4.5 No site-specific surveys are planned for this topic, as extensive information is readily available to characterise the commercial fisheries of the North Sea. Such data are summarised in **Table 23-3**.
- 23.4.6 Consultation with local and regional fisheries stakeholders will be conducted to help inform the baseline and obtain data on fishing vessels operating in the area, types and sizes of vessels, fishing gear(s) used, fishing effort, target species, seasonality location of key grounds.

23.5 Overall Baseline

- 23.5.1 The following section outlines the existing baseline conditions for commercial fisheries.

Current baseline

- 23.5.2 This section describes the key commercial fisheries along the English Offshore Scheme; the local fishing fleet; any fishing restrictions; and provides landings data to contextualise the value of the fishing industry in the region.
- 23.5.3 In 2023, the number of (full-time and part-time) fishers working in the UK was 10,356 (Ref 23.10); a figure which has generally decreased over the last 10 years from 12,325 in 2013. Note, however, that the annual Fishermen’s Survey from which this statistic was taken has been suspended from 2023 onwards due to concerns with the reliability of the data collection process. The number of UK registered vessels has also decreased from 6,383 in 2014 to 5,232 in 2024 (Ref 23.10). In 2024, UK vessels landed (live weight) 767,299.52 tonnes of sea fish with an overall value of over £1.1 billion. Multiple factors have had an impact on fishing and landings which tend to fluctuate considerably over time. However, since 2020, the largest impact on sea fisheries has been the UK’s departure from the EU, which impacted the stocks that the UK fleet had access to fish and affected import and export opportunities.
- 23.5.4 **Plate 23-1** illustrates the overall 2024 landings value in Great British Pounds (GBP), which indicates that demersal and shellfish values are similar, though pelagic was the most valuable fishery. **Plate 23-1** illustrates the overall 2024 landing by weight in tonnes which shows that the highest volumes of catch were from the pelagic fisheries, with the smallest volume from the shellfish fisheries.

Plate 23-1 UK 2024 Landing by species type by value (GBP)

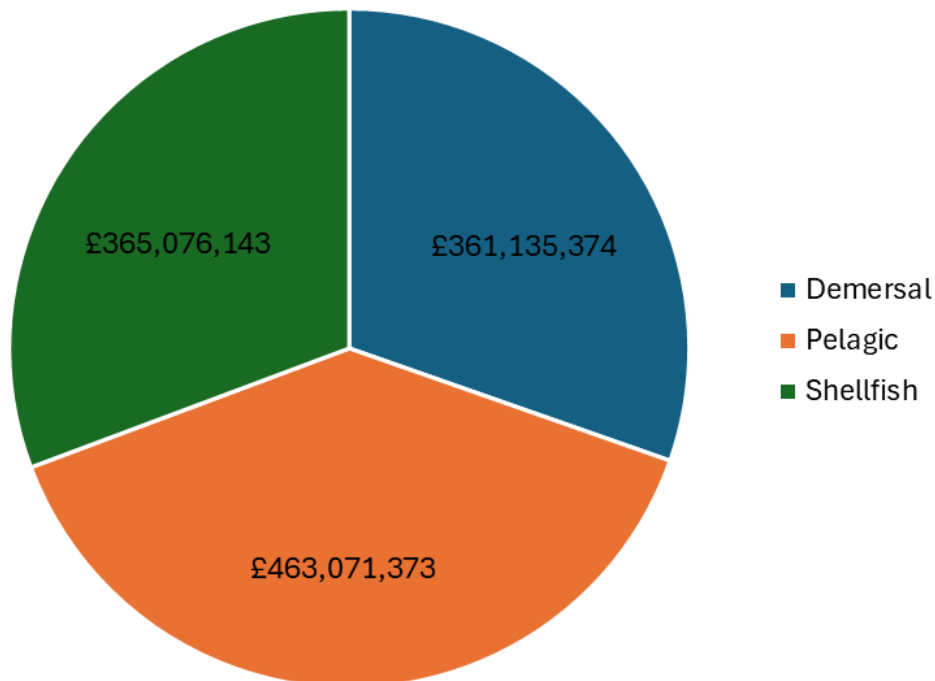
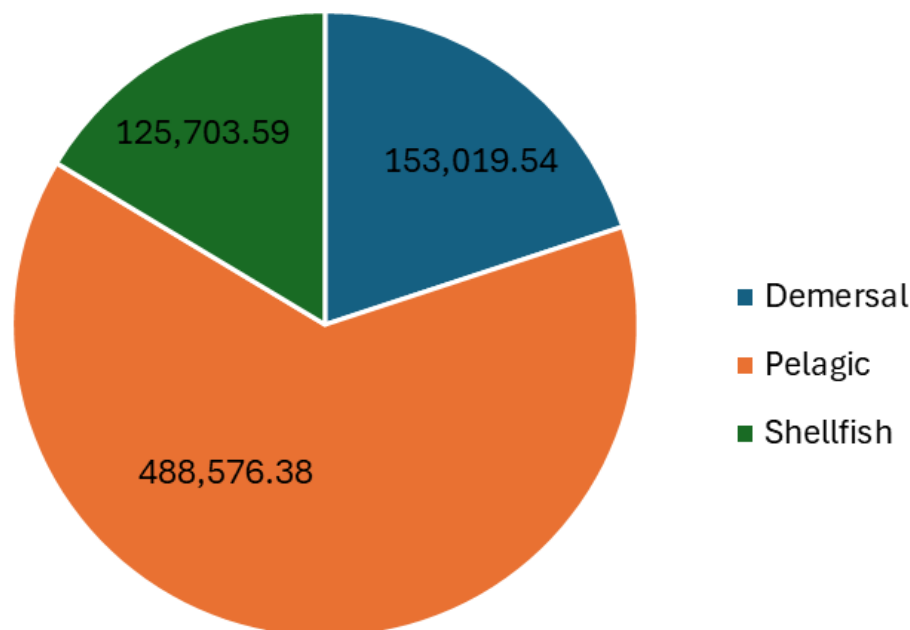


Plate 23-2 UK 2024 Landing by species type by volume (t)



Overview of Fisheries within the study area

- 23.5.5 The study area crosses 12 commercial fisheries management areas (ICES rectangles 35F0, 36F0, 36F1, 37F0, 38E9, 38F0, 39E9, 39F0, 40E9, 40F0, 41E9, and 42E9), as detailed in Section 23.4.2. These rectangles enable accurate monitoring of commercial fisheries and allow for more straightforward spatial fisheries management and policy decisions. Analysis of the fishing data for these 12 rectangles has been used as an indication of the commercial fish species caught in these regions. Fisheries statistics are typically published each September for the previous year; as such, 2024 fisheries data are the most current.
- 23.5.6 The North Sea is home to important fishing grounds used not only by the local English fleet but also by international vessels from Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark, France, Ireland, Spain and Germany. However, the majority of this occurs in ICES rectangles adjacent to the English Offshore Scheme, further offshore.

Shellfish

- 23.5.7 According to landings data from the 12 ICES rectangles, the shellfish industry within the North Sea contributes to 97% of the catch values in the study area (Ref 23.7). Most shellfish are caught via static gear such as pots / creels and traps which target species such as crabs (*Cancer pagurus* and *Necora puber*), lobsters (*Homarus gammarus*) and whelks (*Buccinum undatum*).
- 23.5.8 Other shellfish species such as Nephrops (also known as langoustine, prawn, Dublin prawn, Norway lobster, and scampi) (*Nephrops norvegicus*), squid (numerous species, but commonly include *Alloteuthis subulata*, *Loligo forbesii*, *Loligo vulgaris* and *Illex coindetii*), and octopus (*Eledone cirrhosa*) are caught using demersal trawl gear. Beam trawl gear is also used to target brown shrimp (*Crangon crangon*), primarily in ICES rectangle 35F0.
- 23.5.9 Scallop (*Pecten maximus*) is another highly targeted species within the study area which is caught using dredge gear. The scallop fishery is cyclical in nature with the production

grounds rotating around the UK on a seven to eight-year cycle. The main landing port for scallop caught in the study area is Scarborough.

23.5.10 **Table 23-4** summarises shellfish catch seasonality within the study area; crabs, scallop and whelk have wide high catch seasons, and whelk also have a distinct low catch season from late summer, through to early winter. On the other hand, crab have a lower catch season through spring but are otherwise caught all year round. ‘Squid’ is likely to cover multiple species which may have different life history characteristics. Further, as a phenotypically ‘plastic’ species, catch seasonality is likely to differ from year to year. Note that **Table 23-4** is generic for the UK, and there may be some seasonality variation depending on a species’ stock; i.e., the seasonality shown may differ slightly across the study area.

Table 23-4 Shellfish catch seasonality

Feature	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Brown Shrimp	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High
Crab	High	High	High	High	High	Low	Low	Low	High	High	High	High
Lobster	High	High	High	Low	Low	High	High	High	High	Low	Low	Low
Scallop	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High
Squid	High	High	Low	Out	Out	Low	Low	High	High	High	High	High
Whelk	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	Low	Low	Low	High
Key	High Season		Low Season		Out of Season							

Source: Direct Seafoods (2023) (Ref 23.11)

23.5.11 Analysis of landings data from rectangles in the study area shows that the port of Bridlington lands the highest value of shellfish study area. Landings peak during May, June, and November (Ref 23.7).

Demersal Fish

23.5.12 A variety of demersal (bottom contact) trawl gear methods are used in the North Sea to target demersal whitefish species such as haddock (*Melanogrammus aeglefinus*), halibut (*Hippoglossus hippoglossus*), monk / anglerfish (*Lophius piscatorius*), whiting (*Merlangius merlangus*), cod (*Gadus morhua*), turbot (*Scophthalmus maximus*) and sole (*Solea solea*). They are fished not only by the UK fleet but also by international vessels from Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark, France, Ireland, Spain and Germany.

23.5.13 Beam trawling is predominantly for flatfish species by UK and non-UK fleets (primarily Belgian and Dutch vessels). Fly seine netting is a more recent alternative to the traditional heavy beam trawling due to the depleted fish stocks. Bottom drift nets are now rarely used by the UK fleet with very limited catches using this gear type.

23.5.14 Analysis of landing data from rectangles in the study area (Ref 23.7) shows that the port of Amble is the most important port for landings of demersal whitefish caught within the study area. Landings peak during the period from May to July in North Shields.

Pelagic Fish

23.5.15 The pelagic species caught within the study area are shoaling fish species such as herring (*Clupea harengus*), mackerel (*Scomber scombrus*) and horse mackerel (*Trachurus trachurus*). Pelagic fish are caught primarily using pelagic trawls, and demersal seines (Ref 23.7). Many of the large catches of herring are landed in the Netherlands (specifically, IJmuiden) rather than UK ports (Ref 23.7). Whilst pelagic landings occur throughout the year (except for January), landings are low with the exception of September, where 379 t of the 413 t total landings occur; 396 t are from ICES rectangle 37F0 (Ref 23.6).

