

Notice of closure of the 2026 Squid (Winter) fishery

26 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, effort, and 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 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 7th July and 22nd 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 26th July. However, low catches at the start of the season, a lack of significant fishing activity in the north of the box, and uncertainty around whether there had been an immigration on 30th July, led to several alternative modelling results, most with low biomass estimates. As a result, on 10th August the director issued a temporary closure notice lasting until 00:01 on Monday 24th August.

Two days of exploratory trawling were carried out during the closure, on the 12th and 23rd August. On 12th August trawling primarily took place within the Loligo Box, but vessels were not permitted to trawl west of 59°W with the exception of one vessel that was assigned an E license to trawl in grid squares (XTAG and XUAG) to the west of the Box. On 24th August vessels were not permitted to trawl west of 58°30'W.

The season fully reopened on Monday 24th August; however, catches remained low. Modelling was conducted on 26th August using data from before the temporary closure combined with data from 24th to 25th August. Again, several alternative plausible modelling scenarios were considered, producing biomass estimates ranging from 7,182 tonnes (95% CI: 4,614–18,708 t) to 14,844 tonnes (95% CI: 9,705–28,107 t). All scenarios considered resulted in a 95% lower confidence limit below 10,000 tonnes, with the risk of biomass falling below 10,000 tonnes on 26 August ranging from 3.3% to 77.7%. A four-model ensemble (the four models considered most plausible) gave an estimate of 10,379 tonnes (95% CI: 5,074–23,516 t) and a 44.9% risk, while a two-model ensemble (the two models considered most plausible) gave an estimate of 13,247 tonnes (95% CI: 7,385–25,650 t) and a 16.6% risk.

In addition, biological data from observers from 23rd to 25th August indicated that the majority of fishing after the pause occurred in shallower areas. The proportion of mature and maturing females in these catches was over 80%, which may indicate the onset of a spawning migration returning inshore. Therefore, an early closure of the fishery may allow that migration to be completed.

The director issued a season closure notice on Wednesday 26th August, with fishing ending at 23:59 that day.

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 and due to biological data from observers indicating that mature females were being caught on their return to shallow areas to spawn. Both of these raised conservation concerns for the 2027 winter season, particularly in light of the early or total closure of the previous three winter seasons.

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.