

Salcombe Harbour Board – 12 November 2007

SCALLOP RANCHING TRIAL WITHIN THE ESTUARY

Report of Head of Service Salcombe Harbour

Statutory Powers: Pier and Harbour Order (Salcombe) Confirmation Act 1954

Financial Implications: Officer time only at this time.

Purpose

To inform the Harbour Board of the operational parameters of the Scallop Ranching Trial prior to its commencement in January 2008 and gain the Board's endorsement for the Trial Specification.

Recommendations

That Harbour Board RESOLVES to:

- a. note the progress which has been made to prepare for the scallop ranching trial.**
- b. approve the specification for scallop ranching trial, which will be conducted under the supervision of the Harbour Authority.**

Background

1. Harbour Board approval was given for the conduct of a scallop ranching trial on 20 March 2007 (**SH41/06**). The Board directed that prior to the trial commencing, a further report was to be prepared with full details of the operational parameters. To further define the parameters for a scallop ranching trial there have been a number of meetings with the interested parties, following which the trial specification has been thoroughly reviewed by the Harbour Master, the Marine Conservation Officer, Devon Sea Fisheries Committee, Natural England and the trial operator. Consultation has also been undertaken with representatives of Salcombe's Fishermen. The trial specification, subject to formal approval by all parties, is attached.

Trial Details

2. The original trial specification has been amended in the following areas:
 - a. The area of the trial has remained in the same part of the Estuary (north west corner of the Bag between Coad Cove and Mabel Shoal) and of the same area but the coordinates of the trial area has been altered slightly to allow a rectangular box over consistently deeper water – 150m x 67m (1.005hectares).

- b. The trial will take place in two stages;

Year one, simply depositing scallops within the area, monitoring their growth and movements, and any significant environmental impact of this. Years two to three, allowing commercial harvesting from the site and monitoring any significant operational impact on the Harbour and users, whilst continuing the environmental impact of the operations.

- c. All parties have expressly agreed that all imported scallops must be clean of any obvious fouling organisms to discourage further invasion of the estuary by alien species; that they must be of or larger than the current legal minimum size and that a proportion of these shall be marked in some way to aid their recapture and continued monitoring.
- d. The operator is required to present an environmental impact assessment prior to the trial commencing.
- e. The Operator is required to produce diving method statements, risk assessments and copies diving paperwork.

Trial Preparations

- 3. The Marine Conservation Officer has conducted two dive surveys of the proposed site, the first being a brief general survey and video recording of the site's seabed and marine life; the second consisted of a randomised survey of the present wild scallop population as a baseline. These surveys set the datum of existing scallops within the trial area as well as recording the general health and wellbeing of this part of the Estuary bed. The results of the scallop survey were an average density of 0.53 scallops per m² (5 300 scallops per hectare) with a suggested average size of 115mm.
- 4. There continues to be significant concern from local scallop dredging fishermen. They are concerned that commercial scallop ranching will affect the scallop dredging fishery and will set a precedent for scallop diving within the Harbour. However, it remains the opinion of the Marine Conservation Officer and Devon Sea Fisheries that if anything, the ranching will improve the population of scallops within the Harbour in the longer term; and that there is a clear difference between scallop ranching within a defined area and scallop-diving as carried out in Start Bay for example. These aspects of concern will be monitored throughout the trial.

Value for Money

- 5. Other than the Officer time so far invested, there are no financial implications should permission for the trial be turned down. However, if given and the feasibility of limited scallop ranching established, subject to the new Duchy of Cornwall lease agreement, there will be a sublease rental income.

Good Jobs

- 6. Limited scallop ranching within the estuary would sustain a small number of jobs supplying high quality scallops at the sustainable managed fishery end of the market.

Risk Assessment

Risk	Mitigation
Concerns by scallop dredging fishermen.	Continue to raise awareness of these fishermen about what is actually intended within scallop ranching, scallop biology and some scallop fishery management. These fishermen are actually likely to gain in a small way from scallop ranching.
Scallop ranching may escalate to the detriment of the estuary.	Each request for a scallop ranching area must be considered on its' own merits. There is limited suitable area for scallop ranching, there must be a significant buffer between 'ranchers' and there must be a significant 'no take area' for scallops left for their natural proliferation and settlement.
Invasion of the estuary by further alien species.	Only clean scallops of local progeny would be allowed to be released within the estuary. The estuary is already 'contaminated' by the alien species associated with local scallops, such as the slipper limpet.
Health and safety of divers 'ranching' and monitoring the agreed area.	A risk assessment and code of working practice will be formally agreed with the Harbour Master.

Conclusion

7. Limited scallop ranching is likely to have little environmental impact on the estuary and would enable a limited number of new jobs within the estuary, at no risk to the present and proven sustainable scallop dredging fishery.

Nigel Mortimer
Marine Conservation Officer

Salcombe Harbour Board
12 November 2007

Ian Gibson
Head of Service (Salcombe Harbour)

Appendices:

1. Draft Scallop Ranching Trial Specification
2. Proposed Scallop Ranch Area – general dive survey
3. Proposed Scallop Ranch Area – scallop population survey

