

## **Potential survey work by Cefas on the proposed Skate and Ray closed area north of Lundy**

At the meeting on 4 June between Defra, the NDFA and the Shark Trust, Defra committed to undertaking survey work to assess the biological validity of the proposed skate and ray closed area north of Lundy. The proposed survey work, to be carried out by Cefas, is outlined below.

### **Proposed survey work**

**September:** Cefas will re-allocate approximately one day (allowing for about 5 - 10 tows) from the current Cefas beam trawl survey to sample the proposed closed area. The beam trawl gear is the most appropriate gear for sampling juvenile skates and rays, as the use of the chain mat may restrict catches of larger skates. This gear type and level of sampling will provide data directly comparable to that collected in Carmarthen Bay (which is known to be a nursery ground). Cefas has proposed that sampling occurs during September, as this is an appropriate time of the year to ascertain whether or not the area is a nursery ground i.e. during this period you would expect to find juveniles present.

**November/December:** The Southern and Western International Bottom Trawl Survey (SWIBTS) also samples in the Bristol Channel. Depending on the sea bed conditions experienced during the September survey, the grounds will either be fished with a rockhopper otter trawl or the standard ground gear otter trawl. This gear is suitable for sampling larger skates and rays. The results of this additional survey work will support the data collected in September and March.

**March:** The Cefas Data Collection Regulation Cruise (DCR) is likely to be operating in the vicinity of the Bristol Channel during March. If this is the case, Cefas expect to be in a position to undertake at least one days fishing in the proposed closed area during this time. Additional survey work might be possible; however, this will depend upon the extent and requirements of other commercial species to be sampled during the survey. The gear used will depend heavily on the cruise requirements, and it may be possible to undertake beam trawl to sample juveniles and / or otter trawl to sample mature fish.

**December-May:** Cefas would like to carry out occasional (around 1 to 2) discard trips on a commercial vessel. These would serve to better inform the presence of females carrying eggs in and around the proposed closed area. As this survey work will require the presence of observers on a commercial vessel the support of fisherman in the North Devon area will be essential.