

NWIFCA TSB Quarterly Meeting: 10th February 2026

REPORT NO.
2

BYELAW 3 MINIMUM USE POLICY

Purpose: To present findings from the recent consultation on the draft Minimum Use Policy and a revised policy document.

Recommendation: Members vote to adopt the revised Minimum Use Policy for the 2026/27 season.

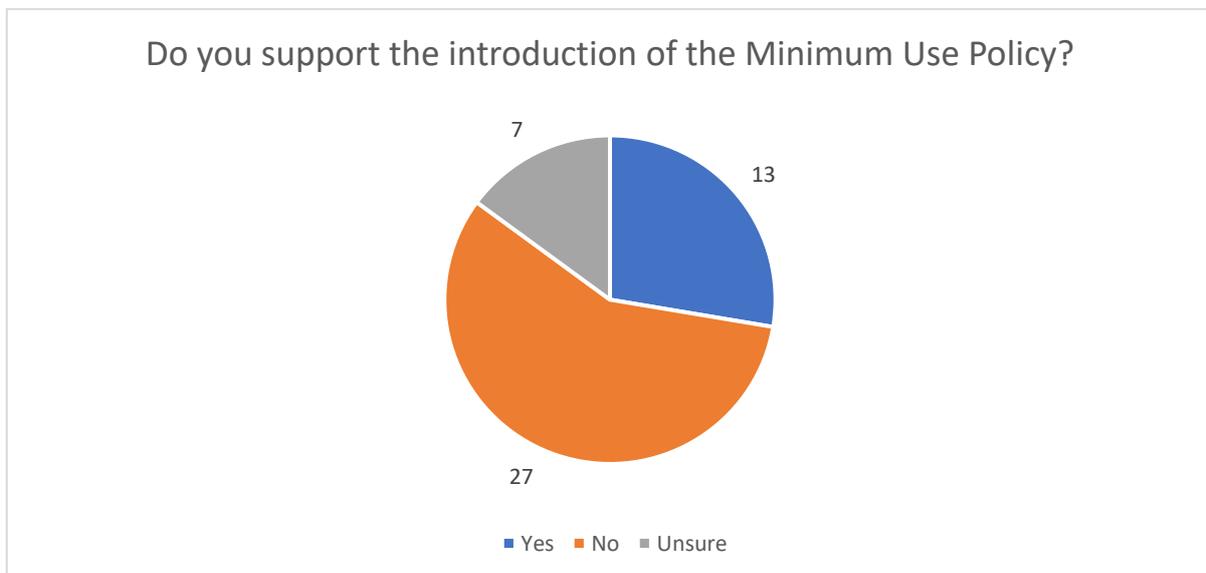
1. Introduction

In November 2024, TSB members voted to pursue the development of a minimum use policy for Byelaw 3 permits for hand-gathering of cockle and mussel within the district. Following this, the CEO drafted a policy, which was then shared with relevant senior officers. It was then consulted on with members of the TSB's Byelaw Working Group, which led to some revisions to the initial executive draft. A stakeholder consultation was then launched on 21st October 2025 and ran for 11 weeks until 5th January 2026. This report presents the key findings from that consultation and narrative on how the draft policy has been updated to reflect the relevant feedback provided.

2. Consultation Findings

There were 63 responses to the consultation, with 51 from current Byelaw 3 permit holders and 12 from individuals on the waiting list.

Thirteen respondents supported the policy, 27 did not, and seven were unsure (16 did not answer this question).



Reasons for supporting or not supporting the policy varied, but are summarised under general themes as follows:

Reasons for supporting the policy	Number of respondents
It isn't fair for permit holders to not fish and deny others opportunity to do so	9
It would be good to have new entrants into the fisheries	4
It would be positive for those on the waiting list	1
It would stop 'part-time' fishers holding onto permits 'just in case'	1
It would lead to better management of the fisheries	1
It would encourage more use of the permits	1
Reasons for not supporting the policy	Number of respondents
It would increase effort on the fisheries	16
It would disadvantage fishers who fish and / or live <i>outside</i> of the district	7
Personal circumstances mean fishing is not always possible	4
Poor prices mean fishing is not worth it	3
There isn't always enough cockle to fish	2
Cockle fishers need multiple permits across different regions	2
The increased turnover of fishers would threaten the fisheries' viability	1
It would disadvantage fishers fishing other fisheries <i>within</i> the district	1
It would be a retrospective change to the rules	1

It is apparent that there is some clear, vociferous opposition to the implementation of this policy from current Byelaw 3 permit holders. This can be characterised as two-fold – concerns that it could directly affect them as they could lose their permit, or that it could indirectly affect them by leading to more fishers being active on the beds, which could potentially reduce their income.

Conversely, those individuals on the waiting list seem to broadly support the policy, as it would increase the likelihood and speed with which they would get a permit.

From some responses, it is apparent there is some misconstruing of *how* the policy would be applied, particularly when stakeholders focussed on poor cockle fisheries or poor prices. If the policy were to

be adopted, the Authority would need to be clear in its communications around minimum use thresholds not necessarily being set every year and being subject to there being productive fisheries and favourable market conditions for fishers.

There was also some misunderstanding around the potential impacts on those who fish other fisheries. Whilst the policy does state that those who have been fishing outside the district would not be eligible for renewal, it also states that those who have fished other fisheries *within* the district would still be (albeit subject to appeal). Again, clear communications would be needed to allay these concerns from North West fishers who wish to retain the ability to diversify their commercial fishing activities across the district.

3. Amendments to Policy

Following review of the consultation responses, the draft policy has been amended as follows:

- Language has been modified to move away from stating that the Authority would ‘remove’ permits, towards fishers not being eligible to renew their permits.
- Addition of wider market conditions being a consideration for whether the Authority would even apply a minimum use threshold in any given year.
- Clarification on the potential bases for appeal, particularly around what would constitute fishing within the district.
- Confirmation that permit holders could continue to fish during any appeals process.

The revised policy is included as an addendum to this report.

Mark Taylor

CEO, North Western Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority

26th January 2026