

Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM)

Island Communities Impact Assessment (ICIA)

March 2024

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Name of Policy, Strategy or Service: Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM)

Objectives

As part of its Fisheries Management Strategy, the Scottish Government is introducing legislation making it a legal requirement for all scallop dredge and pelagic vessels operating in Scottish waters (and for Scottish vessels, when they are operating anywhere) to have a fully operational Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM) system installed on board. The aims of the policy are to deliver confidence and accountability in the activities of fishing vessels at sea, to ensure compliance with key legislation such as the landing obligation and spatial restrictions and to enhance our understanding and knowledge of fisheries and stocks.

The REM requirement applies to all applicable vessels operating in Scottish waters, regardless of national origin, with no differentiation between Scottish islands. The only differing element is the fleet segments the requirement will apply to in this instance – pelagic and scallop dredge, with a potential further rollout to other fleet segments in the future.

The intended impacts/outcomes are as follows and will not differ across the islands:

- To improve our capacity to independently monitor fishing activity at sea and to be able to demonstrate that fishing activities carried out are in line with existing regulations.
- To deliver enhanced accountability in fisheries management, which in turn will provide confidence around catch levels and stock sustainability.
- To deliver the confidence and accountability that consumers and members of the public want to see from our seafood products.
- To improve spatial and fishing data. REM technology offers a range of scientific benefits such as providing enhanced spatial information, which will deliver an improved understanding of the interactions between the fishing industry and other marine users.

Data and Stakeholders

All commercial fishing vessels are required to provide information on their fishing activities, including port of landing, species caught and fishing gear used. This is the same regardless of location. Each vessel has an administrative district to which it is registered. We can therefore identify what specific vessels are based in the entirely island districts (Western Isles, Orkney and Shetland), as well as those in the mixed island districts (Campbeltown, Oban and Portree) that will be affected by this requirement.

Supplementary information from local fishery offices demonstrates that most of the vessels registered to mixed island districts operate out of the mainland ports in this

district. As such, only the island districts should be counted when considering the island impact.

The below table shows the share of affected vessels by district as well as the share of all vessels by district.

District share of Scottish fishing vessels in 2022			
	Pelagic over 12 metres	Scallop Dredgers	All registered
Orkney	0%	1%	6%
Shetland	38%	28%	12%
Stornoway	0%	7%	11%
Total for Island Districts	38%	37%	29%
Campbeltown	0%	8%*	7%
Oban	0%	11%*	5%
Portree	0%	0%	5%
Total for mixed Island Districts	0%	20%*	16%
Total for Island and mixed Island Districts	38%	56%	46%

Source: Marine Directorate fisheries data

Note: Mallaig and Ayr which include some islands were excluded due to the low fishing activity present on these islands.

* Most of the vessels registered to mixed island districts operate out of the mainland ports in this district

- 37% of the scallop dredge fleet are administrated from island districts.
- The figure is similar for impacted pelagic vessels, with 38% of the fleet administratively located in the island districts.
- When considering all vessel types around 29% of the whole fleet is administered from island districts, showing a similar distribution to the islands as the scallop and pelagic fleets.
- Thus, it does not appear that this regulation would unduly impact the islands relative to the rest of Scotland through which vessels are impacted.
- There are a number of stakeholder groups in operation which support the fishing industry, along with a range of other interest groups including environmental and communities groups with an interest in fisheries and environmental outcomes. There is an overarching stakeholder group in place – Fisheries Management and Conservation Group (FMAC) – which provides strategic input to fisheries policy using a co-management approach.
- Individual stakeholder groups are established which provide varying levels of support and advice directly to fishers. For the pelagic sector in Scotland this is primarily through the Scottish Pelagic Fisherman’s Association (SPFA).

- Regional Inshore Fisheries Groups (RIFGs) are non-statutory bodies that work with fishers and Scottish Government to improve the sustainable management of inshore fisheries. There are six RIFGs - Outer Hebrides RIFG, Orkney RIFG, Shetland RIFG, North and East Coast RIFG, North West Coast RIFG and South West Coast RIFG.

There are also a number of groups that support the fishing industry coalesced around specific geographical locations. This includes Shetland Fishermen (which includes the Shetland Fishermen's Association and the Shetland Fish Producers Organisation); the Shetland Shellfish Management Organisation, Orkney Fish Producers Organisation, Orkney Fisheries Association; Western Isles Fishermen's Association and West of Scotland Fish Producers Organisation.

Consultation

Background

The Scottish Government's intention to deliver a legislative requirement for REM onboard pelagic and scallop dredge vessels was developed as part of the Fisheries Management Strategy (published December 2020). The publication provided an early opportunity for extensive engagement with stakeholders on the Strategy's proposals on REM. A national discussion was undertaken in the form of a discussion paper that was supported by a range of stakeholder events based in key fishing areas around Scotland as well as other online events.

