

Shellfish Briefing Note

River Teign

Introduction

Over the last few years Teignbridge Environmental Health have been working with partnership agencies investigating the increased number of complaints associated with the collection of shellfish from both the River Teign and the River Exe.

Teignbridge Environmental Health are responsible for ensuring the safety of food entering the wider food chain. They have no enforcement responsibility over those collecting for personal reasons and they are not responsible for managing shellfish stocking densities or the enforcement of issues that ecologically affect the river.

The public are entitled to collect shellfish from the shoreline where they have a public right of access.

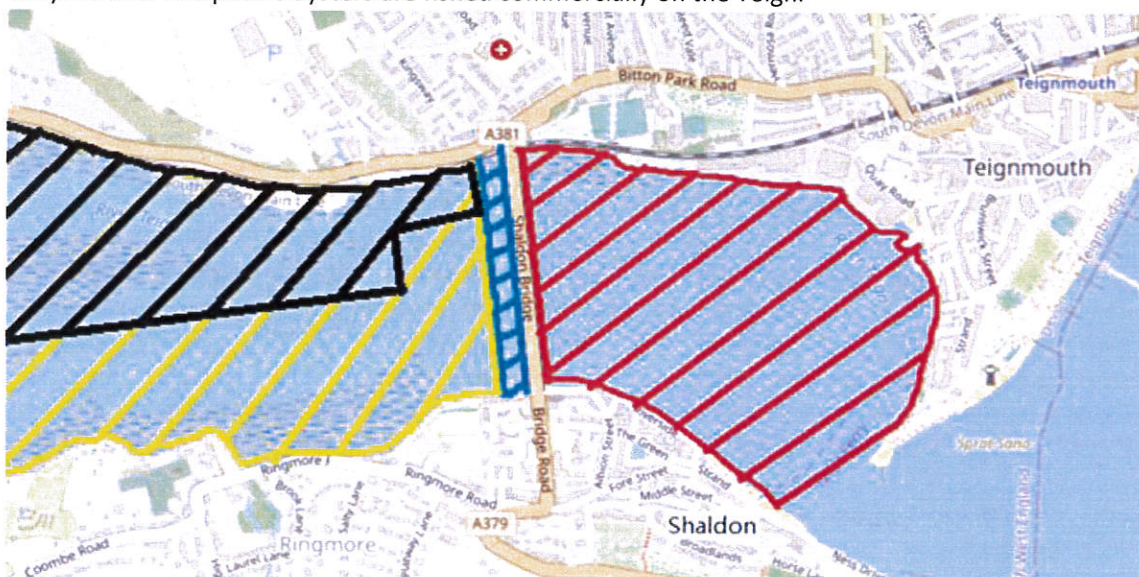
There is currently no legal weight limit or maximum amount specified anywhere in law, or in any byelaw, that prevents the public from taking 'too much' shellfish from the Teign. There are however, areas of the river that are prohibited for public collection.

Where the public appear to be collecting more than 5kg per person per day, Teignbridge Environmental Health will investigate whether or not that shellfish is being collected as part of a commercial activity (supplied into the wider food chain). Though some collectors may take more than 5kg in a day, this does not in itself evidence of commercial collection.

There does appear to be an increase in the number of people collecting shellfish from both our rivers. However, in most cases, the evidence does not suggest that the majority of those collecting are doing so for commercial reasons.

Areas of collection

Only mussels and pacific oysters are fished commercially on the Teign.



Blue area – There are no restrictions on what shellfish can be taken from this area (60 feet out from the bridge) or directly under the bridge.

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Red area – The public cannot take mussels from Shaldon Bridge, down-river to the mouth of the estuary as IFCA have a Temporary Closure Order in Effect for all of this area due to low mussel stocks. Other shellfish species can be collected from this area

Yellow and **Black area** – Commercial Fishery area for oysters and mussels only. The commercial fishing area is 60 feet from Shaldon Bridge, up-river to Archbrook. The public are asked to avoid the black area completely as this is commercially sensitive. Only mussels and oysters can be found here which cannot be removed, by any person, without a licence. The yellow and red areas are the main cockling beds and the public are asked to stick to these areas when cockling (this may be subject to change in the future)

The licensing body are reviewing the need for signage to indicate the commercial area. When signage is in place, any person found to be taking mussels or oysters from the commercial area may be prosecuted, regardless of the amount that's being taken.