UK Fishing Fleet

23.5.16 In 2024, the UK fishing industry was worth almost £1.2 billion annually from a catch of over 734,000 tonnes (Ref 23.7), so is therefore an important part of the economy. The MMO registers all UK vessels monthly and the fleet is split into two categories: vessels with a length 10 m and under, and vessels over 10.01 m in length. The UK registered fleet of vessels 10 m and under in length comprised 4,291 vessels as of December 2024 (Ref 23.10). Of the 10 m and under vessels 2,575 vessels were registered as English with the remainder registered as Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish, and Islands (Isle of Man, Guernsey, Jersey).

23.5.17 The UK registered fleet of vessels over 10 m in length comprised 1,127 vessels as of December 2024 (Ref 23.7). Of the vessels over 10 m, 463 were registered as English with the remainder registered as Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish, or Islands.

23.5.18 **Table 23-5** shows the overall catch information for the UK in 2024, broken down by species type, of percentage of overall catch, weight and catch value.

Table 23-5 Overall catch information for the UK in 2024

Species type	Percentage	Catch weight in tonnes	Catch value in GBP
Demersal	19.9 %	153,019.54	£361.1 million
Pelagic	63.7 %	488,576.38	£463 million
Shellfish	16.4 %	125,703.59	£365 million

23.5.19 **Table 23-6** shows the overall catch information for the UK in 2024, broken down by gear type, of percentage of overall catch, weight and catch value.

Table 23-6 Overall catch information (by gear type) for the UK in 2024

Gear type	Percentage	Catch weight in tonnes	Catch value in GBP
Beam trawl	4.5	12,225	53,362,829
Demersal seine	2.7	13,546	31,687,279
Demersal trawls	29.4	149,223	349,172,966
Dredge	6.2	42,211	73,729,495

Gear type	Percentage	Catch weight in tonnes	Catch value in GBP
Drift and fixed nets	2.4	9,053	28,336,330
Handlines	0.7	2,125	8,751,516
Longlines	1.6	6,989	18,588,099
Other mobile gears	0.1	238	1,197,173
Other passive gears	0.6	1,099	7,301,756
Pelagic seine	0.6	9,274	6,737,015
Pelagic trawls	37.9	474,627	450,201,163
Pots and traps	13.5	46,509	159,979,068
Unknown	0	151	282,200

23.5.20 The UK fleet operates from ports across England, with the two key English ports being Newlyn with a catch value of over £43 million, and Brixham (over £42 million), to which catch is landed. Note, effort data collected within the study area may relate to landings at such ports, particularly for large vessels which are more able to travel further distances to land catch at markets offering the best prices.

23.5.21 **Plate 23-3** study area and **Plate 23-4** study area show the top 5 ports to which fishing vessels land their catch, caught within the study area with catch values for vessels 10 m and under, and over 10 m in length, respectively.

Plate 23-3 Top five ports landed to from fishing activity within the study area for catches from vessels 10 m and under (2024)

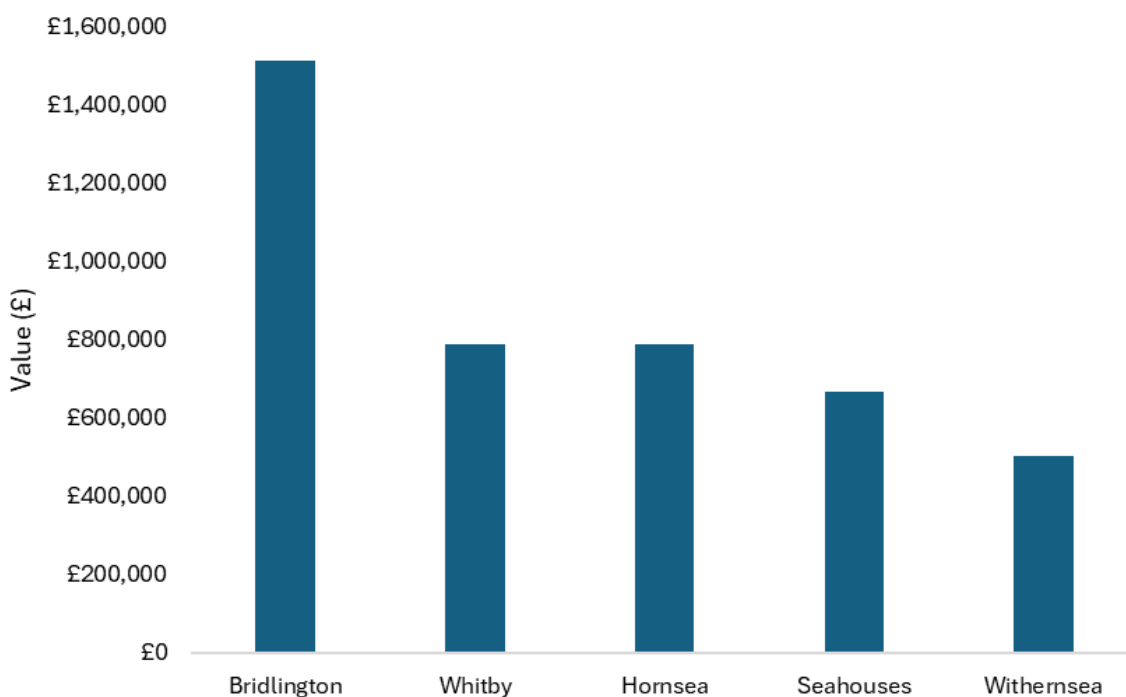
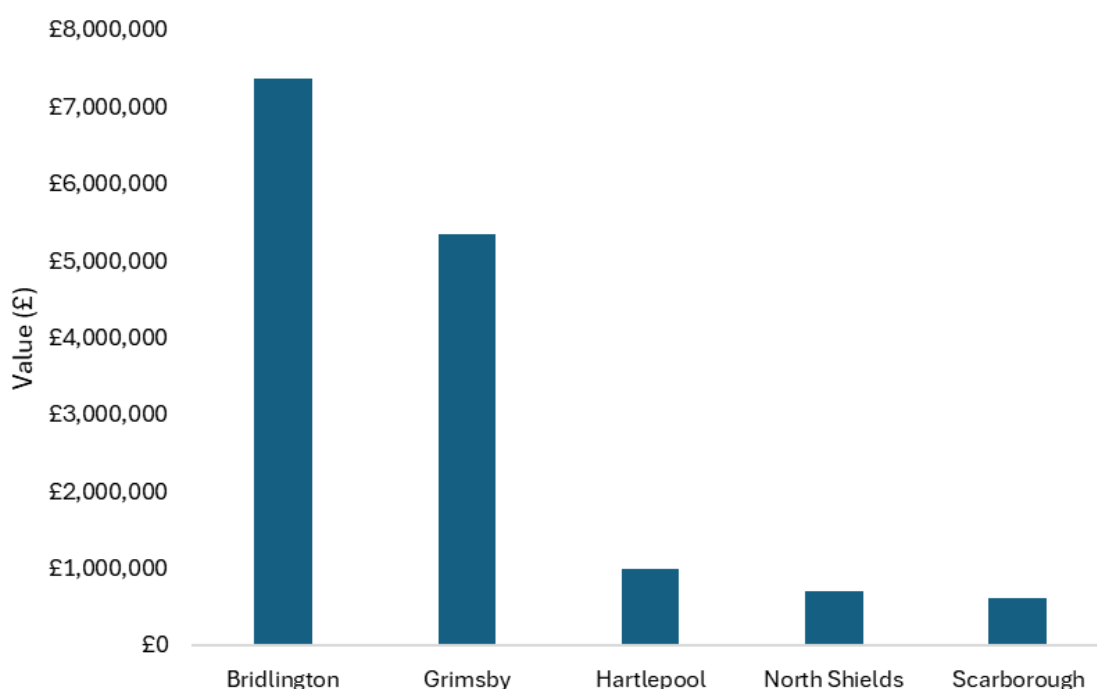


Plate 23-4 Top five ports landed to from fishing activity within the study area for catches from vessels over 10 m (2024)



Local Fishing Fleet

23.5.22 There are 41 ports within the study area who have registered vessels which fish within the 12 rectangles the draft Order Limits intersect. These details have been broken down and are shown in **Table 23-7** which identifies the sizes of the registered vessels, whether they have licenses to catch shellfish and if they have a license to catch scallops. Please note there are no vessels at or under 10 m in length which have a license to catch scallops.

Table 23-7 Registered vessels in ports within the study area as of June 2025

Port	≤10 m vessels	≤10 m vessels with a shellfish licence	>10 m vessels	>10 m vessels with a shellfish licence	>10 m vessels with a scallop licence
Amble	18	16	4	2	4
Arbroath	21	19	1	1	1
Ardglass	16	16	18	0	18
Blyth	17	15	8	6	8
Boston	5	1	15	3	15
Bridlington	21	21	26	25	26

Port	≤10 m vessels	≤10 m vessels with a shellfish licence	>10 m vessels	>10 m vessels with a shellfish licence	>10 m vessels with a scallop licence
Brixham	66	21	55	6	55
Campbeltown	24	16	13	1	13
Cromer	21	21	0	0	0
Eastbourne	30	15	6	5	6
Eyemouth	28	25	5	1	5
Fraserburgh	52	40	57	1	57
Gairloch	2	1	2		2
Gourdon	8	8	1	1	1
Great Yarmouth	17	9	1	1	1
Grimsay	6	6	1	1	1
Grimsby	9	8	11	7	11
Hartlepool	21	18	3	0	3
Hornsea	5	5	0	0	0
Isle Of Whithorn	3	3	0	0	0
Johnshaven	8	8	0	0	0
Kings Lynn	12	4	22	8	22
Methil And Leven	2	2	0	0	0
Newcastle Down) (Co. 3		2	0	0	0
North Shields	21	13	25	5	25
Peterhead	26	22	31	2	31
Plymouth	92	33	27	2	27
Portsmouth	40	7	0	0	0

Port	≤10 m vessels	≤10 m vessels with a shellfish licence	>10 m vessels	>10 m vessels with a shellfish licence	>10 m vessels with a scallop licence
Redcar	31	31	0	0	0
Scarborough	20	20	4	3	4
Scrabster	31	27	4	2	4
Seaham	1	1	1	1	1
Seahouses	9	9	3	3	3
Shoreham-By-Sea	43	21	9	2	9
Skegness	2	2	1	0	1
Staites	3	3	0	0	0
Wells	11	11	3	3	3
Whitby	27	27	6	3	6
Whitstable	11	7	5	0	5
Wick	3	2	1	1	1
Withernsea	6	6	0	0	0

23.5.23 Licenses to fish shellfish are held by 542 of the 10 m and under vessels. This accounts for 68% of the fleet. For the 369 vessels that are over 10 m in length; 96 of these have shellfish licences, which is 26% of the fleet. Additionally, 369 vessels have licenses to dredge for scallop (both *P. maximus* and queen scallop *Aequipecten opercularis*).