Public Consultation

A full public consultation¹ on the use of REM took place from 15 March to 7 June 2022. The consultation sought views on the implementation, impact and general principles of the use of REM in the pelagic sector and was well publicised in Scotland and also throughout the rest of the UK and internationally.

Responses to the consultation were mixed between individuals and organisations, and between environmental / conservation groups and fisheries organisations and have proved helpful in providing stakeholder views on a number of key questions. In total the consultation received 48 valid responses. We published our analysis report² of the responses to the REM consultation in August 2023.

The public consultation was wide reaching on the principles of REM, its specific application to the scallop dredge and pelagic trawl fleets and initial views on its application to the demersal fleet. The consultation did not focus on the policy's specific application to islands and no concerns explicitly to do with islands were received.

¹ [Marine resources - ensuring long term sustainability: remote electronic monitoring \(REM\) consultation - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/consultations/marine-resources-ensuring-long-term-sustainability-remote-electronic-monitoring-rem/consultation-2022-03-15-06-june-2022/pages/1-1-introduction-to-the-consultation.aspx)

² [Marine resources - Remote Electronic Monitoring: Consultation Analysis](https://www.gov.scot/publications/consultations/marine-resources-remote-electronic-monitoring-rem/consultation-analysis-2023-08-01/pages/1-1-introduction-to-the-analysis.aspx)

An issue that was raised in some of the consultation responses related to potential disadvantage to vessels operating from rural coastal locations, where access to engineers and repairs may be limited. Given the rurality of island communities, these comments would likely include the 37% of the scallop dredge fleet and 38% of the pelagic fleet that are islands based. However, any concerns covering this section of the fleet also apply to vessels operating from mainland rural coastal areas and have been accounted for and mitigated in the development of the legislation.

Stakeholder feedback also included the need for realistic lead-in times given potential limitations on access to installation of REM systems in rural coastal areas. This is especially relevant to the pelagic fleet and, taking the feedback onboard, we have extended the 12-month timeframe for the pelagic industry to become compliant that was put forward in the consultation to a longer lead in time – the pelagic provisions will not take effect until 7 March 2026. This will enable the pelagic fishing industry to source and install the required equipment and will provide sufficient opportunity for ancillary support services to be put in place.

All active Scottish scallop vessels have already been provided with considerable time and Scottish Government support to prepare for the introduction of the policy with these boats receiving funded REM installations that meet the requirements of the new regulations.³ These installations have taken place around the Scottish coastline, including on Orkney, Shetland and the Western Isles.

Industry Consultation

For the pelagic element of the policy, meetings have taken place with the Scottish Pelagic Fishermen's Association (SPFA) to explain the policy and provide opportunity for discussion. Engagement with this sector did not highlight any particular concerns with regard to island communities, although the need to maintain a level playing field approach for all pelagic vessels regardless of their country of origin was stressed. Establishing a level playing field approach to REM has been factored into the policy throughout its development and has resulted in a uniform approach for the installation and use of REM by both Scottish and non-Scottish vessels fishing in Scottish waters.

For the scallop dredge element of the policy, there are already a number of vessels (operating in the 6-12 nautical mile zone and deploying 10 dredges per side) that are required to have an REM system installed and operational⁴. The remaining elements of the sector acknowledged the value of using REM to demonstrate responsible fishing practices and for wider benefits. Following positive dialogue with Scottish Government and the Scottish Scallop Sector Working Group (now represented through FMAC) the remainder of the sector (island based and non-island based vessels) have been leading the way in adopting funded REM systems on a voluntary basis⁵ mainly between 2021 and 2023.

³ EMFF funded installations commenced in 2020

⁴ [The Regulation of Scallop Fishing \(Scotland\) Order 2017 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://legislation.gov.uk)

⁵ Costs have been met by the Scottish Government through the [European Maritime and Fisheries Fund](#)

Internal Consultation

Internal discussions have been carried out with local Fishery Office managers who hold a high level of expertise in relation to the fishing industry. In their view, whilst electronic engineers that service the fishing industry and other infrastructure are not as prevalent in island communities or mainland communities out-with areas with significant marine infrastructure (for example NE mainland), provision does exist in these areas – this is by necessity given that the general operation of marine sectors and the fishing industry cannot take place without technical support.

Electronic engineers already support the fishing industry through, for example, VMS and e-log requirements, as well as general work and repairs. REM will require some diversification in the work of engineers, as was the case with the rollout of VMS and e-logs, but the voluntary rollout of scallop REM has demonstrated it is possible, regardless of location for the appropriate level of electronic and technical support to be in place.