Environmental Considerations

Clams and cockles can be taken from anywhere on the river. IFCA routinely monitor the cockle and mussel stocking densities on both rivers. If stocks are low, IFCA can put in place a byelaw that limits or prevents cockle collection in those areas affected, as they have with mussels. More information on shellfish stocks can be found on the D&S IFCA website.

The River Teign is populated by pacific oysters which are an invasive species to the UK. They can displace native oysters by modifying habitats and ecosystems via changes to the physical and chemical environment. It is unlikely that IFCA or Natural England would be too concerned if the pacific oyster numbers dropped significantly for this reason. There are few birds/animals that eat pacific oysters but they do help to improve water quality.

Onward supply

Though many of the collectors we speak to tend to work in food businesses, shellfish is not found on Chinese menus. Where they are found in Thai restaurants, they tend to be the large green lipped mussels that come in frozen from New Zealand.

Environmental Health Officers across the country are aware that shellfish is a potential safety issue and so in restaurants, fish mongers and other food businesses where shellfish is sold, traceability checks are made to ensure the shellfish is supplied through a reputable supplier. There are no reports of people trying to sell shellfish at the 'back door' and most food businesses are more than aware of the risk this would pose.

Intel and info gathering

Though the majority of those collecting appear to be doing so for personal reasons, we are still concerned that there may be some illegal/commercial collection taking place but we do not believe this is the norm.

We whole heartedly welcome any information the public can provide on the collection of shellfish where -

- It is obvious that large amounts are being taken. For example, where multiple trips back and forth to a parked vehicle are made with bags/buckets of shellfish or where large quantities are seen in the back of a vehicle

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- The same people are on the river for several hours at a time collecting shellfish or where the same people are collecting for two or more days in a row
- Groups are dropped off by one person / vehicle and that person / vehicle leaves the collectors on the beach and comes back for them later
- People are being directed by an 'observer' or another person who does not appear to be collecting shellfish
- Collectors arrive with several buckets / bags / ice boxes in the vehicle for the number of people collecting
- There is lots of shucking shellfish on the river
- Several people arrive in a van or minibus to collect shellfish

In these circumstances, we would very much appreciate -

- Timely notification of the collection. Ideally on the day so we can get an officer out to the river (this may not always be possible)
- Vehicle number plates (most important!)
- Number of collectors in the group (not all collectors will be in the same group)
- Time they arrive onsite
- Time they leave the site (if reported after the fact)
- a contact telephone number in case we need to speak to you
- suspicious activity noted (back and forth trips to the vehicle, organisation is clearly evident etc)
- Any photos BUT please do not put yourself at risk!

Concerns can be forwarded to

Teignbridge Environmental Health - 01626 215420 or foodandsafey@teignbridge.gov.uk (please copy in gavin.fearby@teignbridge.gov.uk)

Devon and Severn IFCA (Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority) – 07740175479 or office@devonandsevernifca.gov.uk

A Little Bit of Common Decency

Please note, our investigations have found the vast majority of collectors to be doing so lawfully and so we ask the public not to -

- challenge collectors on what they are doing (chances are they are lawful)
- tell them what they are doing is illegal / not allowed
- block in vehicles
- walk up and obviously take photos of the collectors, especially of their children
- shout or swear at those collecting

Hand Gathering Shellfish

Hand Gathering Shellfish



1 small bag of shellfish per person per day

The Food Safety and Hygiene (England) Regulations 2013

Shellfish may be collected for personal consumption only. Avoid collecting shellfish after heavy rain.

You should not take more than one small bag of shellfish from this river per day. This includes the shell, even where the shell is left on the beach.