Landings Data within the study area

23.5.24 A high-level review of landings data from 2020 to 2024 across the 12 ICES rectangles relevant to the study area provided information on the economic importance of different commercial fish species.

23.5.25 Over the five-year period (2020 to 2024), 66,720 tonnes of fish were landed with a value of over £143 million (**Table 23-8**). Of this value, £29.4 million was landed by the 10 m and under fleet, with the remaining £114.5 million landed by the over 10 m fleet. **Table 23-8** indicates annual variability between catch weight and value, primarily related to supply and demand; this is reflected in the average value per tonne, which has generally increased over the last five years, except for the decrease from 2020 to 2021.

Table 23-8 Annual catch value from 2020 to 2024 for ICES rectangles within the study area

Year	Live weight (Tonnes) 10 m or under	Live weight (Tonnes) over 10 m	Value (GBP) under 10 m	Value (GBP) over 10 m	Value per tonne (GBP/tonne)
2020	2,272	10,928	£4,463,236	£17,911,071	£1,695
2021	1,918	24,923	£6,622,919	£33,858,253	£1,508
2022	1,282	8,919	£5,857,934	£22,926,237	£2,822
2023	1,762	7,161	£6,315,535	£21,823,197	£3,154
2024	1,239	6,316	£6,157,977	£17,983,781	£3,460
Total for 5yr period	8,473	58,247	£29,417,601	£114,502,539	-
Average	1,809	12,983	5,814,906	24,129,690	2,295

23.5.26 **Table 23-9** presents the annual catch value by gear type within the study area. This table indicates that the over the last five years, catch from pots and traps have the greatest value, which demonstrates the importance of static gear fisheries in the study area.

Table 23-9 Annual catch value (GBP) from 2020 to 2024 by gear type for ICES rectangles within the study area

Year	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Total
Demersal Trawl	2,600,079	1,719,032	2,930,610	3,490,904	2,412,337	13,152,962
Pelagic Trawl	1,107,268	11,297,749	1,016,543	40,727	263,943	13,726,230
Pots and Traps	15,505,068	22,974,746	22,580,583	21,593,980	19,461,360	102,115,737
Dredge	1,325,047	2,920,893	1,552,007	1,911,529	1,502,474	9,211,950
Drift and Fixed Nets	4,016	1,991	14,756	1,536	7,074	29,373
Demersal seine	848,758	447,932	236,815	386,402	164,939	2,084,846
Pelagic Seine	-	47,448	14,704	-	-	62,152
Handlines	-	-	-	9,476	5,638.21	15,114
Longlines	5,803	515	-	15,018	5,875	27,211
Beam Trawl	313,288	148,513	158,147	171,589	306,973	1,098,510

Year	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Total
Other mobile gears	664,980	912,351	280,006	517,571	11,142	2,386,050

23.5.27 **Table 23-10** presents the annual catch value and weight per ICES rectangle within the study area. This table indicates that the highest catch value was from rectangle 36F0 for both 10 m and under and vessels over 10 m, though the highest catch weight was from rectangle 35F0 for vessels 10 m and under, and rectangle 37F0 for vessels over 10 m.

Table 23-10 Annual UK catch value between 2020 to 2024 within the study area by vessel size

Rectangle	Vessels 10 m and under weight in tonnes	Vessels 10 m and under value	Vessels over 10 m weight in tonnes	Vessels over 10 m value
35F0	4,382.11	5,112,250.88	1,770.41	4,132,909.26
36F0	2,522.58	15,038,924.46	14,174.07	49,743,323.27
36F1	0.41	719.25	7,129.17	13,911,656.64
37F0	224.49	1,646,891.69	21,173.41	22,731,702.55
38E9	1,057.90	5,859,320.47	2,426.64	6,833,168.13
38F0	2.28	4,660.15	3,377.77	4,270,335.05
39E9	119.12	637,891.23	2,297.23	7,155,410.61
39F0	1.09	2,066.89	1,983.79	1,902,212.17
40E9	163.62	1,113,351.12	2,902.93	2,227,477.12
40F0	-	-	161.07	385,485.95
41E9	-	-	167.33	450,039.84
42E9	0.14	1,525.60	684.46	748,818.24

Source: Ref 23.7

Fishing Intensity

23.5.28 Based on EMODNET, pelagic trawl and seine, and static gear effort within the study area is shown in **Volume 3, Part 3, Figure 23-2: Pelagic Trawl and Seines, and Static Gear Effort within the Study Area**, bottom seines and dredging effort within the study area is shown in **Volume 3, Part 3, Figure 23-3: Bottom Seines and Dredge Effort within the Study Area**, and beam trawling and bottom otter trawl effort within the study area is shown in **Volume 3, Part 3, Figure 23-4: Beam Trawling and Bottom Otter Trawl Effort within the Study Area**, for years 2019 – 2020 (averages). For clarity, only static and non-static gear activity by vessels 12 m and over are presented; as such, the small vessels operating inshore are not displayed.

23.5.29 Pelagic trawl and seine effort was highest in rectangle 37F0 and 40E9, though effort was visible throughout the study area and wider North Sea. **Volume 3, Part 3, Figure 23-2: Pelagic Trawl and Seines, and Static Gear Effort within the Study Area**, indicates areas of high intensity potting within the study area.

23.5.30 Intensity of bottom seine, and dredging throughout the study area was sparse, albeit with both gear types having notably higher intensities of fishing effort in rectangles 37F0 and 36F0.

23.5.31 Beam trawl effort was also sparse throughout the study area, with the greatest intensity occurring in the offshore waters of the central North Sea. Bottom otter trawl effort was distributed throughout the North Sea, though effort throughout the study area was low.

23.5.32 Surveillance sightings of gear types (during 2018 to 2025) revealed high numbers of long liner sightings throughout the study area (**Volume 3, Part 3, Figure 23-5: Surveillance Sightings by Gear Type During 2018 to 2025**), followed by potter / whelkers, scallop dredgers, hand liners, and stern trawlers. According to vessel nationality surveillance sightings (**Volume 3, Part 3, Figure 23-6: Surveillance Sightings by Vessel Nationality During 2018 to 2025**) most of these vessels were from the UK, albeit with some sightings from France, Germany, and Belgium.

23.5.33 A detailed breakdown of the sightings within the study area is provided in **Table 23-11**.

Table 23-11 Surveillance sightings by nationality and gear type (2018 to 2025)

Vessel nationality	Primary gear type	No sightings (2018 to 2023)	% to sightings (2018 to 2023)	of No sightings to (2024 to 2025)	% to sightings (2024 to 2025)	of to
UK	Potter / whelker	464	54.9	27	19.42	
	Stern trawler (Pelagic Demersal)	154	18.2	93	66.9	
	Scallop dredger (French Newhaven)	73	8.64	2	1.44	
	Trawler	11	1.3	9	6.48	
	Beam trawler	8	0.94	1	0.72	
	Rod and line	8	0.94	-	-	
	Shrimper	5	0.59	-	-	
	Bottom seiner (Anchor / Danish / Fly / Scots)	4	0.47	-	-	
	Other dredges (including mussel)	4	0.47	-	-	
	Unknown	3	0.35	-	-	

Vessel nationality	Primary gear type	No sightings (2018 to 2023)	% to sightings (2018 to 2023)	of No sightings (2024 to 2025)	% to sightings (2024 to 2025)	of to
	Freezer (Pelagic Demersal) trawler /	1	0.11	-	-	
	Drift netter	1	0.11	-	-	
	Side (Pelagic Demersal) trawler /	1	0.11	-	-	
	Total	737	87.13	133	95.6	
Belgium	Bottom (Anchor / Fly / Scots) seiner / Danish /	2	0.23	-	-	
	Trawler	2	0.23	-	-	
	Total	4	0.46	-	-	
German	Stern (Pelagic Demersal) trawler /	2	0.23	-	-	
	Bottom (Anchor / Fly / Scots) seiner / Danish /	2	0.23	-	-	
	Trawler	1	0.11	-	-	
	Total	5	0.57	-	-	
Danish	Stern (Pelagic Demersal) trawler /	19	2.25	2	1.44	
	Other (including mussel) dredges	1	0.11	-	-	
	Trawler	1	0.11	-	-	
	Total	21	2.47	2	1.44	
French	Stern (Pelagic Demersal) trawler /	30	3.55	3	2.16	
	Beam trawler	5	0.59	-	-	
	Bottom (Anchor / Fly / Scots) seiner / Danish /	4	0.47	-	-	

Vessel nationality	Primary gear type	No sightings (2018 to 2023)	% to sightings (2018 to 2023)	of No sightings (2024 to 2025)	% to sightings (2024 to 2025)	of to
	Trawler	4	0.47	-	-	
	Total	43	5.08	3	2.16	
Dutch	Beam trawler	14	1.65	-	-	
	Bottom seiner (Anchor / Danish / Fly / Scots)	9	1.06	-	-	
	Trawler	6	0.71	-	-	
	Stern trawler (Pelagic / Demersal)	2	0.23	1	0.72	
	Freezer trawler (Pelagic / Demersal)	1	0.11	-	-	
	Total	32	3.76	1	0.72	
Norwegian	Unknown	1	0.11	-	-	
	Total	1	0.11	-	-	
Portuguese	Trawler	1	0.11	-	-	
	Total	1	0.11	-	-	

Landings by Weight and Value

23.5.34 In terms of annual landed weight in 2024 within the study area, shellfish is the largest target species representing ~88.7% of the overall catch volume (Ref 23.7). Demersal fishing only accounted for approximately 5.8% and pelagic fishing approximately 5.5% (Ref 23.7). In terms of catch value, shellfish account for approximately 96.8% with demersal and pelagic at 2% and 1.8% respectively (Ref 23.7).

23.5.35 **Table 23-12** shows the top five species caught within the study area. Of the 12 rectangles analysed, only rectangle 42E9 had finfish as their most valuable species, rather than shellfish.