Whilst Shetland is the island grouping with the most scallop dredge vessels and pelagic vessels, given the marine infrastructure and diverse marine sectors present there, our assumption based on our prior experience is that there is sufficient expertise available with at least average coverage of engineers and so should manage in much the same way as mainland communities outwith the NE do. Additionally, many of these vessels already operate technical electronic systems, particularly the pelagic vessels, and so the REM system is expected to simply be an ancillary system to the existing operation requiring only some training. Furthermore, the active Shetland scallop dredge fleet are already carrying REM on a voluntary basis, with installations having been carried out by local engineers. As such it is the Marine Directorate's view that there should be no capacity issues with availability in Shetland relative to Scotland at large.

The introduction of the legislation has been, and will continue to be, well publicised amongst non-Scottish vessels, with other fisheries administrations being provided with relevant information to help support their fishing vessels to understand and comply with the new regulations.

Assessment

Our assessment has not identified any unique islands impacts that are required to be taken into account.

- **Demographic:** It is not anticipated that there will be any unique impacts. The regulation is not expected to move fishing activity away from the islands and thus should not impact available work.
- **Economic:** The policy change will impact vessels across Scotland in the same way, for example vessels based in Shetland, Fraserburgh and Peterhead. There is not anticipated to be any additional costs for vessels based on the islands, nor are the costs expected to change these vessels' ability to make profit and thus stay in business. A full Business Impact Assessment (BRIA) on this policy has been undertaken and has not revealed any impacts that are unique to island operators.

- Gaelic: N/A
- Social: The policy will not have a unique social impact on island communities in terms of deprivation and social exclusion in the islands.

No additional barriers have been identified that are unique to island communities. Some feedback detailed in the consultation responses did raise questions about accessing installers and maintenance facilities for vessels operating from rural coastal locations, which include both island and mainland locations. These two issues are fully addressed in the legislation – time to access repairs and maintenance is equitable across all fleets, should a technical failure occur. On the issue of installation, pelagic vessels are being given a long lead-in time, with scallop dredge boats having already had ample time to prepare for REM. As such, it is our view that rural and island based vessels are not placed at any disadvantage as a result of the introduction of REM.

As we do not believe there are different impacts for island communities, we do not propose any particular mitigations need to be put in place. That said, we do recognise the need to be pragmatic in introducing an REM requirement that is sensible and proportionate and which does not unfairly impact on businesses. Fishing businesses operating in more rural areas, which would include islands, can experience issues in terms of access to services. With this in mind, we have built-in several mitigations to ensure the legislation is applied in a pragmatic way, these are;

- where a vessel's system breaks down at sea, if this is a first breakdown the vessel is permitted to continue to fish and fix the breakdown when they return to port.
- For scallop dredge vessels only, which can operate in more rural locations, where a malfunction occurs in a winch sensor they will be permitted to continue to fish (as long as the camera/s and vessel positioning system of the REM device are functional) for a 28-day period to allow them additional time to get this fixed.

For scallop dredge vessels, which do not tend to have satellite technology onboard and which are reliant on mobile phone or wi-fi signals to transmit data, the data transmission requirements within the SSI are drafted in such a way as to not unfairly penalise this section of the fleet. The data is stored on the REM device until the next available opportunity to transmit it. There have been no issues with data transfer due to connectivity in the voluntary rollout of REM around the Scottish coastline.

Is a full Island Communities Impact Assessment required?

- 1. Are there mitigations in place for the impacts identified and noted above from stakeholders and community consultations? (If further ICIA action is not required, complete the section below and publish).**

No significantly different impacts for islands communities are expected, therefore, no specific mitigations have been put in place to address this.

2. Does the evidence show different circumstances or different expectations or needs, or different experiences or outcomes (such as levels of satisfaction, or different rates of participation)?

No. The evidence suggests that, while 37% of the scallop dredge fleet and 38% of the pelagic fleet are administered from Scottish islands, their expectations regarding mandating of REM are in line with the wider industry and, in particular, with vessels operating from other rural coastal locations in Scotland. The evidence does not point to any unique outcomes for island based vessels resulting from the requirements for REM.

3. Are these different effects likely?

N/A

4. Are these effects significantly different?

N/A

5. Could the effect amount to a disadvantage for an island community compared to the mainland or between island groups?

No

A full Islands Community Impact Assessment is not required

In preparing the ICIA, I have formed an opinion that our policy, strategy or service is NOT likely to have an effect on an island community which is significantly different from its effect on other communities (including other island communities). The reason for this is detailed below.

Reason for not completing a full Islands Communities Impact Assessment: Our assessment has not identified any unique islands impacts that are required to be taken into account.

Screening ICIA completed by: Jessica Roscoe

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Signature and date: Jessica Roscoe 05/12/2023

ICIA authorised by: Malcolm Pentland

Position: Deputy Director – Marine Economy and Communities Portfolio

Signature and date: Malcolm Pentland – 05 March 2024



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