

# Welsh Government Fisheries Division

## Cockle Permit Conditions

The Cockle Fishing Management and Permitting (Specified Area)  
(Wales) Order 2024

- **Three Rivers Cockle Fishery - 2026/2027 permitting period**

**PLEASE NOTE:** This document includes only the permit conditions that pertain to the Three Rivers cockle fishery, and forms part of the wording of the full Welsh Government Cockle Permit for the 2026/2027 permitting period. The full permit covers the entirety of the Specified Area, and comprises this document, all other permit documents issued in respect of the other fisheries within the Specified Area. The full permit wording should be read with a valid email confirmation of permit approval with the permit-holder's unique permit reference number.

Any reference in this document to a 'permit' is to a full Welsh Government Cockle Permit as issued to a permit-holder for the 2026/2027 permitting period.

Welsh Government Cockle Permits are issued under the authority of the Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs, one of the Welsh Ministers, pursuant to the [Cockle Fishing Management and Permitting \(Specified Area\) \(Wales\) Order 2024](#) ('the Order'). The 'Specified Area' means cockle fisheries designated in the Order, as illustrated on [this](#) map.

The permit applies to a single person for a single permit period from **1 June 2026** to **31 May 2027**. The permit will enable the permit holder to fish for or take cockles from open cockle beds within the Specified Area during the permit period. A permit may not be transferred from one person to another.

All cockle beds are closed until they are assessed and declared open by the Welsh Ministers under articles 5 and 6 of the Order.

No person may fish for or take cockles or knowingly allow or assist another person to fish for or take cockles-

- (a) from a closed cockle bed, or
- (b) from an open cockle bed except and to the extent authorised by a permit,

unless they are a person exempted by article 14 of the Order.

A person who fishes for or takes cockles contrary to the provisions in the Order (including in contravention of a condition of a permit), must re-deposit the cockles on the cockle bed from which they were taken in accordance with instructions from a marine enforcement officer. When re-depositing cockles, the cockles must be spread thinly and evenly.

## **Part 1**

### **Fixed permit conditions pertaining to all Welsh Government cockle fisheries within the Specified Area:**

#### **Requirement to check the status of a cockle bed**

1. The permit holder must check the Welsh Government's website ([www.gov.wales/cockles](http://www.gov.wales/cockles)) each day to confirm a cockle bed is open before they fish for or take cockles from that cockle bed.

#### **Prohibition on fishing at night**

2. The permit holder must not fish for or take cockles or knowingly allow or assist another person to fish for or take cockles from a cockle bed between half an hour after sunset on any day and half an hour before sunrise on the following day.

#### **Restriction on the use of vessels**

3. The permit holder must not use a vessel over 10 metres in overall length when measured from bow to stern, when fishing for or taking cockles from a cockle bed.

#### **Daily catch returns**

4. The permit holder must submit a daily catch return to the Welsh Ministers within two days of the day on which those cockles were fished for or taken from a cockle bed. A daily catch return must record the date of each catch of cockles, the total live weight of all cockles gathered on that date, and the cockle bed from which the cockles were gathered. This can be done via the online permitting system: <https://www.gov.wales/submit-catch-return>

#### **Gathering and sorting of cockles**

5. The permit holder must sort and wash cockles before they are taken from the cockle bed and for these purposes, a cockle is deemed as taken from a cockle bed as soon as it is placed in a container (including bags, sacks, and other similar receptacles).
6. The permit holder must not have in their possession or vessel a net bag while on a cockle bed or use a net bag to gather cockles from a cockle bed. For the purposes of this condition, "net bag" means a flexible handheld device used to fish for or take cockles which has a rigid frame and a wide, open net.

#### **Requirement to carry and produce the permit**

7. The permit holder must carry their permit at all times (either in electronic or paper form) while gathering cockles from a cockle bed.

## **Part 2**

### **Additional permit conditions pertaining to the Three Rivers cockle fishery.**

#### **Opening days**

1. Cockles may be fished for and taken from the Three Rivers fishery only on the following days:

Llanybri & Gwendraeth: Saturday and Sunday only

Ferryside, Llansteffan & St Ishmael / Tanylan: Wednesday and Thursday only

#### **Daily catch limit**

2. The permit-holder must not take more than 350kg of cockles from the Three Rivers fishery in any one day.

#### **Equipment for fishing**

3. Cockle sacks up to a size of 25kg (approximately 45cm x 60cm) must be used to remove cockle from the cockle beds.
4. Identification tags for all sacks must be securely attached to the cockle sacks and the tags must clearly display the permit holder's permit number.
5. The use of tamps, or any other instrument used to fluidise the sand, is prohibited.