Table 23-12 Top five landed species by value (GBP) in 2024 in ICES rectangles within the study area

		ICES rectangles						
		35F0	36F0	36F1	37F0	38E9	38F0	
Landed species	1	Crab (edible / brown)	Lobster	Crabs (edible / brown)	Lobster	Lobster	Crab (edible / brown)	
	2	Whelk	Crab (edible / brown)	Lobster	Crab (edible / brown)	Nephrops	Lobster	
	3	Lobster	Scallop	Scallop	Scallop	Crab (edible / brown)	Nephrops	
	4	Brown shrimp	Whelk	Whelk	Herring	Scallop	Scallop	
	5	Green crab (<i>Carcinus maenas</i>)	Brown shrimp	Velvet crab (<i>Necora puber</i>)	Whiting	Turbot	Halibut	
			39E9	39F0	40E9	40F0	41E9	42E9
	1	Nephrops	Nephrops	Lobster	Nephrops	Nephrops	Haddock	
	2	Haddock	Halibut	Crab (edible / brown)	Halibut	Crab (edible / brown)	Crab (edible / brown)	
	3	Crabs (edible / brown)	Monks and Anglers	Nephrops	Haddock	Lobster	Nephrops	
	4	Lobster	Haddock	Haddock	Whiting	Monks and Anglers	Lobster	
5	Halibut	Whiting	Halibut	Squid	Scallop	Plaice (<i>Pleuronectes platessa</i>)		

Temporal Trends

23.5.36 Despite a reduction in vessel numbers over the last decade and reductions in fish quotas for all EU member state fishing fleets (Ref 24.13), it is unlikely that there will be any significant change to fishing effort and activity in the North Sea fishing grounds and in the vicinity of the English Offshore Scheme in the near future.

23.5.37 Most of the local fishing fleet rely on pots and traps for shellfish (Table 23-9, Ref 23.7), and trawling for demersal and pelagic species (Table 23-9, Ref 23.7).

Restricted Fishing Areas

23.5.38 The English Offshore Scheme intersects (such as in the case of all EIFCA Byelaw areas) or is within proximity of areas which have fishing restrictions. These are either put in place by the regional IFCA (out to 6 NM) or by the MMO (out to 12 NM) and are as follows:

EIFCA Byelaw areas

- Byelaw 3 – Molluscan Shellfish methods of Fishing which requires Fishers to request authorisation for a license to fish shellfish in these areas (Ref 23.12).

- Byelaw XXIV: Humber Estuary Cockles Fishery - provisions of this Byelaw state “*no person shall take, remove or disturb any cockle unless that person holds a current permit issued by the Committee*” (Ref 23.13).
- Whelk Permit Byelaw 2016 - The byelaw requires whelk fishers to have a permit to fish for whelks and to fish in accordance with flexible permit conditions. Whelk permits are issued annually and expire on the 31 March each year, regardless of when fishers applied or received a permit (Ref 23.14).

MMO

- Inner Dowsing Race Bank and North Ridge Special Area of Conservation (SAC) 2022 – Towing. Which says that the use of bottom towed fishing gear is prohibited within a specified reef or sandbank area (Ref 23.15).
- Farne Deeps Fishing Restrictions – Which says vessels deploying demersal trawls and seines (except for beam trawls) are prohibited from fishing in the Farne Deeps, unless they comply with certain mesh restrictions / selectivity devices (Ref 23.16).

Future baseline

23.5.39 The EIA process will consider the existing baseline conditions within the study area, and future baseline conditions (as far as reasonably practicable) in accordance with the methodology set out in **Volume 1, Part 1, Chapter 5: PEIR Approach and Methodology** of the PEIR.

23.5.40 Commercial fisheries trends are difficult to predict and vary season-by-season based on a range of natural, socio-economic and regulatory factors including:

- Environmental management: Restrictions on the use of certain types of fishing gear or restrictions on species caught within certain areas (such as the Whelks Fisheries Management Plan to ensure the long-term sustainability of whelk stocks by developing a harvest strategy, (Ref 23.17)).
- Recent fisheries management plans introduced in December 2025 which introduced new minimum landing sizes for specific species in specific areas. This has been introduced to protect juveniles being caught before they have matured. (Ref 23.18).
- Fish stock abundance: Fluctuations of the number of individual species stocks due to recruitment, natural disturbances (such as weather conditions and sea temperature variations).
- Market prices: Commercial fishing fleets respond to the market prices and therefore may change focus on targeting the higher value species when the prices are high (such as whelk whose value has increased over recent years and are primarily exported to non-EU countries; the UK is un-restricted by EU measures on this shellfish since Brexit (Ref 23.19).
- Fishing gear: As with many industries the commercial fishing industry is trying to be more efficient and sustainable and therefore are using improved gear technology to reduce their operational costs. An example of this is the move away from using beam trawling to using demersal seine gear.
- Fisheries management: each year quotas are set by the government for specific fish species this is to avoid overfishing of specific species and therefore may mean a change in fishing effort in a particular area. Following the withdrawal from the EU, the

UK and EU have agreed the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA), which establishes a transitional period from 1 May 2021 until 30 June 2026. During the transitional period, 25% of the EU's fisheries quota in UK waters will be transferred to the UK. Based on these changes it is likely that up to 2026, a similar level of fishing activity will take place within UK territorial waters, but this effort will be undertaken by a greater proportion of UK than EU vessels. As of May 2025, this agreement was extended until 2038. EU vessels can access UK waters by applying for a foreign vessel licence. This licence allows EU vessels to fish within the UK EEZ (12 to 200 NM limit), UK 6 to 12 NM limit (ICES 4c, 7d-g) and Northern Ireland 0 to 6 NM (Ref 23.20). There are additional constraints on EU vessels fishing in ICES 38E9, 39E9, 40E8 and 40E9 where there are restrictions on deploying demersal trawls and seine nets (Ref 23.19). The Government is currently proposing to extend the ban on bottom trawling in more Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) which could affect 30,000 km² over 41 MPAs (Ref 23.21). Fisheries management also includes closures to some fisheries, such as the March 2024 ban on landing sandeel in the English North Sea waters and all Scottish waters.

- Climate change: It is anticipated over time that global climate change will result in changes to the marine environment, which would include impacts on fish and shellfish populations of commercial importance (Ref 23.22, Ref 23.23). This may in turn result in changes to commercial fisheries practices to respond to any potential changes in species distribution abundance and / or seasonal trends.
- Other offshore developments: The Lincolnshire coast has a number of existing and planned offshore projects including other interconnector projects, and offshore wind developments. All of these projects will have demands on an ever-decreasing area where the local fishers can fish.

23.6 Environmental Measures

23.6.1 As set out in **Volume 1, Part 1, Chapter 5: PEIR Approach and Methodology**, the environmental measures are characterised as design measures or control and management measures. A range of environmental measures could be implemented as part of the English Offshore Scheme and will be secured through the DML and in the Development Consent Order (DCO) as relevant. **Table 23-13** outlines how these design and control measures would influence the commercial fisheries assessment.

23.6.2 Design measures that are relevant to the commercial fisheries assessment are denoted by a (D) in the ID reference column in **Table 23-13**. These are also included in **Volume 2, Part 1, Appendix 5.A: Outline Register of Design Measures**.

23.6.3 Several management plans will be provided as Outline Management Plans with the DCO application to support the DML. These include an Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), Outline Marine Pollution Contingency Plan (MPCP), and an Outline FLCP. These documents will outline measures to be implemented to comply with legislation (e.g., in relation to the prevention of oil and chemical spills) during all phases of the English Offshore Scheme. Final management plans will be submitted in accordance with the DML to discharge the licence conditions. Control and management measures that are relevant to the commercial fisheries assessment are denoted by a (C) in the ID reference column in **Table 23-13**. These control and management measures are also included within the Outline CEMP and Outline FLCP that can be found in **Volume 2, Part 1, Appendix 5.C: Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan** and

Table 23-13 Summary of the environmental measures

Receptor	Potential changes and effects	Environmental measures	ID reference
All gear types	Risk of snagging / Loss of grounds due to deposit of external cable protection	The cables shall be buried in the seabed, except in areas where burial is not possible e.g., where ground conditions do not allow cable or at infrastructure crossings.	OMT03 (D)
All gear types	Risk of snagging / Loss of grounds due to deposit of external cable protection	External cable protection will only be installed where considered necessary for the safe operation of the English Offshore Scheme. This includes the repair of cables due to accidental damage, where depth of lowering is not achieved and at infrastructure crossings.	OMT04 (D)
All gear types	Temporary restricted access to fishing ground (including required gear clearance) due to the presence of Project vessels and equipment)	Designated (and as minimal as possible) anchoring areas and protocols shall be employed during marine operations to minimise physical disturbance of the seabed.	OMT07 (D)
All gear types	Risk of snagging / Loss of grounds due to deposit of external cable protection	A Cable Burial Risk Assessment (CBRA) will be undertaken to identify appropriate target depth of burial based on geology, water depths and Automatic Identification System (AIS) data. A risk based burial approach will be used, assessing external cable protection risk factors such as sediment type, shallow geology, sediment mobility, fishing activity, shipping movements and anchor deployment along the route.	OMT09 (D)
All gear types	Risk of snagging / Loss of grounds due to deposit of external cable protection	Where rock protection is used for external cable protection, consideration will be given to design that minimise the risk of fishing gear snagging (i.e., use of 1:3 profiles).	CF01 (D)

Receptor	Potential changes and effects	Environmental measures	ID reference
All gear types	General safety	As-built locations of cable and external protection will be supplied to the United Kingdom Hydrographic Office (UKHO) (Admiralty), The Crown Estate and Kingfisher (KIS-ORCA).	OMT02 (C)
Demersal gear	General safety	Guard vessel(s), using Radio Detection and Ranging (RADAR) with Automatic RADAR Plotting Aid (ARPA) to monitor vessel activity and predict possible interactions, will be employed to work alongside the installation vessel(s) during cable installation works and to protect any temporary cable exposures during installation.	OMT05 (C)
All gear types	Temporary restricted access to fishing ground (including required static gear clearance) due to the presence of Project vessels and equipment)	Relevant information will be communicated to other sea users Notices to Mariners (NtM), Kingfisher Bulletins, Radio Navigation Warnings, Navigational Telex (NAVTEX) and Navigational Areas (NAVAREA) warnings and / or broadcast warnings.	OMT10 (C)
Demersal gear	General safety	Cut cable end locations and associated weights shall be accurately noted and charted and positions supplied to the UKHO (Admiralty), The Crown Estate, Kingfisher (KIS-ORCA) and the Fisheries Liaison Officer (FLO) at the earliest opportunity for onward communication.	OMT12 (C)
All gear types	General safety	A FLO, and / or fisheries working group(s), will be maintained throughout installation to ensure project information is effectively disseminated, dialogue is maintained with the commercial fishing industry and access to home ports is maintained during the main fishing season. Details of the FLO will be included in the Fisheries Liaison Coexistence Plan (FLCP). An OFLCP has been prepared, which will be updated to the FLCP post-consent (Volume 2, Part 3, Appendix 23.B: Outline Fisheries Liaison and Coexistence Plan).	CF01 (C)

