Common Whelk Fishery

Traditionally, whelks (*Buccinum undatum*) or buckies as they are known locally, were fished in the western region during the closure of the velvet crab fishery in the summer months. Though in recent years the fishery has targeted whelks from as early as February through to September, with the fishery currently subject to closure from September to January during their breeding season. The fishery is targeted using pots and there is a local minimum landing size of 75mm (the national MLS is 45mm).

Landings and effort were variable from 2000 – 2006, with landings around 200 tonnes. This was followed by a decrease in fishing which saw low landings until 2015 (Figure 1). Much of this change was driven by market access. Landings have subsequently fluctuated around 200/300 tonnes in the period from 2016 to 2021, though a peak in landings was seen in 2020 at 450 tonnes. Landings per unit effort (LPUE) have shown a period of increase from 2005, with some interannual variability, and have stabilized in recent years. The mean LPUE data for 2017 was the highest recorded in the fishery with a value of nearly 2.5 kg/pot. This dropped in 2018 but has shown an increase to 2.5kg/pot in 2020 before falling to 2.1kg/creel in 2022.

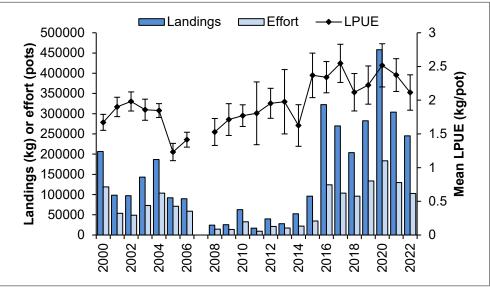


Figure 1 Total whelk landings (kg), total numbers of creels, and the average LPUE obtained from SSMO logbook data with 95% confidence intervals

The areas of highest LPUE are observed around Yell and Fetlar (Figures 2-4), exhibiting similar distribution to 2021 landings and effort. Whelks are highly substrate-dependent and therefore occur in distinct patches, which can mean they are vulnerable to localised overfishing.

Although the fishery appears to be relatively stable in recent years with respect to LPUE, a cautious approach may be appropriate as whelks are slow-growing and late to mature.

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						K07	L07	M07	N 07	P07	Q07	R07							K07	L07	M07	N07	P07	Q07	R07							K07	L07	M07	N07	P07	Q07	R07
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60.8°N				H09	J09	K09	L09	M09	NO9	~P09	Q09	R09	60.8°N —				H09	J09	K09	1.09	M09	NO9		Q09	R09	60.8°N —				H09	J09	K09	L09	M09	N09	P09	009	R09
			G10	H10	J10	К10	L10	MIO	N10	P10	910	R10			[G10	H10	J10	К10	L10	M10	N10	P10	910	R10				G10	H10	J10	К10	L10	M10	N10	P10	910	R10
60.6°N			G11	ни	J11	K11	2 L11 3	L _{M11}	NH	P11	Q11	R11	60.6°N			G11	ни	J11	K11	L11 5	L_M11	N14	F11	Q11	R11	60.6"N			G11	ни	J11	K11	L11	M11	N11	P11	Q11	R11
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60.4°N - 1	E14	F14	G14	> H14	J14	K14	L14W214E	M14	N/14	P14	Q14	R14	60.4°N	E14	F14 (G14	> H14	J14	K14 L	14W/14E	M14	N14	P14	Q14	R14	60.4°N	E14	F14	G14	≥ H14	J14	K14 L1	4W/14E	M14	N14	P14	Q14	R14
5	E15	F15	G15	— Η15 ζ	J15	K15N	∿ ີ∟15₩215	E_M15	N15	P15	Q15	R15	5	E15	F15	G15	Η15 ζ	J15		L15W/15E	M15	N15	P15	Q15	R15	5	E15	F15	G15		J15	K15N L1	5W/15E	M15	N15	P15	Q15	R15
- ► 60.2°N રે	E16	F16	G16	H16	J16	K155	L16W16	É, M16	N16	P16	Q16	R16	- ,60.2°N 3	E16	F16	G16	H16	J16	K15S	L 16W 16E	M16	N16	P16	Q16	R16	60.2°N \$	E16	F16	G16	H16	J16	K15S	6W/16E	M16	N16	P16	Q16	R16
7	E17	F17	G17	HIZ	J17	K17	L 17W 17	E M17	N17	P17	Q17	R17	,	E17	F17	G17	H11Z	J17	K17	L 17W 178	M17	N17	P17	Q17	R17	7	E17	F17	G17	HIT	J17	K17, L1	7W217E	M17	N17	P17	Q17	R17
3	E18	F18	G18	H18	J18	K18	L 18W 18	E M18	N18	P18	Q18		3	E18	F18	G18	H18	J18	K18	181/168	M18	N18	P18	Q18		3	E18	F18	G18	H18	J18	K18 L1	8W/18E	M18	N78	P18	Q18	
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59.8°N —	59.8°N		G21	H21	J21	K21	L21	M21		Whelk 2022 Landings (kg)		59.8°N —			G21	H21	J21	K21	L21	M21		elk 202 fort (cre]	59.8°N —			G21	H21	J21	К21	L21	M21	N2 L	helk 20: PUE (k	22 g/creel)]	
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59.6°N —		F23	G23	H23	J23	к23	L23	M23		_	- 9017		59.6°N —		F23	G23	H23	J23	к23	L23	M23			- 4579		59.6"N —		F23	G23	H23	J23	K23	L23	M23		_	- 1.18 - 1.87	
		F24	G24	H24	J 24	К24	L24				3 - 14456 57 - 3209				F24	G24	H24) 24	К24	L24				580 - 7781 782 - 10659			F24		G24	H24	J 24	к24	L24				- 3.04 - 4.23	
	F25 G25 H25				J25	K25	L25				95 - 5064				F25	G25	H25	J25	K25	L25				0 - 1524	1			F25	G25	H25	J25	К25	L25				- 5.52	
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Figure 2 Geographic distribution of whelk landings per SSMO stat square in 2022.

Figure 3 Geographic distribution of whelk effort per SSMO stat square in 2022. Figure 4 Geographic distribution of whelk LPUE per SSMO stat square in 2022.

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