#### **Minimum Landing Size**

6. Gathering must be undertaken by hand or by rake using a fixed mesh sieve. Only cockles which are retained by a gauge having a square opening of **17.5 mm** along each side of the square can be taken.

#### **Harvestable surplus**

7. Permit holders will be notified of the harvestable surplus once a stock survey and Habitats Regulations Assessment of the fishery have been completed.

Where there is evidence that the harvestable surplus has been fished or taken, the relevant area will be closed by the Welsh Government pursuant to article 7(1)(a) of 'The Cockle Fishing Management and Permitting (Specified Area) (Wales) Order 2024'.

#### **Conditions required by the environmental assessment of the cockle bed**

8. Boat-only removal. All cockle harvested within the Three Rivers fishery must be removed from the area by coded vessel only.

No mechanically propelled land vehicles may access the cockle beds.

## **Advisory notes for the Three Rivers cockle fishery**

1. Due to the proximity of the live firing range at MOD Pendine, Gwendraeth and Llanybri cockle beds will only be available at weekends when activity is least likely. However, on occasion the range at MOD Pendine may also open at weekends. Permit holders should ensure the range is not operational prior to any planned weekend gathering.
2. Access to Ginst Point is only permitted via Brill Gate on weekends, and only when the Range is not in operation. The gate is locked and monitored constantly by the Ministry of Defence (MOD). Permit holders must request access using the intercom system at Brill Gate. Strictly no motor vehicles are allowed on the sand dunes and/or saltmarsh, and the only parking available and allowed in the area is the Ginst Point car park. Failure to comply will result in the offender being reported to Dyfed-Powys Police by the MOD. For further information, please visit: <https://www.qinetiq.com/en/pendine/public-access/brill-gate-and-ginst-point>
3. Access through the Carmarthenshire Country Council owned and managed property at Pembrey Country Park or via any point along Cefn Sidan is not permitted. Any vehicle using Cefn Sidan to access the cockle beds will be reported to Dyfed Powys Police as a breach of the Road Traffic act 1988, section 34.
4. Byelaw 48 of the former South Wales Sea Fisheries Committee (Vehicle Usage within the Three Rivers) states that no person shall cause or permit any mechanically propelled vehicle to stand on or pass over any part of the South Wales Sea Fisheries Committee District that lies to the north of a line drawn eastwards from Ginst Point (NG Ref. SN332079) to Tywyn Point (NG Ref. SN357064), otherwise known as the Three Rivers Estuary, without the prior written authority of the Committee, and in accordance with conditions set out in that authority.
5. The Permit does not authorise the use of vehicles on or otherwise grant access to land bordering the Area. This authorisation does not provide any defence to prosecution under any other legislation. It has no effect in relation to and will not provide a defence to any other legal provision or requirement, including any provision of the Road Traffic Act 1988 or any other legislation applying to the use of a vehicle.
6. In addition to other statutory provisions, you may be committing a criminal offence if you access or use a vehicle in the area and bordering areas without first obtaining the prior permission of all relevant landowners (and any other relevant bodies) over whose land you intend to travel. You should also note that unless each relevant landowner has carried out all assessments required under any relevant nature conservation or environmental legislation (for example under the Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC)) before granting permission to use your vehicle in the specified area, you may still be committing a criminal offence even if you have the landowner's permission.
7. Permit holders should be aware that it is a legal requirement that each batch of cockles must be accompanied by a Registration Document (previously known as movement documents) when moved from the production area, i.e. the shellfish bed, or when first placed on the market. Registration Documents must be

completed and include the gatherer's details, the bed from which the shellfish were gathered and the date, before the cockles are transported (in accordance with paragraph 3 of Chapter I: General Requirements for the Placing on the Market of Live Bivalve Molluscs to Section VII (Live Bivalve Molluscs) of Annex III to Regulation (EC) No 853/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 laying down specific hygiene rules for food of animal origin). These documents can be obtained from Carmarthenshire County Council using the following contact details- Tel. Carmarthenshire County Council 01267 234567 or email [PublicProtection@carmarthenshire.gov.uk](mailto:PublicProtection@carmarthenshire.gov.uk) to log a request for the required documents.