Receptor	Potential changes and effects	Environmental measures	ID reference
Demersal gear	General safety	If cable exposures are identified during routine surveys, the location of these will be shared with fisheries stakeholders and where necessary, additional temporary measures put in place (e.g., marker buoys, use of guard vessels etc), until a repair or remediation can be implemented.	CF02 (C)
All gear types	Risk of snagging / Loss of grounds due to deposit of external cable protection	A procedure for the claim of loss of / or damage to fishing gear will be developed and details included in the Construction Fisheries Liaison and Coexistence Plan post-consent.	CF03 (C)
All gear types	Risk of snagging / Loss of grounds due to deposit of external cable protection	During cable route clearance, specific activities will be completed to remove items from the seabed.	CF04 (C)
All gear types	Risk of snagging / Loss of grounds due to deposit of external cable protection	Where the English Offshore Scheme encounters Out of Service (OOS) cables, if deemed necessary, those OOS cables will be cut and their ends made safe with weights. Any cut cable lengths will be retrieved to the deck of the vessel for disposal onshore via conventional onshore waste channels. Any cut cable end locations and associated weights shall be accurately noted and charted and positions given to the FLO at the earliest opportunity for onward communication to the fishing industry.	CF05 (C)
All gear types	Risk of snagging / Loss of grounds due to deposit of external cable protection	Timings of any temporary areas of exclusion from fishing grounds will be clearly communicated via a notice to mariners and communicated by the Company FLO directly to local fishing associations and known fishers as required.	CF06 (C)
All gear types	General safety	During cable route clearance, specific activities will be completed to remove items from the seabed. In the event that abandoned, lost or discarded fishing gear ('ALDFG') is encountered, it may be necessary in certain circumstances to bring ALDFG onto the vessel deck. In these instances, marked ALDFG would be returned to the MMO / local Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority	CF07 (C)

Receptor	Potential changes and effects	Environmental measures	ID reference
		(IFCA) for onward retrieval by the owner of the marked gear, in line with existing best practice. Not all gear (particularly 'active' gear) is marked; if necessary to bring onto the vessel deck, unmarked gear would be disposed of via conventional onshore waste channels.	

23.7 Scope of the Assessment

Spatial scope and study area

- 23.7.1 The spatial scope of the assessment of the commercial fish assessment covers the area of the English Offshore Scheme contained within the draft Order Limits, together with the study area as described in Section 23.4.

Temporal scope

- 23.7.2 The temporal scope of the assessment of coastal and marine physical processes is consistent with the period over which the English Offshore Scheme would be carried out. It assumes construction of the English Offshore Scheme will commence in 2030 and cover a period of approximately 5 years. Operation would commence in 2035, with periodic maintenance required during the Operation and Maintenance phase of the English Offshore Scheme. It is assumed that maintenance and repair activities could take place at any time during the life span of the English Offshore Scheme.
- 23.7.3 The English Offshore Scheme is expected to have a life span of more than 40 years. If decommissioning requires full or partial removal of the English Offshore Scheme at this point in time, then activities and effects associated with the decommissioning phase are expected to be of a similar level to those during the construction phase, albeit with a lesser duration. The Project could also remain operational for a period after the 40 years or be taken out of service and left within the draft Order Limits after 40 years. Acknowledging the complexities of completing a detailed assessment for decommissioning works up to 40 years in the future, based on the information available, the Project has concluded that impacts from decommissioning would be no greater than those during the construction phase. Furthermore, should decommissioning take place it is expected that an assessment in accordance with the legislation and guidance at the time of decommissioning would be undertaken. In addition, it is expected that the DCO will include a requirement for a written scheme of decommissioning for approval by the relevant planning authority.

Identification of receptors

- 23.7.4 The principal commercial fisheries receptors that have been identified as being potentially subject to significant effects are summarised in **Table 23-14**.

Table 23-14 Commercial fisheries receptors subject to potential effects

Receptor	Reason for consideration
Commercial fisheries (Static gear, dredging, demersal seine, demersal trawl, beam trawl, pelagic seine and pelagic trawl)	Commercial fisheries rely on fishing grounds being available to fish, therefore any works within their grounds will cause disruption. The level of disruption would be based on the activities taking place.

Potential effects considered within this assessment

23.7.5 The effects on commercial fisheries receptors which have the potential to be significant and have been taken forward for detailed assessment are summarised in **Table 23-15**.

23.7.6 The following potential impacts although applicable to commercial fisheries have been considered in **Volume 1, Part 3, Chapter 22: Shipping and Navigation**:

- Fishing gear interactions with cable;
- Reduction in under-keel clearance (cable and crossings); and
- EMF interference with marine navigation, communications and position-fixing equipment.

23.7.7 Potential impacts on commercial fish species are addressed by the fish and shellfish assessment (**Volume 1, Part 3, Chapter 19: Fish and Shellfish**).

Table 23-15 Commercial fisheries receptors scoped in for further assessment

Receptor	Likely Significant Effects
Commercial fisheries (Static gear, dredging, demersal seine, demersal trawl, beam trawl, pelagic seine and pelagic trawl)	Temporary restricted access to fishing grounds during construction, Operation and Maintenance, and decommissioning phases of the Project.
Commercial fisheries (Static gear, dredging, demersal seine, demersal trawl, beam trawl, pelagic seine and pelagic trawl)	Temporary displacement of fishing activity into other area during construction, Operation and Maintenance, and decommissioning phases of the Project.
Commercial fisheries (Demersal fisheries – dredging, demersal trawl, beam trawl)	Permanent displacement of fishing activity during construction, Operation and Maintenance, and decommissioning phase of the Project.
Commercial fisheries (Static gear)	Temporary increase and deposition of suspended sediments during construction, Operation and Maintenance, and decommissioning phases of the Project.

23.7.8 The receptors / effects detailed in **Table 23-16** have been scoped out from being subject to further assessment because the potential effects are not considered likely to be significant, as agreed through the Scoping Opinion.

Table 23-16 Summary of effects scoped out of the commercial fisheries assessment

Receptors / potential effects	Justification
Commercial fisheries (Mobile gear)	As outlined in Table 23-2 , the Planning Inspectorate agreed that temporary increases and deposition of suspended sediments on mobile gear during construction, Operation and Maintenance, and decommissioning phases of the Project has been scoped out. This is because mobile fishing gear is unlikely to be in one area long enough for suspended sediment to settle.
Changes in distribution of target species during construction, operation, and decommissioning phases of the Project	<p>This potential impact pathway was included within the Scoping Report as an impact that would be assessed if the assessment for fish and shellfish identified significant effects that would affect fish and shellfish populations as outlined in Table 23-2.</p> <p>Volume 1, Part 3, Chapter 19: Fish and Shellfish has concluded effects to fish and shellfish resulting from the Project are Not Significant, therefore this impact has been scoped out of the preliminary assessment for commercial fisheries.</p>

23.8 Key Parameters for Assessment

Realistic worst-case design scenario

- 23.8.1 The assessment has followed the Rochdale Envelope approach as outlined in **Volume 1, Part 1, Chapter 4: Description of the Project** and **Volume 1, Part 1, Chapter 5: PEIR Approach and Methodology** of the PEIR. The assessment of effects has been based on the description of the Project and parameters outlined in **Volume 1, Part 1, Chapter 4: Description of the Project**. However, where there is uncertainty regarding a particular design parameter, the realistic worst-case design parameters are provided below with regards to commercial fisheries along with the reasons why these parameters are considered worst-case. The preliminary assessment for commercial fisheries has been undertaken on this basis. Effects of greater adverse significance are not likely to arise should any other development scenario, based on details within the Rochdale Envelope (e.g., different infrastructure layout within the draft Order Limits), to that assessed here be taken forward in the final design scheme.
- 23.8.2 In relation to commercial fisheries the following assumptions presented in **Table 23-17** are made regarding the Project design parameters to ensure a realistic worst-case assessment has been undertaken.

Table 23-17 Project worst-case assumptions

Impact	Phase			Maximum Design Scenario (MDS)	Justification
	C	O	D		
Temporary Restricted Access to Fishing Ground (Including Required Static Gear Clearance)	✓	✓	✓	<u>Construction</u> Advisory Safety Zones 500 m advisory safety zones for fishing vessels from Project vessels. Subtidal temporary habitat disturbance = 13.91 km ²	The MDS for temporary habitat loss / seabed disturbance (which could imply temporary restricted access to fishing ground) relates to seabed preparation and cable lay and burial, and vessel advisory safety zones.
				<u>Operation and Maintenance</u> Advisory Safety Zones 500 m advisory safety zones for fishing vessels from Project vessels for maintenance works. Subtidal temporary habitat disturbance = 0.315 km ²	The MDS for temporary habitat loss / seabed disturbance (which could imply temporary restricted access to fishing ground) relates to cable repair, and vessel advisory safety zones.
				<u>Decommissioning</u> Refer to the construction phase MDS.	MDS is similar (or less) to that of the construction phase.
Temporary Displacement of Fishing Activity into Other Areas	✓	✓	✓	<u>Construction</u> Refer to 'Temporary Restricted Access to Fishing Ground' for realistic worst-case assumptions.	
				<u>Operation and Maintenance</u> Refer to 'Temporary Restricted Access to Fishing Ground' for realistic worst-case assumptions.	Refer to 'Temporary Restricted Access to Fishing Ground' for realistic worst-case assumptions.
				<u>Decommissioning</u> Refer to 'Temporary Restricted Access to Fishing Ground' for realistic worst-case assumptions.	

Impact	Phase			Maximum Design Scenario (MDS)	Justification
	C	O	D		
Permanent Displacement of Fishing Activity	✓	✓	✓	<u>Construction</u> No permanent displacement.	Maximum effect of permanent displacement of fishing activity will occur because of the maximum area of seabed covered by remedial external cable protection and protection at infrastructure crossings. If the English Offshore Scheme is left in-situ, permanent displacement of fishing activity will be the same as Operation and Maintenance.
				<u>Operation and Maintenance</u> Total permanent habitat loss = 2.276 km ²	
				<u>Decommissioning</u> Refer to the Operation and Maintenance phase MDS.	
Temporary increase in suspended sediments and sediment deposition	✓	✓	✓	<u>Construction</u> Peak suspended sediment concentrations of more than 10 mg/l predicted to occur up to 8.8 km from the point of release.	The greatest impact distance is predicted to be associated with trenching in the area where there is the highest percentage of fines and fastest flow. During Operation and Maintenance, de-burial and re-burial to repair cables would utilise similar cable installation equipment as construction, therefore the potential for suspended sediments to be mobilised is the same as construction.
				<u>Operation and Maintenance</u> Refer to the construction phase MDS.	
				<u>Decommissioning</u> Refer to the construction phase MDS.	
					If the English Offshore Scheme is removed, temporary increase in suspended sediments and sediment deposition will be the same as Operation and Maintenance. If the English Offshore Scheme is left in situ, there will be no changes to suspended sediments.

