

Why do we need a co-operative tagging programme?

A tagging programme will enable a direct assessment and review of the health state of by-caught sharks & rays prior to discard. The percentage of shark & ray by-catch fit for tag and release will be assessed and measured against those that are not.

How will we communicate the results?

- **Through dedicated workshops** – Outcomes of the project at a local level will be determined by three stakeholder workshops held at regular intervals through the project.
- **Wider dissemination to fisheries through the circulation of leaflets and posters throughout the east coast.**
- **Dedicated interactive website and on-line forums** – Information about the project, latest updates from workshops and surveys together with interactive maps of the latest tagged shark and ray locations will be available through a dedicated Shark By-Watch UK website. In addition on-line forums will also be available for broad discussions enabling fishermen, scientists, conservationists and the general public to share views and information.

Why is this project important to the future of inshore fisheries?

The Shark, Skate and Ray Conservation Plan published by Defra (Jan 2011) has highlighted clear policy objectives to manage elasmobranch stocks sustainably, identifying that action will be taken to protect and restore those species most at risk as a matter of priority. With the threatened status of sustainable shark & ray stocks featuring highly on UK government and EU agendas the *do nothing* approach increases the risk that landings of some species of shark & ray could be prohibited on a precautionary basis with the loss of significant income. This new project will improve fishing and handling practices, by-catch mortality of discarded sharks and rays will be reduced and will help to increase the sustainability of the relevant fisheries.

Tender documents and more information about the project can be obtained via:

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Keep in touch with the project on:

Facebook: www.facebook.com/sharkbywatchuk

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NEW PROJECT



Regional by-catch awareness of sharks and rays in the southern North Sea

**April 2012 –
March 2013**

Relatively little is known about shark & ray populations within UK waters, compared to other commercially important species such as cod and plaice. There is therefore a strong need to gain a better understanding of sharks and rays to better inform such processes as management plans for the benefit of both the fishery and fishers.

This project is funded by the European Fisheries Fund (EFF), which is committed to promoting the long-term future of England's fishing industry, by helping fishermen to become more sustainable and remain profitable. This new project will aim to improve knowledge of shark and ray by-catch and discarding in the inshore fisheries of the southern North Sea (ICES area IVc), with a view to improving fishing and handling practices that will support more sustainable shark and ray fisheries. The under 10 metre fleet has been selected due to their historically important fisheries of spurdog, thornback ray, blonde ray, tope and starry smoothhound.



How will Shark By-Watch UK work?

The project will develop a partnership between coastal fisheries and fisheries scientists through:

- action based workshops to share and develop knowledge, engaging directly with inshore fisheries and other bodies to increase a greater understanding and awareness of local shark & ray stocks.
- co-operative shark & ray tagging programmes.
- sharing of information and knowledge (through dedicated websites and forums).

In return, Shark By-Watch UK will Increase the quality of information on fishing practices and activities,

- identifying ways to reduce by-catch mortality through improved fishing and handling practices.
- developing a partnership between fishermen and scientists to promote greater awareness and knowledge of local shark & ray stocks and conservation issues.

It is hoped that these outcomes will encourage greater long term sustainability of shark & ray fisheries without the need for further management intervention, and help to maintain valuable income from these fisheries.

Workshop topics for engagement and discussions will include:

1. **Shark & ray survival from by-catch to discard** – Open discussion incorporating fishers perspectives and expertise.
2. **Tag & release reward scheme** – Training of fishermen in the use of mark ID tags to enable local co-operative based independent tagging by fisherman.
3. **Establishing quarterly/annual fishery-dependent surveys** – Implementing fishermen-lead sampling surveys to promote greater industry involvement in future shark and ray assessments and to help determine ways to conserve local stocks.
4. **Sharks & Rays in UK waters** – A local guide, brought about by fisherman, on the biological information of shark and ray species to promote greater awareness of stocks currently under pressure and potential implications.

We anticipate that the following types of data will be collected from fishery-dependent surveys:

1. **Location and type of fishing.**
2. **Species composition of catches.**
3. **Handling/processing protocol.**
4. **Numbers of discarded fish, by species.**
5. **Condition/health of discarded fish, from a list of selected species.**