8. Gathering cockles can be dangerous and brings with it a significant element of risk to personal safety. It is strongly recommended that you carry out your own health and safety and risk assessments before undertaking this activity. You are responsible for ensuring your own safety and for implementing appropriate control measures. Permit holders should familiarise themselves with, and follow, relevant health and safety guidance issued by competent authorities and other appropriate organisations.
9. Welsh Government will close the fishery to avoid an adverse effect on the integrity of a relevant protected site, or to assess the risk of adverse effect on the integrity of a relevant protected site (as defined by under Article 2 of the 2024 order).
10. Opening and closure declarations will be sent to all permit holders via email and will be published on the Welsh Government website and, whenever practicable, declarations will be placed in clearly visible locations on or near the cockle bed.
11. Unaccompanied bags of cockles should not be left on the cockle bed after gathering has concluded as they may be seen as abandoned. Any abandoned cockles will be returned to the cockle bed.
12. Permit holders are advised to hold liability insurance for any vessel used to gather cockles.
13. The area of water covering the Three Rivers cockle fishery is defined as "at sea". A vessel involved in any manner with regard to the transportation of personnel, equipment or cargo for cockling in the area will be operating commercially. As such any vessel operating for commercial purposes, must comply with relevant United Kingdom Merchant Shipping Legislation. Please see Annex D for further information.
14. Permit holders should act responsibly and respectfully while on or near the cockle beds. Anti-social behaviour, such as abusive language, intimidation, littering or any other disruptive conduct, is not acceptable.
15. It is your responsibility to be aware of the current classification of the gathering area. If sample results fail to meet the requirements for a Class C classification, the Food Standards Agency and relevant Local Authorities will prohibit cockle gathering in the affected area until the classification requirements are met.

You can view the current classification here: [Classification zone maps - Cefas \(Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science\)](#)

## **Safety warnings**

### **Unexploded Ordnance**

All activities carried out under this permit are undertaken entirely at the permit holder's own risk. The Three Rivers Estuary has been and continues to be used for ordnance testing.

We strongly advise that all individuals who wish to operate in this area (whether pursuant to this authorisation or otherwise) to act with caution and carry out their own risk assessment prior to any gathering or other activity taking place in this vicinity. Should any unexploded ordnance be found please contact QinetiQ on 0800 0921345.

Further advice on unexploded ordnance can be found at:

[QinetiQ - Unidentified Objects and Unexploded Ordnance](#)

### **Live Firing**

The Llanybri cockle beds lie adjacent to and partially within the MOD Pendine Live Firing Range. When the range is active, the beach area may be cordoned off. The prohibited area is clearly marked with cones, flags and a public safety sign, warning of the Danger Area. (See Annex B. Note red arrow heads point into the Danger Area)

The Llanybri cockle bed will only open on weekends. Firing at the range usually takes place during weekdays, but occasionally firing may occur during weekends. You should check scheduled firing prior to gathering. Below is a link to information regarding firing forecasts.

[QinetiQ - Advance Alert Service and Weekly Forecast](#)

The following link provides information to gatherers on access: [QinetiQ - Public Access to the Land Danger Area](#)

The following link is the MOD Byelaws relevant to Pendine Range:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/carmarthenshire-byelaws>

The following link provides information on Military low flying:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/military-low-flying-air-weapons-ranges-activity>

The Gwendraeth cockle beds lie adjacent to and partially within the MOD Pembrey Live Firing Range. When the range is active, the beach area may be cordoned off. The prohibited area is clearly marked with cones, flags and a public safety sign, warning of the Danger Area. (See Annex C. Note red arrow heads point into the Danger Area)

The Gwendraeth cockle bed will only open on weekends. Firing at the range usually takes place during weekdays, but occasionally firing may occur during weekends. You should check scheduled firing prior to gathering.

The following link provides information on Pembrey Sands Air Weapons Range:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/public-access-to-military-areas#pembrey-sands>

## **Rail Crossing Safety**

Please visit the following Network Rail website for information regarding level crossing safety: <https://www.networkrail.co.uk/communities/safety-in-the-community/level-crossing-safety/>

**A person who contravenes the conditions of a permit is guilty of an offence under section 190 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009. A person found guilty of an offence under that section is liable on summary conviction to a fine. In addition, the court may order the forfeiture of any fishing gear used in the offence and any sea fisheries resources in respect of which the offence was committed, or the payment of a sum of money representing the value of that fishing gear or resources.**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Alexander', written in a cursive style.