23.9 Assessment Methodology

Overview

23.9.1 The commercial fisheries assessment generally follows the assessment approach framework as set out in **Volume 1, Part 1, Chapter 5: PEIR Approach and Methodology**. However, while this has informed the approach, it is necessary to set out how this methodology has been applied, and adapted as appropriate, to address the specific needs of the commercial fisheries assessment.

Receptor sensitivity / value

23.9.2 In line with the industry standard approach across offshore EIAs, a four-category sensitivity and magnitude scale, from "Negligible" to "High" has been used. While **Volume 1, Part 1, Chapter 5: PEIR Approach and Methodology** provides for a "Very High" category, this is based on onshore specific guidance, rather than being applicable to offshore receptors.

23.9.3 The criteria provided in **Table 23-18** have been used to characterise the sensitivity of the receptor. The sensitivity of the receptor is a function of its capacity to accommodate change and reflects its ability to recover if it is affected. The sensitivity of the receptor is therefore quantified via the following factors:

- Value - A measure of the receptor's importance, rarity and worth.
- Adaptability - The degree to which a receptor can avoid or adapt to an impact.
- Tolerance - The ability of a receptor to accommodate temporary or permanent change without a significant adverse impact.
- Recoverability - The temporal scale over an extent to which a receptor will recover following an impact.

23.9.4 Where receptors can adapt to, tolerate or recover from indirect impacts, these factors were incorporated into an assessment of their sensitivity.

Table 23-18 Criteria for characterising the sensitivity of receptors

Receptor sensitivity / value	Definition
High	Receptor is highly vulnerable to impacts and recoverability is long term or not possible. e.g., no and / or very limited alternative fishing grounds available.
Medium	Receptor is generally vulnerable to the impacts and recoverability is slow or costly e.g., low levels of alternative fishing grounds are available, and / or the fishing fleet has a low operational range.
Low	Receptor is somewhat vulnerable to impacts and moderate levels or recovery e.g., moderate levels of alternative fishing grounds available and / or fishing fleet has moderate operational range.

Receptor sensitivity / value	Definition
Negligible	Receptor is generally not vulnerable to impacts and / or has high recoverability e.g., high levels of alternative fishing grounds available and / or fishing fleet has large operational range or adaptive to change.

Magnitude of impact

23.9.5 The criteria for characterising the magnitude of an impact on commercial fisheries are outlined in **Table 23-19**. The magnitude of an impact provides a useful initial measure of the likelihood of an environmental effect arising. Magnitude is defined for the purposes of assessment via four factors:

- Extent - The area over which an impact occurs.
- Duration - The time for which the impact occurs.
- Frequency - How often the impact occurs.
- Severity - The degree of change relative to the baseline level.

Table 23-19 Criteria for characterising the magnitude of an impact

Magnitude	Definition
High	Loss of resource and/or quality and integrity of resource; severe damage to key characteristics, features or elements (e.g., target fish or shellfish biological resource, location of fishery). Substantial loss of economic value of commercial landings, that are nationally or regionally significant.
Medium	Loss of resource but not adversely affecting the integrity; partial loss of / damage to key characteristics, features or elements (e.g., target fish or shellfish biological resource and location of fishery). Partial loss of economic value of commercial landings that is locally significant.
Low	Some measurable change in attributes, quality or vulnerability; minor loss of, or alteration to one or more key characteristics, features or elements (e.g., target fish or shellfish biological resource and location of fishery). Minor loss of economic value of commercial landings that is not locally significant.
Negligible	Very minor loss or detrimental alteration to one or more characteristics, features or elements. Slight loss of ability to carry out fishing activities or slight loss or target fish or shellfish biological resources.

Significance of effect

23.9.6 The significance of an effect, either adverse or beneficial, would be determined using a combination of the magnitude of the impact and the sensitivity of the receptor (**Table 23-20**).

Table 23-20 Significance matrix

Sensitivity or value	Magnitude of change			
	High	Medium	Low	Negligible
High	Major (significant)	Major (significant)	Moderate (potentially significant)	Minor (not significant)
Medium	Major (significant)	Moderate (potentially significant)	Minor (not significant)	Minor (not significant)
Low	Moderate (potentially significant)	Minor (not significant)	Minor (not significant)	Negligible (not significant)
Negligible	Minor (not significant)	Minor (not significant)	Negligible (not significant)	Negligible (not significant)

Preliminary assessment of cumulative effects

- 23.9.7 **Volume 1, Part 4, Chapter 27: Cumulative Effects** defines the methodology for the assessment of cumulative effects. The Commercial Fisheries assessment of intra- and inter-project cumulative effects will be carried out and reported within the ES to be submitted with the application for development consent.
- 23.9.8 The zone of influence (Zol) for the inter-project cumulative effects assessment of commercial fisheries would comprise the draft Order Limits, plus a buffer which extends into the North Sea from north Norfolk (to encompass the Wash and North Norfolk Coast SAC, up to the offshore waters off the Lincolnshire coast, out to 12 NM. This is a precautionary maximum Zol that encompasses the worst-case scenario of potential impact pathways from temporary restricted access to fishing ground, and temporary displacement of fishing activity into other areas and is based on static gear being the most limited gear type, and this static fleet tends to fish out to 12 NM.
- 23.9.9 **Volume 1, Part 4, Chapter 27: Cumulative Effects** and **Volume 2, Part 4, Appendix 27.A: Long List of other Developments** present the long and short lists of 'other developments' for the inter-project cumulative effects which will be considered at the ES stage (with updates as necessary), and the methodology which allowed for the identification of these other developments, to allow consultation bodies to form a view and provide comment on the other developments included. The long list will be reviewed and if necessary, updated, in the lead up to the ES, as the Project design further evolves and in response to any comments raised at statutory consultation.

23.10 Preliminary Impact Assessment - Temporary Restricted Access to Fishing Ground (Including Required Static Gear Clearance) Effects

Construction

- 23.10.1 For the purposes of assessment, it has been assumed that the English Offshore Scheme will involve up to eight cable lay and burial campaigns. Pre-construction phase activities, such as surveys, route preparation, boulder clearance, pre-sweeping and infrastructure crossing preparation are anticipated, and the entire construction programme is expected to be completed by 2035. As set out in **Volume 1, Part 1, Chapter 4: Description of the**

Project, installation vessels are estimated to install the cable at a speed of between 100 m and 500 m per hour, depending on seabed conditions and the vessels used.

- 23.10.2 The two High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) cables will be installed in one trench, with installation methodologies being considered including simultaneous cable lay and trenching, and surface cable lay followed by post lay trenching. Cable burial tools which may be used include jet trenching machines, mechanical trenchers, control flow excavators and ploughs. Overall, displacement ploughs / boulder clearance ploughs would result in the greatest seabed disturbance, however, this method will only be required within discrete sections of the English Offshore Scheme.
- 23.10.3 Additional information on the construction techniques is provided in **Volume 1, Part 1, Chapter 4: Description of the Project**.
- 23.10.4 The English Offshore Scheme has the potential to affect all commercial fishing activity (both static and mobile gear) during the construction via temporary restricted access to fishing grounds. During construction, fishing activity will be temporarily excluded from discrete areas of the draft Order Limits due to the recommendation that vessels stay at least 500 m distant from Project vessels engaged in works.
- 23.10.5 There would also be a requirement for fishing vessels that use static gear such as pots to clear their gear from a discrete corridor within the draft Order Limits, or a part of it, in advance of any construction activities.
- 23.10.6 Additionally, during the construction phase fishing vessels may be asked to avoid areas of the draft Order Limits where the installed cables may be temporarily vulnerable for example where cables are surface laid or exposed and are awaiting trenching or protection. If this is required, it will be requested via NtM's and engagement with fisheries stakeholders via the FLO. Further, advisory safety zones around construction will be implemented and guard vessels will be utilised.
- 23.10.7 This impact will cause a localised, but temporary, loss of access to fishing grounds and the resources within them. This will therefore result in the loss of fishing activities taking place within these locations which would affect all fishing types / vessels during the periods of construction.

Static gear

- 23.10.8 Construction will impact on vessels using static gear such as pots and traps, especially within ICES rectangle 36F0 where the shellfish (e.g., crab, lobster and whelk) catch is of the highest value, though static gear is not localised and is used along much of the draft Order Limits as illustrated in **Volume 3, Part 3, Figure 23-2: Pelagic Trawl and Seines, and Static Gear Effort within the Study Area**.
- 23.10.9 During construction, fishing vessels using pot or traps will be required to remove pots from areas under construction and either relocate or bring to shore depending on available grounds and fishing preferences. Potting fishers could therefore experience loss of earnings for the time taken to relocate gear (unless they are able to use other grounds and have sufficient prior notice not to set their gear in the construction area), and, potentially, also a loss of earnings associated with not being able to fish the specific grounds under construction.
- 23.10.10 It is understood that specific potting grounds may be targeted by specific fishers and therefore impact magnitude will vary between fishers with some more affected than others. The magnitude has been assessed as Negligible because the disruption caused by construction of the English Offshore Scheme is only temporary and will be localised

to short sections for short periods and not affect the whole draft Order Limits at any one time. For all areas where target burial depth is successfully reached, displacement effects last for the duration of which the cable installation vessel takes to transit through the area. If remedial burial is needed, disruption might occur for only a matter of weeks, to months.

- 23.10.11 The fishers who use static gear work in areas which are already heavily exploited and operate from vessels which may be sensitive to change. The highest value landings tend to come from those vessels 12.01-15.01 m length, which are more capable of finding alternative fishing grounds than, for example, vessels of length 10 m and under, but less capable than vessels exceeding 15 m length. Therefore, this receptor has been identified as having a value and sensitivity of Medium because there may be limited areas of alternative fishing grounds that can be used.
- 23.10.12 The overall significance of the effect on static gear fisheries has been assessed as **Minor and Not Significant**.

Dredging

- 23.10.13 Some dredging occurs in the draft Order Limits within ICES rectangles 36F0, 36F1, 37F0, 38E9, 38F0, and, to a lesser extent, 40E9 and 41E9 as illustrated in **Volume 3, Part 3, Figure 24-3: Interconnector and Telecommunication Cables Within the Study Area**. However, as this is a mobile gear it is thought that there is unlikely to be any significant effect on this type of fishing because the fishing is locationally flexible and they can work around the localised construction areas during the construction duration (see **Table 23-9**). Potential for temporary restricted access to fishing grounds will be temporary and transient in nature as the cable installation progresses, with construction occurring in discrete locations at any one time.
- 23.10.14 The impact on the receptor has been assessed as having a Negligible magnitude with the value and sensitivity of the receptor determined to be Negligible. The overall significance of the effect on dredging fisheries is **Negligible and Not Significant**.

