

**Report to Salcombe Harbour Board****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 seek the support of the Harbour Board to carry out a feasibility trial for the ranching of scallops within the upper Bag area of the estuary.

**Recommendations****That Harbour Board RESOLVES to:**

- a. **Approve the conduct of a feasibility trial for scallops under the supervision of the Harbour Authority.**

**Background**

1. The estuary supports a healthy population of the native King Scallop, due to there being relatively little freshwater input and hence the unusually high salinity of the estuary.
2. The Harbour Authority has received a request to carry out a trial to test the feasibility of scallop ranching within the estuary by a local professional scallop diver presently operating within Start Bay.
3. Scallop ranching would involve the placing of minimum legal sized scallops on an area of seabed (ca. 100 x 100m) for growing on to the size required by restaurants where they command a premium price as sustainably managed and diver harvested scallops. The placing of the scallops, their harvesting and through the trial their monitoring would be carried out by suitably qualified divers under the relevant HSE code of conduct.
4. The Marine Conservation Officer has consulted widely with relevant colleagues to ensure that any such trial and potential future would be environmentally sustainable, legal and manageable by all the relevant authorities such as Devon Sea Fisheries and Environmental Health.
5. Diving for scallops within the District is closed for three months of the summer by a Devon Sea Fisheries byelaw and whilst there is some question over whether this would apply to the estuary, this applicant has agreed to comply with the byelaw.

6. A number of issues have been raised, and safeguards and stipulations have since been discussed and informally agreed with the potential operator, prior to confirmation of permission for the trial by the Harbour Board. On gaining the approval of the Board, the Harbour Master and Marine Conservation Officer shall confirm all operational parameters of the trial formally with the operator before anything further is allowed to take place.
7. There is presently significant concern from local scallop dredging fishermen that, if after the trials commercial scallop ranching was permitted, it would set a precedent and that many other operators would move in affecting their fishery. However, is the opinion of the Marine Conservation Officer and Devon Sea Fisheries that there is only a finite area of the estuary that would be suitable, limiting any escalation, and that management safeguards would be instigated to limit operators and their divers to their own ranched areas.

### **Value for Money**

8. 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**

9. 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.
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## **Conclusion**

10. Limited scallop ranching would 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  
Conservation Officer

Ian Gibson  
Head of Service Salcombe Harbour

Salcombe Harbour Board  
20 March 2007

## **Background Documents:**

Letter from Paul Fivian – 17<sup>th</sup> September 2005