**Signed by** Mark Alexander

Deputy Director - Fisheries

Date: 21 April 2026

### **Three Rivers estuary area**

In this Permit, the “Three Rivers Estuary area” means an area within the estuaries of the Rivers Taf, Tywi and Gwendraeth, known as the Three Rivers Estuary, which are enclosed by a line drawn Ginst Point (map reference SN 332079) to Pen Tywyn Point (map reference SN 357064). Tidal waters are defined by the following limits:

1. A line drawn across the River Taf, between Laugharne Castle and Black Scar.
2. A line drawn across the River Tywi, true east from the south-easternmost corner of Llansteffan Castle to the opposite shore.
3. A line drawn across every river or stream flowing into the Gwendraeth estuary, along the seaward side of the bridges carrying the railway between Carmarthen Bay Holiday Park and RAF Pembrey Sands.

### **Individual cockle beds within the Three Rivers estuary area**

#### **Ferryside**

“The Ferryside cockle bed” means the cockle bed at Ferryside within the estuary of the River Tywi enclosed by:

- i. Due east from mid channel on a line drawn across the River Tywi, from the south-easternmost corner of Llansteffan Castle to the opposite shore at Ferryside and
- ii. A line drawn from St Isfael Parish Church (NG Ref. SN 362084) north-west to a point mid channel opposite Wharley Point (NG Ref. SN 340092) and
- iii. A line drawn along the River Tywi between the two mid channel points.

#### **Gwendraeth**

“Gwendraeth cockle beds” means the cockle beds within the estuary of the River Gwendraeth enclosed by:

- i. A line drawn from Carmarthen Bay Holiday Park (map reference SN 367073) in a south-west direction along Pastoun Scar to Pen Tywyn Point (map reference SN 357064) and
- ii. A line drawn across every river or stream flowing into the Gwendraeth estuary, along the seaward side of the bridges carrying the railway between Carmarthen Bay Holiday Park and RAF Pembrey Sands.

#### **Llansteffan**

“The Llansteffan cockle bed” means the cockle bed at Llansteffan within the estuary of the River Tywi enclosed by:

- i. A line drawn from Ginst Point (NG Ref. SN 332079) to Wharley Point (NG Ref. SN 340092) and
- ii. A line drawn due east across the River Tywi to mid channel, from the south-easternmost corner of Llansteffan Castle towards the opposite shore at Ferryside and

- iii. A line drawn to mid channel from Ginst Point (NG Ref. SN 332079) towards Tywyn Point (NG Ref. SN 340092) and
- iv. A line drawn along the River Tywi between these two mid channel points.

### **Llanybri**

“Llanybri cockle beds” means the cockle beds at Llanybri within the estuary of the River Taf enclosed by:

- i. A line drawn between Laugharne Castle (map reference SN 302108) and Black Scar (map reference SN 311108) and
- ii. A line drawn between Ginst Point (map reference SN 332079) to Wharley Point (NG Ref. SN 340092).