Demersal seine, Beam trawling and Demersal trawl

- 23.10.15 There is evidence of demersal seine gear usage within the draft Order Limits. This is primarily used in ICES rectangles 36F0, 37F0, and 42E9, as illustrated in **Volume 3, Part 3, Figure 23-3: Bottom Seines and Dredge Effort within the Study Area**.
- 23.10.16 There is evidence of some beam trawl gear usage within the draft Order Limits. This is primarily used in ICES rectangles 35F0, 36F0 and 38E9, as illustrated in **Volume 3, Part 3, Figure 23-4: Beam Trawling and Bottom Otter Trawl Effort within the Study Area**, albeit at a much lower scale than some of the other gear types.
- 23.10.17 The use of demersal gear occurs along much of the draft Order Limits; there are areas of high-density effort specifically in ICES rectangle 39E9, as illustrated in **Volume 3, Part 3, Figure 23-4: Beam Trawling and Bottom Otter Trawl Effort within the Study Area**, which is primarily for Nephrops.
- 23.10.18 The UK demersal seine, beam and demersal trawl fleets are highly mobile and can operate across large areas of the North Sea. Given adequate notification via NtM and regular contact with the Project's FLO, it is expected that these vessels will be able to avoid construction areas. The impact on these receptors has been assessed as having a Negligible magnitude because of their mobile nature with the value and sensitivity of the receptor determined to be Negligible because of their ability to find alternative fishing

grounds. The overall significance of the effect on demersal seine, beam and demersal trawl is **Negligible** and **Not Significant**.

Pelagic trawl

- 23.10.19 There is little evidence of the use of pelagic trawl gear along the draft Order Limits with areas of high-density effort in ICES rectangle 40E9 as illustrated in **Volume 3, Part 3, Figure 23-2: Pelagic Trawl and Seines, and Static Gear Effort within the Study Area**, yet this is not reflected in the catch statistics, which show landings only from rectangle 37F0.
- 23.10.20 As with demersal and beam trawl pelagic trawl vessels are also considered to be highly mobile operating over large areas of the North Sea. Given adequate notification via NtM and regular contact with the Project's FLO, it is expected that these vessels will be able to avoid construction areas.
- 23.10.21 The impact on this receptor has been assessed as having a Negligible magnitude because of their mobile nature with the value and sensitivity of the receptor determined to be Negligible because of their ability to find alternative fishing grounds. The overall significance of the effect on demersal seine, beam and demersal trawl is **Negligible** and **Not Significant**.

Operation and Maintenance

- 23.10.22 The English Offshore Scheme would be designed to minimise any maintenance requirements. Following installation, routine maintenance is not anticipated. However, the following activities may be required during the Operation and Maintenance phase:
- Inspection surveys;
 - Cable Repair (if required); and
 - Reburial, remedial protection, or maintenance and reinstatement of external cable protection features.
- 23.10.23 Additional information on the English Offshore Scheme Operation and Maintenance is provided in **Volume 1, Part 1, Chapter 4: Description of the Project**.

All gear types

- 23.10.24 During Operation and Maintenance fishing activity would be temporarily excluded from discrete areas of the draft Order Limits due to the need of implementing advisory safety zones around the cable repair vessels and any support vessels such as guard vessels.
- 23.10.25 It is estimated that one survey every five years may occur during the lifetime of the Project that would require temporary restricted access to fishing grounds. However, any repair or maintenance activities would be temporary and localised rather than the entire draft Order Limits.
- 23.10.26 The NtM's would be issued in advance of any maintenance works. Vessels using static gear such as pots may be required to temporarily relocate their gear for the duration of any maintenance works.
- 23.10.27 The magnitude of the impact is predicted to be localised and of a shorter duration than construction and therefore the magnitude has been defined as Negligible for static gear and Negligible for other fishing methods because the disruption will be temporary and of a short duration.

- 23.10.28 The vessels that use static gear will be the most sensitive to this impact as they will be required to move their gear. However, any restrictions will be highly localised and therefore should only impact a small number of vessels. Therefore, this receptor has been identified as having a value and sensitivity of Low.
- 23.10.29 The mobile fleet who and can operate across large areas of the North Sea are unlikely to be impacted by Operation and Maintenance work. Therefore, these receptors have been identified as having a value and sensitivity of Low because of their ability to find alternative fishing grounds due to their mobile nature.
- 23.10.30 The overall significance of the impact Temporary restricted access to fishing grounds (including required static gear clearance) during Operation and Maintenance effect has been assessed as **Negligible** and is **Not Significant**.

Decommissioning

- 23.10.31 The English Offshore Scheme is expected to have a life span of more than 40 years, although with repairs, some cable systems last upwards of 60 years.
- 23.10.32 The environmental impact of decommissioning the English Offshore Scheme would be assessed at the time of decommissioning in line with the legislation at the time. Removal of the cable is a similar process to the installation of the cable but in reverse. The environmental impact can therefore not be fully assessed until the environmental conditions at the time of decommissioning are established.
- 23.10.33 In any event, it is not anticipated that impacts from decommissioning would present any greater environmental risk than any assessed impacts from the construction phase.

All gear types

- 23.10.34 The effects on commercial fishing of decommissioning activities would be to be the same or similar to those effects during the construction of the English Offshore Scheme. Therefore, the overall magnitude for vessels using static gear of Negligible and other vessels Low because the disruption will be temporary and of a short duration and will not affect the whole route at any one time.
- 23.10.35 As with construction, Operation and Maintenance vessels using static gear will be impacted more than other vessels using other gear types. Therefore, this receptor has been identified as having a value and sensitivity as Medium because there are limited areas of alternative fishing grounds that can be used. Due to their mobile nature other vessels are unlikely to be significantly impacted, Therefore, these receptors have been identified as having a value and sensitivity of Low because of their ability to find alternative fishing grounds due to their mobile nature.
- 23.10.36 The overall significance of the impact Temporary restricted access to fishing ground (including required static gear clearance) during decommissioning effect has been assessed as **Minor** and is **Not Significant**.

23.11 Preliminary Impact Assessment - Temporary Displacement of Fishing Activity into Other Areas

Construction

23.11.1 The English Offshore Scheme has the potential to effect commercial fishing activity (both static and mobile gear) during construction via temporary displacement. This impact will cause a localised, but temporary, loss of access to fishing grounds and will therefore cause temporary displacement of fishers. Exclusion from fishing grounds within the draft Order Limits may lead to temporary increases in fishing effort in other areas which may already be heavily fished. It may also increase the steaming distances of vessels to reach other fishing grounds.

Static Gear

23.11.2 Prior to construction potting vessels will be required to remove pots from the draft Order Limits and either relocate them or bring to shore depending on available grounds and fishing preferences.

23.11.3 Though preference is to relocate to alternative fishing ground this may not be possible as adjacent areas may already be heavily fished by other vessels using static gear which could potentially lead to gear conflict. It could also lead to an increase in steaming distances to other fishing grounds.

23.11.4 There is the potential for conflict over the reduced grounds if displaced vessels using mobile gear explore grounds primarily used by potting vessels. Conflict between mobile and static gear has the potential to occur and therefore impact fishing patterns in the area. The magnitude has been assessed as Low because the disruption caused by construction of the English Offshore Scheme is only temporary and will not affect the whole draft Order Limits at any one time.

23.11.5 The fishers who use static gear work in areas which are already heavily exploited and in smaller vessels and are therefore more sensitive to change. Therefore, this receptor has been identified as having a value and sensitivity of Medium because there are limited areas of alternative fishing grounds that can be used.

23.11.6 The overall significance of the effect on static gear fisheries has been assessed as **Minor and Not Significant**.

Dredging

23.11.7 There is some evidence of the use of dredging gear in the draft Order Limits, and with patches of dredging activity observed offshore, and to the north, along the inshore coast. Given adequate notification via NtM and regular contact with the Project's FLO, it is expected that these vessels will be able to avoid construction areas and can fish in other areas where static gear such as potters are scarce. As this is a mobile gear it is thought that there is unlikely to be any significant effect on this type of fishing because the fishing is locationally flexible and they can work around the construction areas.

23.11.8 The impact on the receptor has been assessed as having a Low magnitude with the value and sensitivity of the receptor determined to be Negligible. The overall significance of the effect on dredging fisheries is **Negligible and Not Significant**.

Demersal seine

- 23.11.9 Vessels using demersal seine gear are unlikely to be impacted by displacement as they are a mobile gear type and would be able to find alternate grounds to fish in as the excluded areas would be limited and temporary. Surveillance sightings show high intensity of seine fishing in offshore waters throughout the North Sea. Given adequate notification via NtM and regular contact with the Project's FLO, it is expected that these vessels will be able to avoid construction areas and can fish in other areas where static gear such as potters are scarce. Therefore, it is unlikely there will be any significant effect on this gear type during construction.
- 23.11.10 The impact on the receptor has been assessed as having a Low magnitude because of their mobile nature with the value and sensitivity of the receptor determined to be Negligible because of their ability to find alternative fishing grounds. The overall significance of the effect on demersal seine fisheries is **Negligible** and **Not Significant**.

Beam trawling and Demersal trawl

- 23.11.11 Beam and demersal trawlers may be impacted if vessels using static gear methods that have been displaced move to grounds used by the trawlers. This could cause potential conflict of gear. The beam and demersal trawlers tend to be larger than the vessels using static gear and as alternative fishing grounds exist, the impact of temporary displacement will be minimal, even if they need to steam further to reach them. Beam and demersal trawl fleets are highly mobile and can operate across large areas of the North Sea evidenced by the surveillance sightings, which show beam trawl effort highest around England's east coast (particularly ICES rectangle 35F2) and demersal trawl effort prevalent throughout the North Sea. Given adequate notification via NtM and regular contact with the Project's FLO, it is expected that these vessels will be able to avoid construction areas and can fish in other areas where static gear such as potters are scarce. Therefore, it is unlikely there will be any significant effect on this gear type during construction.
- 23.11.12 The impact on the receptor has been assessed as having a Low magnitude because of their mobile nature with the value and sensitivity of the receptor determined to be Negligible because of their ability to find alternative fishing grounds. The overall significance of the effect on beam trawl and demersal trawl fisheries is **Negligible** and **Not Significant**.

