

ITEM 13

AGRICULTURE, ENVIROMENT & SEA FISHERIES COMMITTEE

Report with Propositions to Christmas Meeting Chief Pleas, 21st January 2026

SEA FISHERIES REPORT

The Agriculture, Environment & Sea Fisheries Committee presents this report to Chief Pleas.

(1) Sea Fisheries boat

The Sea Fisheries rib has been put to good use assisting the emergency services. Our thanks to Terry Crowther and Joe Carton for their effort in maintaining the boat and being on call.

(2) The season

The season has been a challenging one, along for the rest of the Bailiwick's fishermen with the causes well documented in the media. These include sea water temperature raising above normal requiring the move to deeper waters, and the influx of octopus chasing food which has affected the shellfish industry. We are hoping for a really cold winter which should kill some of the octopus, or encourage them to move away from chasing food. There has also been an increase in the tuna population chasing fish shoals.

Our fisherman have diversified by finding markets for the octopus, designing ways to transport them alive and deliver them in prime condition. Others have moved away from potting to the netting of the bays, which is a high impact and non-selection method of fishing. This has led to a conflict of interest between recreational and commercial fisherman.

The island still attracts recreational fisherman in boats and from the shore. We should point out at this point that recreational boat fisherman require a licence to sell fish, issued by Guernsey's Sea Fisheries department. Fisherman should take note that fish sizes do change from time to time to reflect the scientific data collected.

Despite these challenges, the island's hospitality trade still supports and showcases the wonderful array of seafood Sark has to offer.

(3) Blue Marine Foundation report

A recent presentation by Blue Marine Foundation highlighted that Sark is ahead of the game in regards to protecting its habitats and fish stocks. Examples of this include:

- a closed season for crab and lobster

- total ban on catching crawfish
- only hand dive caught scallop season
- limited fishing in wintertime due to harbours being open to the elements

It remains a fine balance between conservation and depriving people of making a living to supply demand.

(4) Future plans

Looking ahead, there may be need for putting in place a bag limit for the amount of fish caught in a day. Longer term, we may have to look at buying in juvenile lobster to restock the grounds but whilst there are octopus around this would be pointless. The Committee will keep this under review.

(5) Propositions

The Committee is at present looking at restricting the use of netting in the bays, by net mesh size, length of net and height. These measures will further protect stocks, whilst enabling our fishermen to continue to operate.

Proposition 1 -

That Chief Pleas directs the Agriculture, Environment & Sea Fisheries Committee to instruct the Law Officers of the Crown to prepare legislation for a closed season from 20th March to 20th September for netting in the bays.

Proposition 2 -

That Chief Pleas directs the Agriculture, Environment & Sea Fisheries Committee to instruct the Law Officers of the Crown to prepare legislation for net restrictions for monofilament nets with maximum length of 100m and maximum height of 2m.

Conseiller Helen Plummer

Chair, Agriculture, Environment & Sea Fisheries Committee