Any person found to be removing too much shellfish from the river may -

- Have their vehicle searched
- Have the shellfish seized
- Have their equipment seized
- Be prosecuted

It is an offence to sell or give shellfish removed from the River Exe to another person or business without the consent and knowledge of Teignbridge District Council Environmental Health. Tel – 01626 215420 for more information.

Health Warning

It is not advisable to eat raw shellfish straight off the river. Shellfish can contain harmful bacteria and viruses and should be cooked for at least three minutes before eating.

Teignbridge District
Council
Environmental Health
Brunel Road
TQ12 4XX
Tel: 01626 215420

Please note – the information in this leaflet is subject to change at any time



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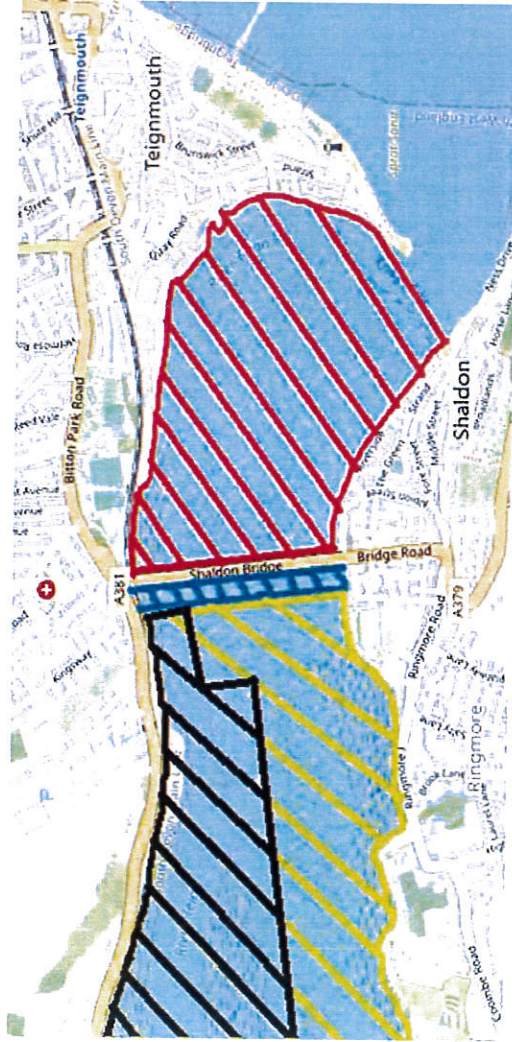
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Public Collection of Shellfish - River Teign

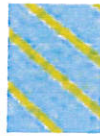


Permitted Gathering

The areas you can legally take shellfish from are indicated here. Failure to stick to the permitted area may result in prosecution.

KEY

No Mussels or Oysters can be removed from this area



No Mussels can be taken from this area



Any species can be collected from this area



Commercially sensitive area – please avoid this area. Fishing here could result in prosecution



Further Information

DSIFCA Temporary Closure orders –

- www.devonandsevernifca.gov.uk/Enforcement-Legislation/Temporary-Closure-of-Shellfish-Beds

Water Quality –

- www.cefas.co.uk/data-and-publications/shellfish-classification-and-microbiological-monitoring/england-and-wales/shellfish-monitoring-results/

Commercial Collection –

- <https://www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/industry-specific-advice/fish-and-shellfish>

Protect Stocks – all oysters should be at least 8cm in size. All winkles must be above 16mm

Public Collection of Shellfish - River Exe

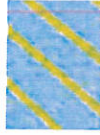


Permitted Gathering Areas and Safety Information

When collecting shellfish you must not take mussels from the area marked in red. You should not access the areas marked in purple as these areas are environmentally sensitive and are protected. The River Exe is a private fishery. Please respect the 5kg rule agreed by the rights holder.

KEY

This area is at risk of high levels of environmental contamination and so collection of any shellfish from this area should be avoided.



Mussel collection only is prohibited due to a temporary closure notice. For more info contact DSIFCA on 01803 854648



SSSI site. No collection of shellfish allowed



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Protect Stocks - Please do not collect undersized shellfish