### **St Ishmael & Tanylan**

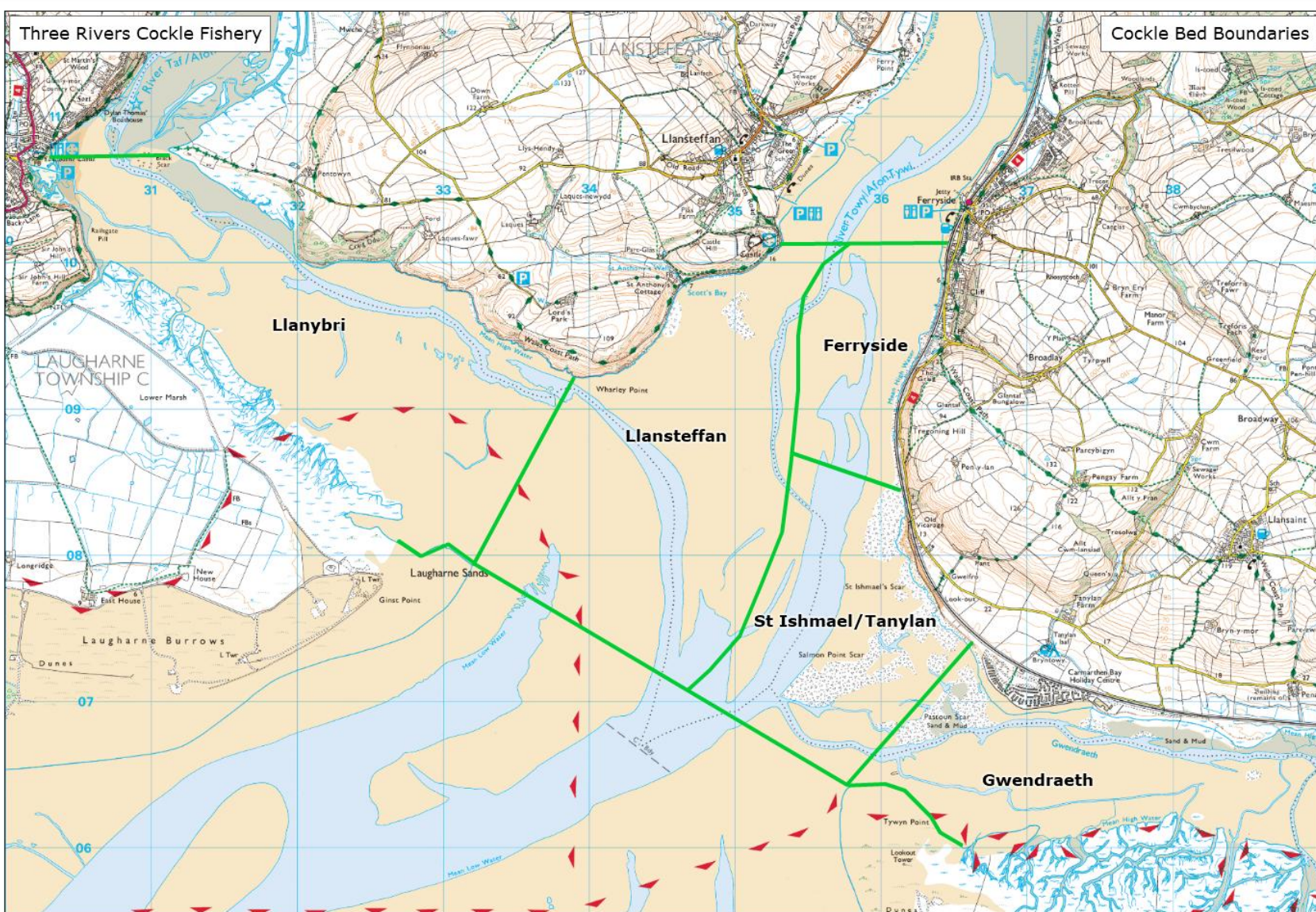
“St Ishmael & Tanylan cockle beds” means the cockle beds at St Ishmael & Tanylan within the estuary of the Rivers Tywi and Gwendraeth enclosed by:

- i. A line drawn from Carmarthen Bay Holiday Park (NG Ref. SN 367073) in a south-west direction along Pastoun Scar to Pen Tywyn Point (NG Ref. SN 357064) and then in a north-west direction to mid channel of the River Tywi and
- ii. A line drawn from St Isfael Parish Church (NG Ref. SN 362084) north-west to a point mid channel opposite Wharley Point (NG Ref. SN 340092) and
- iii. A line drawn along the River Tywi between the two mid channel points.

