

South East Regional Inshore Fisheries Forum

Action Points to be brought to the next NIFF meeting from the SE RIFF meeting of the 02nd April 2019

1.1 RIFF renewal process

The South East RIFF is embarking on replacing and adding some additional members to the board of the SE RIFF, and first seeks the following clarification;

The revised TOR for the forums state *'The Inshore Fisheries Forums will be consultative forums at which members will be representative of 'the inshore sector', fishermen using fishing boats of less than 12m overall length.'*

Where nominations are being sought from registered fishermen for a nominee, what parameters are required to be allowed to make a nomination, i.e.

- Size of boat cut off by nominating boat/fisherman - is this exactly 11.99 metres loa (as suggested by the revised TOR above)
- Area being fished by nominating boat/fisherman - is this from only those fishing inside of 6nm or 12nm or a substantial portion of their effort within 6 nm or 12nm – is there a stated amount
- Both of the above or at least one?

1.2 Update on meeting with representatives of SSE regarding plans to construct wind turbines at the Arklow Bank

Three representatives of SSE attended the meeting of the SE RIFF on the 02nd of April 2019 and outlined their plans for constructing up to 99 wind turbines at the Arklow Bank. They stated that they first have to get a contract/approval from Eirgrid for a connection to the Irish electrical grid/network, and also participate within an auction system to win the construct and run the windfarm. It is anticipated to be late 2021 before any construction will commence. However, in the meantime they are finalising any gaps in the survey data regarding the bed where the windfarm is to be placed, and are commencing consultations with stakeholders. They plan to meet harbour users of both Wicklow and Arklow ports within the coming month in order to make a decision on which harbour to be used as their operations base. Members of the RIFF raised concerns about exclusions zones around the turbines once in place, where the SSE reps stated that there would be none. The need to verify that the authorities here such as the Marine Surveyors Office would not impose one on safety grounds needs to be clarified. Concerns over construction were also raised. It was stressed by the members of the SE RIFF that SSE need to as soon as possible arrange to meet with the fishermen and other stakeholders within the Arklow Bank area to brief them on their plans directly, rather than relying on second information to be disseminated. The SSE reps agreed with this and also to stay in contact with the RIFF at all stages of the process as communication with all stakeholders is key. SSE are also to meet with other relevant RIFFS such the North East RIFF.

1.3 North West Mackerel proposal

The South East RIFF wish to state that its support the proposal to increase the quota for Mackerel Hook and Line fishery from 500kg to 1250kg per trip for vessel which can safely carry 1250kg.

It adds that the RIFF is however concerned about the impact on mackerel stocks of the potential for larger offshore pelagic vessels to high grade at sea in contravention of the Landings Obligation. The placement of observers onboard is recommended.