Operation and Maintenance

- 23.11.13 During Operation and Maintenance if vessels have advisory safety zones established around them this could lead to displacement of fishing activity i.e., fishing vessels would be temporarily excluded from discrete areas of the draft Order Limits.
- 23.11.14 During Operation and Maintenance of the English Offshore Scheme there is potential to effect commercial fishing activity (both static and mobile gear) via temporary displacement. This impact will cause a localised, but temporary, loss of access to fishing grounds and with therefore cause temporary displacement of fishers. Exclusion from fishing grounds within the draft Order Limits may lead to temporary increases in fishing effort in other areas which may already be heavily fished and could cause potential conflicts.

All gear types

- 23.11.15 It is unknown how many events would happen during the lifetime of the Project that would require temporary restricted access to fishing grounds and therefore temporary displacement. However, any repair or maintenance activities would be temporary and localised rather than the entire draft Order Limits.
- 23.11.16 NtMs would be issued in advance of any maintenance works. Vessels using static gear such as pots may be required to temporarily relocate their gear for the duration of any maintenance works and therefore be temporarily displaced.
- 23.11.17 The impact is predicted to be highly localised and of a shorter duration than construction and therefore the magnitude has been defined as Low for static gear and Negligible for other fishing methods because the disruption will be temporary.
- 23.11.18 The vessels that use static gear will be the most sensitive to this impact as they will be required to move their gear. However, any restrictions will be highly localised and therefore should only impact a small number of vessels. Therefore, this receptor has been identified as having a value and sensitivity as Medium because there are limited areas of alternative fishing grounds that can be used.
- 23.11.19 The mobile fleet who and can operate across large areas of the North Sea are unlikely to be impacted by Operation or Maintenance work. Therefore, these receptors have been identified as having a value and sensitivity as Low because of their ability to find alternative fishing grounds due to their mobile nature.
- 23.11.20 The overall significance of temporary displacement of fishing activity into other area during Operation and Maintenance effect has been assessed as **Minor** and **Not Significant** for the static fleet, and **Negligible** and **Not Significant** for the mobile fleet.

Decommissioning

- 23.11.21 The effects on commercial fishing of decommissioning activities would be to be the same or similar or less than those effects during the construction of the English Offshore Scheme. Therefore, the overall magnitude for vessels using static gear will be Low and for other vessels will also be Low because the disruption will be temporary and of a short duration.
- 23.11.22 As with construction, Operation and Maintenance vessels using static gear will be impacted more than other vessels using other gear types. Therefore, this receptor has been identified as having a value and sensitivity as Medium because there are limited areas of alternative fishing grounds that can be used.
- 23.11.23 Due to their mobile nature other vessels are unlikely to be significantly impacted, Therefore, these receptors have been identified as having a value and sensitivity as Low because of their ability to find alternative fishing grounds due to their mobile nature.
- 23.11.24 The overall significance of temporary displacement of fishing activity into other areas has been assessed as **Minor** and **Not Significant**.

23.12 Preliminary Impact Assessment – Permanent Displacement of Fishing Activity

- 23.12.1 The deposit of external cable protection will cause a localised change in seabed topography. Demersal fishing methods, such as bottom drift nets are reliant on a flat

featureless seabed to operate effectively. The placement of external cable protection would therefore exclude the gear type from being used in that area during construction, Operation and Maintenance, and decommissioning.

All Phases

Demersal seine

- 23.12.2 Demersal seine vessels can operate across large areas of the North Sea are unlikely to be impacted by construction, Operation or Maintenance work, and decommissioning. Within the study area, in 2024, demersal seine vessels accounted for only £164,939 of landings.
- 23.12.3 Demersal seine activity is prevalent throughout the study area and further offshore to the north, east, and south east, implying suitable fishing ground is widespread. Therefore, it is unlikely there will be any significant effect on this gear type during construction.
- 23.12.4 The impact on the receptor has been assessed as having a Low magnitude because of their mobile nature with the value and sensitivity of the receptor determined to be Negligible because of their ability to find alternative fishing grounds. The overall significance of the effect on demersal seine fisheries is **Negligible** and **Not Significant**.

Beam trawling and Demersal trawl

- 23.12.5 Beam and demersal trawlers can operate across large areas of the North Sea are unlikely to be impacted by construction, Operation or Maintenance work, and decommissioning. Within the study area, in 2024, beam trawler landings were worth £306,973 and demersal trawl landings were worth £2,412,337.
- 23.12.6 Beam trawling activity is sparse throughout the study area and is most intense further offshore, particularly in ICES rectangle 35F2 and adjacent rectangles. Demersal trawling activity is widespread throughout the North Sea, with highest intensities occurring offshore, and inshore of England's north east coast (ICES rectangle 39E8 and 39E9).
- 23.12.7 The impact on the receptor has been assessed as having a Low magnitude because of their mobile nature with the value and sensitivity of the receptor determined to be Negligible because of their ability to find alternative fishing grounds. The overall significance of the effect on demersal seine fisheries is **Negligible** and **Not Significant**.

23.13 Preliminary Impact Assessment - Temporary Increase and Deposition of Suspended Sediments

Construction

- 23.13.1 Temporary increases and depositions of suspended sediments are likely to occur from installation activities during construction such as pre-lay grapnel run or boulder clearance but primarily from pre-sweeping of sandwaves and cable trenching. As turbidity may also increase, sediment plumes could then be carried through the water column and deposited on the seabed elsewhere. This assessment also considers the pressures changes in water clarity, disturbance of contaminated sediments and smothering and siltation rate changes which are all sub-sets of impact pathway. For commercial fisheries, this may cause the clogging of static gear and any contents of pots or traps and clogging of fine nets.

23.13.2 Most of the draft Order Limits is over primarily sand, gravelly sand and slightly gravelly sand sediment type. **Volume 1, Part 3, Chapter 17: Coastal and Marine Physical Processes** provides an assessment of the area of seabed impacted by temporary increases and depositions of suspended sediments. In summary, it estimates that all sediment coarser than fine sand will settle within the draft Order Limits and very coarse gravels will settle back into the trench. The greatest impact distance is predicted to be associated with trenching in the area where there was the highest percentage of fines and fastest flow, with peak suspended sediment concentration of more than 10 mg/l predicted to occur up to 8.8 km from the point of release. More typically, impact areas are likely to be around half this distance or less, particularly in view of the conservative assumptions applied. Any exceedances of more than 10 mg/l are predicted to be of short duration (order of hours or less) beyond the draft Order Limits due to the relatively fast installation speeds.

Static gear

23.13.3 There is potential for temporary increases and depositions of suspended sediments to affect the use of static gear. Static gear sits on the seabed and therefore could get smothered by depositions of suspended sediments which could clog up the gear and any contents, should the gear be close to the disturbance. However, it is highly unlikely that static gear would be that close to construction activities as they will have been asked in advance to move away from these areas.

23.13.4 The magnitude of a temporary increase and deposition of suspended sediments has been assessed as Negligible. This receptor has been identified as having a value and sensitivity of Low commercial fishers using static gear would have been requested to move their gear away from construction areas. The overall significance of the effect on cockles has been assessed as **Negligible** and **Not Significant**.

Operation and Maintenance

Static gear

23.13.5 It is possible that temporary increases and deposition of suspended sediments may be required during Operation and Maintenance however this would be highly localised. Therefore, the magnitude has been defined as Negligible. The sensitivity of static gear types of receptors has been assessed as Low sensitivity as NtM's will be communicated in advance to ask fishers to avoid the area during any Operation or Maintenance activities. The significance of the effect has been assessed as **Negligible** and **Not Significant**.

Decommissioning

Static gear

23.13.6 If temporary increases and deposition of suspended sediments occur during decommissioning its impact will be like those during construction and therefore overall significance for static gear types is predicted to be **Negligible** and **Not Significant**.

23.14 Transboundary Effects

23.14.1 The EIA Regulations require an ES to consider the transboundary effects of a development (paragraph 5 of Schedule 4). Given the nature of the English Onshore

Scheme and its proposed location, significant transboundary effects are unlikely as there are no pathways for effects to occur outside of the UK. Similarly, the English Offshore Scheme lies wholly in UK waters. Separate applications will be submitted to the relevant Statutory Authority for the Scottish Schemes. Where the English and Scottish Schemes meet, collaborative environmental assessments will ensure impacts are fully assessed.

23.14.2 Effects on biological resources could occur over a range of tens of kilometres from the English Offshore Scheme but are considered unlikely to interact with other European Economic Area (EEA) states, with nearest European mainland coastlines located over 100 km away and potential effects from those impacts listed above not extending to such a distance. Potential impacts and carrier considered within the Transboundary Screening (Ref 23.24) by The Planning Inspectorate for the English Offshore Scheme are:

- Temporary restricted access to fishing grounds (including required static gear clearance).
- Temporary displacement of fishing activity into other areas.
- Permanent displacement of fishing activity.
- Temporary increase and deposition of suspended sediments.

23.14.3 The North Sea is used by vessels from Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway and Germany, which have been considered as part of the baseline that the commercial fisheries assessment covers.

23.14.4 With No Significant impacts predicted to result from the English Offshore Scheme on fish and shellfish receptors, and Commercial Fishing similarly no transboundary impact on the fishing fleets or fish stocks of other EEA States are predicted.

23.15 Further Work to be Undertaken

23.15.1 The information provided in this PEIR is preliminary, the final assessment of significant effects will be reported in the ES. This section describes the further work to be undertaken to support the commercial fisheries assessment presented in the ES.

23.15.2 An Outline Construction Fisheries Liaison and Coexistence Plan has been provided with the PEIR (see **Volume 2, Part 3, Appendix 23.B: Outline Fisheries Liaison and Coexistence Plan**). This will outline how the Applicant will interact with fishers prior and during any works on the Project. This will be discussed with fisheries stakeholders and further detail added for the ES. Further consultation with relevant statutory consultees will be undertaken to define the scope and extents of the environmental measures set out in the assessment above. If, following stakeholder consultation feedback, further design refinement and further assessment, it is identified that additional measures are required, these will be detailed as part of the ES.

Baseline

23.15.3 MMO catch data is updated annually (in September) and the intention would be to update the commercial fisheries ES chapter with the most up to date data available.

23.15.4 Further data for non-UK vessels will also be collected to provide an assessment; although landings from these vessels from the 12 ICES rectangles consistent with the study area are expected to be low.

Assessment

23.15.5 Further assessments may be required if something is picked up during the Statutory Consultation which has not been previously assessed. If this is the case it would be included within the ES.

Further environmental measures

23.15.6 Further consultation with relevant statutory consultees will be undertaken to define the scope and extents of the environmental measures set out in the assessment above. If, following stakeholder consultation feedback, further design refinement and further assessment, it is identified that additional measures are required, these will be detailed as part of the ES.

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National Grid plc
National Grid House,
Warwick Technology Park,
Gallows Hill, Warwick.
CV34 6DA United

Registered in England and Wales
No. 4031152
nationalgrid.com