

Notice of early closure of the 2025 Squid (Summer) fishery

Background

The Squid (Summer) fishery (for *Doryteuthis gahi*, commonly known as 'Loligo'), operated under the C-licence, is open for a period of a maximum of 70 calendar days starting on the last Sunday in February. This period allows for a maximum of 64 fishing days, the remaining 6 calendar days are to allow for compensatory days, to be utilised in circumstances such as bad weather or mechanical breakdown. The period the fishery is open for all fishing vessels is referred to as a season.

The summer Loligo season is primarily managed on the basis of seeking to ensure that the minimum biomass of Loligo in the designated Loligo fishing area (known as the 'Loligo Box') is above 10,000 tonnes at the end of the season, as set out in the [2025 licensing advice](#), which states: "*If in-season depletion models project that calamari biomass will fall below 10,000 tonnes, the fishery may be suspended or stopped before the scheduled end date of the season*". As this squid species lives only one year, the goal is to maintain a population large enough to reproduce and replace itself.

An additional consideration during the summer Loligo season is the size and maturity of the Loligo caught. During the latter part of the season there is a crossover between the two cohorts of the Loligo population, with the mature cohort (which is the target of the Summer fishery) returning in-shore to breed and the immature cohort (the target of the Winter fishery) heading off-shore to feed. Fishing during this crossover period presents a risk of a negative impact on the population of the second season cohort, affecting the biomass available for the subsequent Winter fishery.

The Fisheries Department carries out a pre-season survey prior to both the summer and winter Loligo seasons to estimate the total Loligo biomass in and around the Loligo Box. The estimate also includes figures for lower and upper 95% confidence boundaries.

During the season, the Fisheries Department continues to produce regular updates of the estimated biomass based on a depletion model using catch, effort, and squid size data. These estimates are used to take management decisions related to the fishery, alongside other factors such as the maturity and size of Loligo being caught.

Relevant legislation

Under section 11 of the Fisheries (Conservation and Management) Ordinance 2005, the Director of Fisheries (the Director of Natural Resources) may set sustainability measures for a stock, taking into account the effects of fishing on the stock, existing controls and the natural variability of the stock. Measures may include changing the total allowable effort or catch, the size/sex/state of stock allowed to be taken, the areas from which stock may be taken, the methods by which stock may be taken, and the period for which fishing may take place in a fishery.

For the purposes of the Loligo fishery, in practice this allows the director to take measures including closing part of the Loligo Box to fishing, temporarily closing the fishery, issuing a final closure notice for a season, or not opening a season at all.

Section 12 of the ordinance requires that prior to setting or varying a sustainability measure, the director (so far as reasonably practicable) must consult with the Fisheries Advisory Committee and other persons or organisations that it would be desirable to consult with, who are representative of persons having an interest in the stock or effects of fishing. For the Loligo fishery, in practice this means the Loligo Producers Group.

However, section 12 also allows the director to set or vary measures without carrying out the aforementioned consultation in cases of urgency.

Should the director take any decisions, section 12(3) requires them to publish the reasons for their decision as soon as reasonably practicable.

2025 Squid (Summer) season

In 2025 the last Sunday in February fell on 23 February, giving a season end date of 4 May. However, no vessel in the fishery is granted a licence for more than 64 days, meaning in practical terms the fishery was due to close on 28 April, unless compensatory days had been allowed.

The pre-season survey estimated the total biomass at 31,034 tonnes (95% credible interval 27,450 to 42,178 tonnes). However, there were concerns over the sizes of the Loligo caught during the survey, being not a viable commercial size. As a result, the Loligo Producers Group requested the start of the season be delayed until 1 March. This was agreed by the Fisheries Department.

Following the start of the season, the Fisheries Department provided regular updates on biomass estimates to the Loligo Producers Group thereafter.

Closure decision

On 9 April a notice was issued closing two grid squares of the Loligo box to fishing at 23:59 that day.

On 25 April 2025 a notice was issued closing a further three grid squares at 23:59 that day, and that the season would be closed at 23:59 on 27 April.

Rationale

The grid square closure notice issued on 9 April was issued due to concern by the Fisheries Department after a sharp drop in the maturity levels of Loligo being caught in the grid squares in question, suggesting that the immature Winter cohort of Loligo was being caught.

The closure notice issued on 25 April was issued due to concern from both the Fisheries Department and industry over the average size and maturity of catches in the final few days of the season. The three grid squares closed immediately on 25 April had seen a significant drop in the average size of the Loligo caught in the previous days, suggesting that the immature Winter cohort of Loligo was being caught.

In both cases the Director took the decision for reasons of stock conservation and long-term sustainability of the fishery. The recent issues in the Winter fishery (early closure in 2023 and non-opening in 2024) were relevant factors, with the Director determining that these issues required taking a precautionary approach in order to try and protect the Winter fishery.

This decision was taken without consultation with Fisheries Advisory Committee on the basis that an urgent decision was required to protect the Winter fishery and any consultation would significantly increase the risk of causing significant damage to the Winter fishery. The Loligo Producers Group was consulted with throughout the decision-making process.

Post-closure note

In the last two days of fishing prior to the full closure notice taking effect, average sizes of the caught Loligo dropped even further to the lowest level recorded during the season (see below).