1.4 Lack of competitiveness within the razor clam market

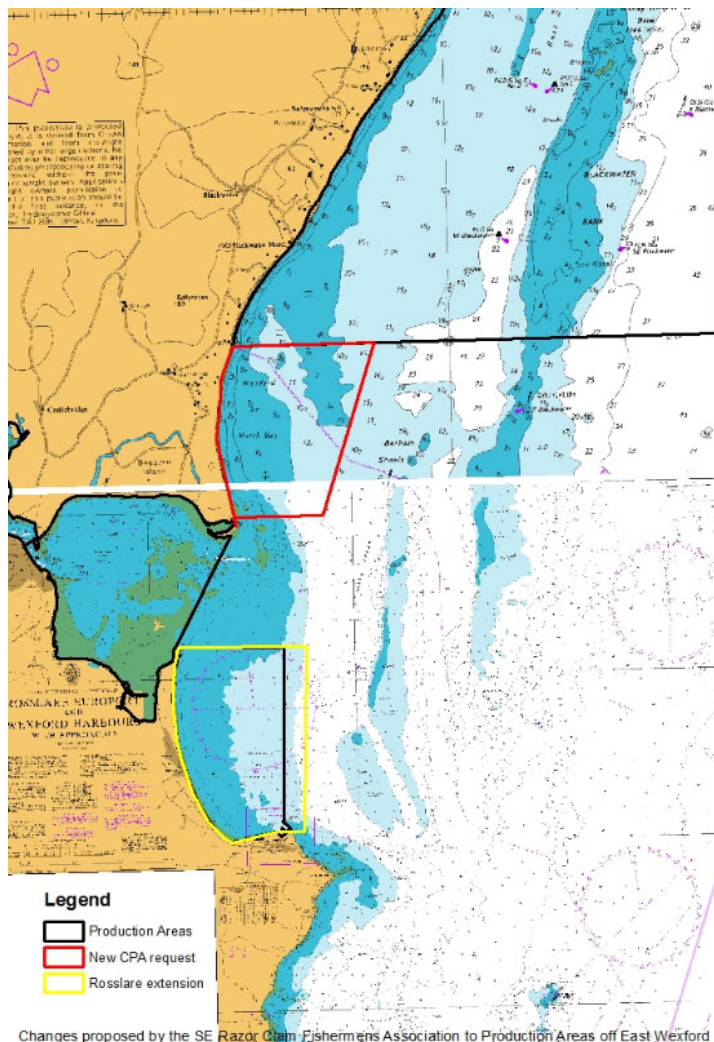
The South East RIFF wish to highlight the deteriorating market position for Irish caught razor clams, due to the apparent landing by the Scottish fishing industry which apparently allows for electric pulse caught razors. Buyers of razors from the south east have stated that they are finding it increasingly difficult to market Irish razors due to the difference in quality. Boats from the south east are now only fishing to order with an ever-decreasing number of landings required. This has now reached an uneconomic level for fishermen to continue within the industry, and has the potential for Ireland to lose any position with the razor export market.

The South East RIFF urgently request that

- (a) the relevant agencies examine the market situation for razors
- (b) the position within Scotland regarding the use of the electric pulse system and re-examine its introduction within Ireland within an appropriate management plan to safeguard stocks.

1.5 Extension to classified razor beds at Wexford (south and north beds).

The South East RIFF having received notification by the South East Razor Association to seek an extension to the two Classified Production Areas (CPAs) as shown in the image below, wish to state that it has no issue with this, and is happy to support the razor association in the process of extending the areas.



1.6 Bi valve Classification Protocol.

The SE RIFF wish to have clarified regarding the protocol;

- Is it fully signed of by all appropriate authorities/agencies with the IMG
- If it has not been signed of, what are the outstanding issues and what plans are there to resolve them and when
- If it has been signed of on, has it been circulated to all Port managers of the SFPA as there appears to still be doubt about the process for identifying new razor clam beds, i.e. fishermen being allowed to 'scout' areas without making any landings in order to request further work by the MI etc.

The SE RIFF requests that the Bi valve Classification Protocol be finalised if not done so, and that it sent to the Bi valve Working Group (BWG), the NIFF, 6 RIFFs, all offices of the SFPA and be published on the Inshore Forums website as soon as possible. Briefings if appropriate should also be made available to ensure a consistent approach.

1.7 Voisinage agreement implications

- (a) Quota access: Clarification is required regarding the position for Northern Ireland (NI) registered fishing vessels fishing inside of 6 NM and the requirement that they need to have quota from their own jurisdiction (NI) rather than land fish from the ROI quota. This applies to whitefish quota species.

What is the position for inshore stocks that have a quota in place within the Republic of Ireland (ROI) such as razor clams. Do the NI authorities have to put in place a quota regime of their own to cover their own NI registered boats, or is it the case that such boats have access to and fish from the quota put in place by the ROI authorities.

How will landings by NI registered boats that are based in The NI be enforced. Should they be required to land with the ROI?

- (b) Loophole in obtaining NI licenses: With the new legislation to reinstate the Voisinage agreement has the loophole been closed that enables boats from the UK to be registered through the NI jurisdiction, where in many cases such boats are purchased by ROI based fishermen. The main concern here is that boats registered here in the ROI could sell there license and re-register in the NI, especially if the situation with regard to access to shellfish quotas is unclear. Fear that effort could increase in fisheries already under pressure from NI registered boats.