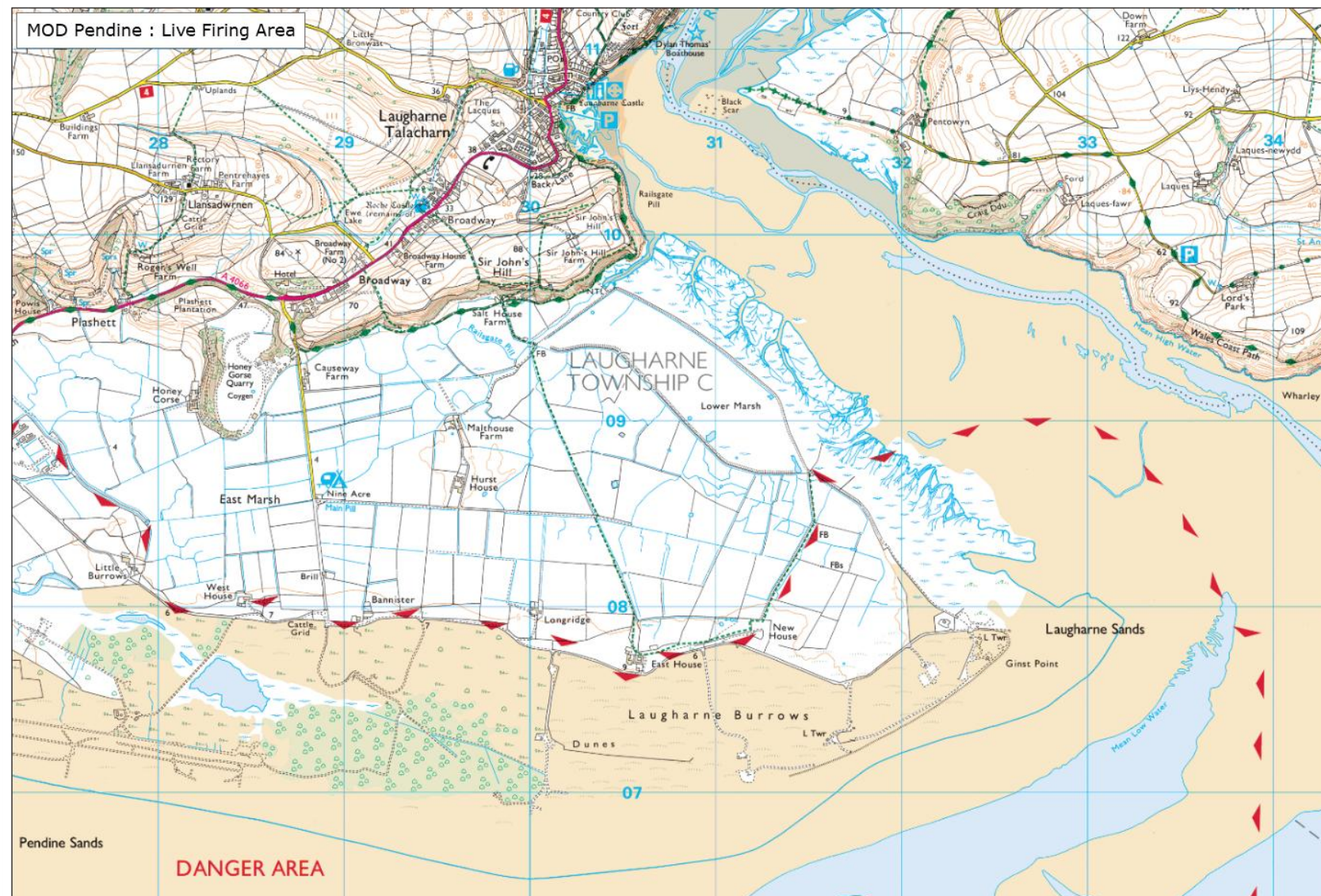
For information only, the boundaries of the individual cockle bed areas are shown below.

