

## **FAQs**

### **How does the SSMO Licensing process work for potential new entrants?**

*When the SSMO Board make the decision to hold a new licencing round this is then advertised on the SSMO website and in the press. Interested parties are invited to request an application pack. When applications are received they are only seen by the SSMO Inshore Coordinator who then anonymises them in advance of them going to the Licensing Sub Group. The Group make recommendations to the Board of Directors who then make the final decision. For data protection reasons no list is kept of anyone who is interested in a licence or of anyone who has not been successful in obtaining a licence. There has never been a waiting list – decisions are taken in light of the stock assessment and the harvest control rules.*

*Licensing Flow Chart is attached*

### **How does the succession process work for SSMO licences?**

*In 2015 the SSMO Board introduced a process of succession for SSMO licences as a method of getting younger people into the industry and of keeping vessels in the Shetland fleet. Succession for family members was always part of the SSMO regulations but this was extended so that SSMO licence holders who were thinking of retiring could add someone to their licence and, after a period of one year, that person with the permission of the SSMO Board, could take over the SSMO licence.*

*As the SSMO Regulations state – no value is attributable to a SSMO licence.*

### **How are Fishery Management decisions taken?**

*Decisions are based on annual stock assessments and advice from the NAFC Marine Centre alongside knowledge gained from local fishermen. The stock assessment process was peer reviewed in 2020 by Dr Mike Bell of Herriot Watt University and Dr Oliver Tully and Dr Guillermo Martin based at the Marine Institute of Ireland and both reviews were very favourable.*

### **Why are there fewer SSMO licences now than when the Regulating Order started?**

*When the Regulating Order became law then anyone who had a track record of fishing within the 6 mile limit around Shetland was given the opportunity to apply for a SSMO licence. This resulted in 166 licences being issued in the year 2000. Numbers have never been so high again with a lot of fishermen deciding they did not want to retain the licence. Since then numbers have fluctuated somewhat with 133 being issued in 2001, 129 in 2002, 124 in 2003 and 118 in 2004. Licence numbers currently stand at 108. At no time was it ever said that, in the future, no Shetland fisherman would ever be refused a SSMO licence.*

### **What is meant by a species specific SSMO licence?**

*SSMO were granted permission by Marine Scotland to issue species and areas specific licences. The idea behind this was that in 2016, when it was decided to have a licensing round, the ability to issue creel licences was still available to the Board even though velvet crab was going through a stock rebuilding process. At that time 4 creel licences were issued without the ability to fish for velvet crab and a further licence was issued which was both species and area specific.*

### **What are the current SSMO creel limits?**

*Current SSMO creel limits stand at 600 of which no more than 240 may be used for Velvet crab. The vast majority of SSMO licence holders have far fewer than this number of creels. Creel numbers are reviewed on a regular basis by the SSMO Board. SSMO fishermen are issued with numbered creel tags and also escape gaps for creels over and above 240 in number. Any complaints received around creel numbers are passed to Marine Scotland Compliance. SSMO are not responsible for monitoring Hobby Fishermen's creel numbers. Marine Scotland have not placed a restriction on creel numbers for Hobby Fishermen, instead, they have restrictions on daily catch numbers which cannot be sold commercially.*

### **What are the restrictions on SSMO licenced scallop vessels?**

*Scallop vessels have restrictions both in size and dredge numbers. There are also Closed Areas which should not be dredged in and a restriction in hours – there should be no dredging between 9.00pm and 6.00am. Marine Scotland is making Remote Electronic Monitoring in the scallop fleet mandatory in 2021.*

### **How is SSMO funded?**

*SSMO is mainly funded through Licence Fees and an annual grant from the SIC although funding from other sources are always sought. The organisation employs a part-time Inshore Coordinator who reports to a Board of Directors all of whom are volunteers.*

### **What is the relationship between SSMO and Marine Scotland?**

*SSMO are part of the RIFG network and therefore work closely with Marine Scotland.*

*The Regulating Order requires SSMO to keep the Scottish Ministers advised of any changes to their rules and regulations.*

*There is a MOU between Marine Scotland Compliance and SSMO which is reviewed every 5 years and any complaints received are passed on to Marine Scotland Compliance to investigate.*

### **What is the structure of the SSMO Board**

*SSMO is a Private Limited Company registered at Companies House. SSMO does not have a Constitution but instead has Articles of Association which are available on the Companies House website. For the purpose of meetings, the members are the directors who represent the licensed fishermen. SSMO licenced fishermen can approach any director and ask them to take queries to a Board Meeting or AGM.*

*The SSMO Directors are as follows:*

*2 shellfish processor members appointed by Seafood Shetland who are currently George Hirbakis (Scottish Shellfish) and Robert Williamson (QA Fish) who is also the SSMO Chairperson.*

*2 members appointed by the Association of Shetland Community Councils currently Lindsay Laurenson and a vacancy created by Ian Walterson stepping down as a SSMO director.*

*2 members appointed by Shetland Fishermen's Association who are currently Garry Leask and Richard Gray.*

*4 fishermen who are appointed by SSMO licenced fishermen. If more than one fisherman comes forward for a vacant post then this goes out to ballot among the fishermen. The SSMO fishermen who are currently directors are Sydney Johnson (who is also Vice-Chairperson), George Andrew Williamson, Richard Grains and Billy Reid.*

*All SSMO Directors give their time voluntarily with no remuneration and all the directors sign a Director's Code of Conduct when they join the Board.*

*An Open Meeting is held annually for SSMO licenced fishermen when, among other things, a presentation is given on the previous year's Stock Assessment.*

### **What is the purpose of the SSMO Advisory Group**

*As the name suggests, the SSMO Advisory Group provides advice and recommendations to the Board of Directors – the Advisory Group is non decision making.*

*The Advisory Group is chaired by Dr Beth Mouat who is also the science representative and the rest of the group comprises an industry representative, a funding representative, the Chair of the SSMO Board and the SSMO Inshore Coordinator.*

*Depending upon what is being discussed by the Advisory Group they can invite others to attend meetings. This could be, for example, association representatives, licenced fishermen or Marine Scotland.*