

## Notice of temporary closure of the 2026 Squid (Winter) fishery

10 August 2026

### Background

The Squid (Winter) fishery (for *Doryteuthis gahi*, commonly known as ‘Loligo’), operated under the X-licence, is open for a period of a maximum of 70 calendar days starting on the last Sunday in July. 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 is referred to as a season.

The winter 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 [2026 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.

The Fisheries Department carries out a pre-season survey prior to both the summer and winter Loligo seasons to estimate the starting Loligo biomass in the Loligo Box. The estimate also includes figures for lower and upper confidence boundaries. The estimated biomass is used by the Fisheries Department to determine whether the fishery should open.

During the season, the Fisheries Department continues to produce regular updates of the estimated biomass based on catch and effort 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 is 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.

### **2026 Squid (Winter) season**

The pre-season survey carried out between 7 July and 22 July 2026 resulted in an estimated total biomass of 17,508 tonnes (95% confidence interval 14,049 – 33,560 tonnes).

The season opened on Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> July. The first four days saw low catches, with between 7 and 14 tonnes of *Loligo* per vessel day in the south and less than five tonnes per vessel day in the north.

*Loligo* catches substantially increased on day 30<sup>th</sup> July, reaching over 40 tonnes per vessel day. They subsequently fell back slightly and remained at between 20-30 tonnes per vessel day for most of the following seven days. However, catches were highly concentrated in a small area to the west of Beauchêne.

The low catches at the start of the season, lack of significant fishing activity in the north of the box, and uncertainty of whether the high catches on 30<sup>th</sup> July were the result of an immigration, led to a series of unclear modelling results, most with low biomass estimates.

A meeting was held with the *Loligo* Producers Group (LPG) on Friday 7 August to discuss the situation. With bad weather forecast, it was agreed that fishing would pause on 9 and 10 August and the data from 6–8 August would be added to the model prior to a decision on whether to pause the season being taken.

After this data was received, five different modelling options were considered on Monday 10 August, which produced biomass estimates ranging from 10,517 tonnes (95% CI: 6,089 – 18,820 t) to 20,605 tonnes (95% CI: 13,381 – 41,037t). Four of the five model results showed the 95% lower confidence interval to be below 10,000 tonnes and the risk of there being less than 10,000 tonnes of biomass at the end of the season to be between 12% and 41%. A four-model ensemble gave an estimate of 14,244 tonnes (95% CI: 6,933 – 33,928t) and an 18% risk.

### **Closure decision**

On 10 August the director issued a temporary closure notice lasting until 00:01 on Monday 24<sup>th</sup> August.

However, LPG accepted an invitation to carry out trawls on Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> August outside of the area to the west of Beauchêne to provide more information on *Loligo* distribution in areas that were not fished extensively in this season. 14 of the 16 vessels in the fleet were tasked with carrying out two two-hour trawls at 28 stations typically used in the pre-season survey (all stations east of Beauchêne) and one vessel was tasked to carry out two two-hour trawls in grid squares XTAG and XUAG to the west of the *Loligo* Box. The fleet was also given the opportunity to fish commercially for the remainder of that day except in the area to the west of 59° longitude.

### **Rationale**

The closure notice was issued as the modelling showed a significant risk of biomass being below 10,000 tonnes by the end of the season.

The closure issued was temporary rather than permanent (for the remainder of the season) as it is possible that there will be an immigration event in the intervening period (the winter season has an average of two immigration events over the last 15 years). When fishing resumes on 24<sup>th</sup> August, depletion modelling will restart.

This decision was taken without consultation with Fisheries Advisory Committee on the basis that an urgent decision was required due to the aforementioned biomass risk.