Three Rivers Cockle Fishery

Cockle Bed Boundaries



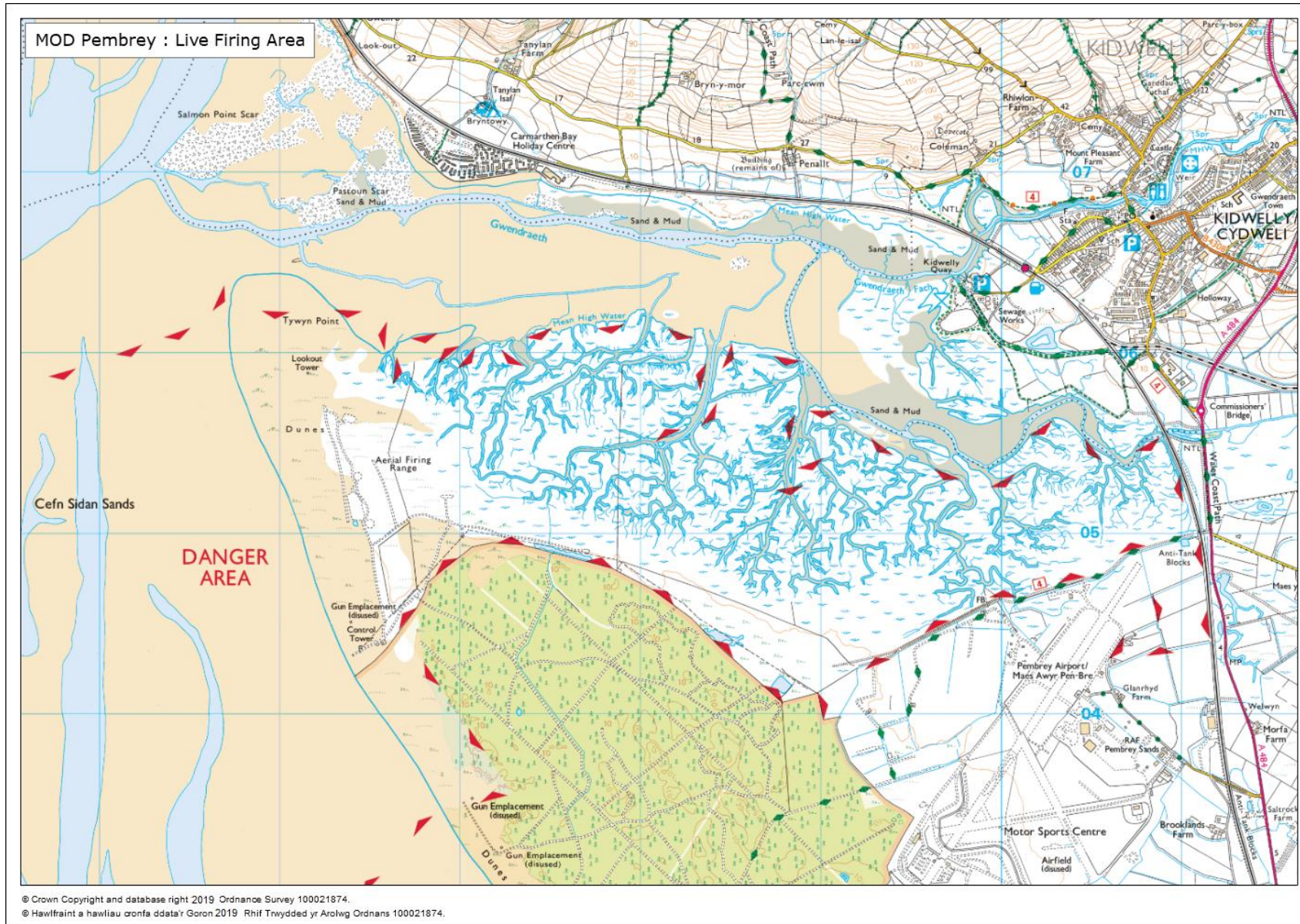
Annex B



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Annex C





Maritime &  
Coastguard  
Agency

Cardiff Marine Office  
**Maritime and Coastguard Agency**  
Anchor Court, Keen Road, Cardiff, CF245JW

[www.gov.uk/mca](http://www.gov.uk/mca)  
19 March 2026

## **GUIDANCE FOR VESSELS INVOLVED IN COCKLING OPERATIONS IN THE THREE RIVERS COCKLE FISHERY**

The area of the Three Rivers Cockle Fishery is beyond UK categorized water and it is defined as “at sea”.

A vessel involved in any manner with the transportation of personnel, equipment or cargo for cockling in the area will be operating commercially. All commercially operating vessels shall comply with the following legislation:

[SI 2023 No. 1216 - The Merchant Shipping \(Small Workboats and Pilot Boats\) Regulations 2023](#)

[The Workboat Code Edition 3](#)

Existing vessels that are certificated under the Brown Code, its equivalent standard published in the technical Annex to MGN 280(M), or Workboat Code Edition 2, Amendment 1 shall meet the requirements of the Code by the vessel’s next renewal examination or three years after the date of entry into force of the Code, whichever is later, except, where references to previous requirements are explicitly specified within individual sections of the Code they may comply with such requirements.

All cargo shall be stowed and secured in a manner which will not adversely affect the safe operation of the vessel. A vessel shall have adequate cargo support and securing arrangements appropriate for all intended modes of operation.

The “maximum number of persons on board” and “the maximum loading condition”, as indicated in the vessel WorkBoat Certificate, shall be always complied with.

### **Concerns for safety of Cockle vessels:**

There have been reports of safety related incidents occurring on vessels operating in cockle beds. These incidents involve, overloading of cockles, carrying more people on board than certified to carry and operating the vessel without proper certification and/or without the required safety equipment. Additionally, grounding and stranding incidents are noted to be on the increase.

MCA wishes to work with ‘Cockle Gatherers and Gangmasters’ to collectively address these concerns, by effective engagement, monitoring of incidents, participating in multi-agency initiatives and carrying out enforcement actions where necessary.