



Square Mesh Escape Panels

Target Species:

Nephrops

Fishing Method:

Prawn Scraper Net

Area:

North Sea ICES IV a/b

Vessel:

MV Atlas

Trial Objective:

Cod avoidance



Aim of the Trial:

Cod avoidance in the *Nephrops* Fishery. This is necessary for those vessels with no quota for cod, especially within the context of the Landing Obligation (LO).

Gear Modifications:

- A coverless, letterbox net with two feet of cover to keep tension
- Square mesh windows in the lower wings of the net with panels running from the top guard mesh right up into selvedge
- Panels of 300mm inside mesh with a minimum size of 5mm double netting.
- The length of the panels of 3 metres in total, placed no closer to the start of the lower wing than 10 metres.

The Control net was a similar net with cover and wing panels covered (or traditional scraper).

Further Modifications:

During the trial the observer noted that the test net was proving to be relatively ineffective at allowing cod to escape where larger quantities of cod were found. In scarcely populated cod areas it was 25-30% more efficient. As a result, panels were added/replaced in the wings of the net at sea.

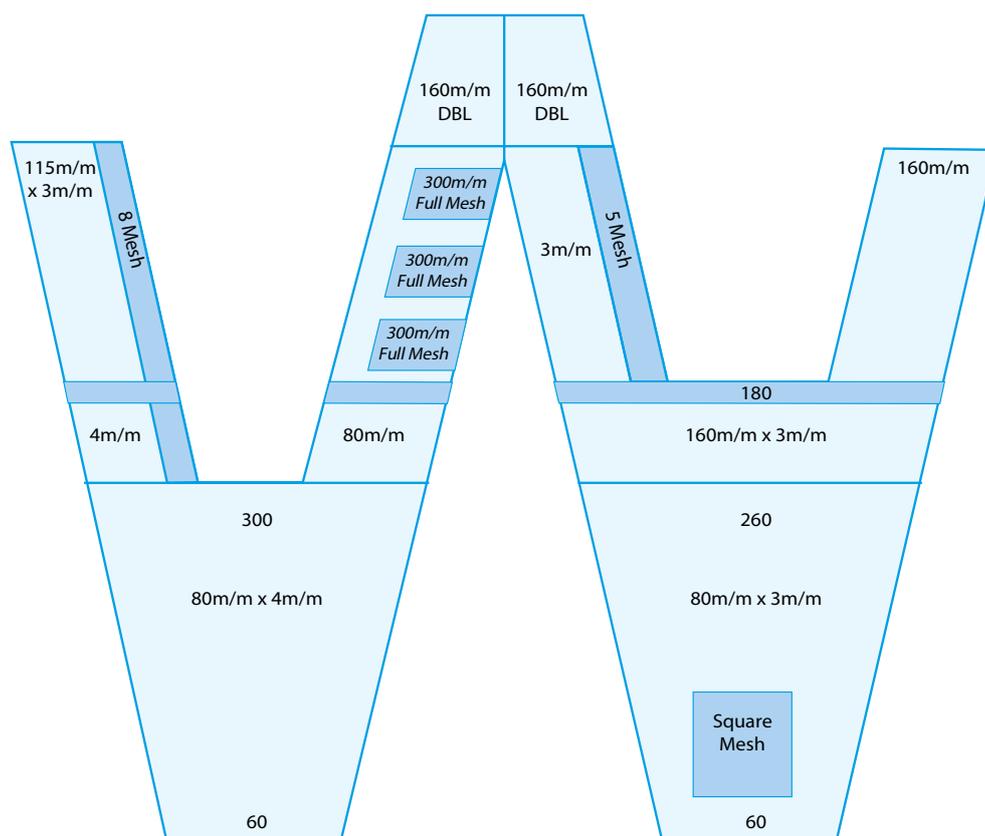
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Results

Given that the aim was to reduce catches of cod, initial thoughts were that this was not delivered in a significant manner.

Length frequency data collected by the Observer was plotted with a view to determining if the test gear had been more selective in relation to juvenile (or < Minimum Conservation Reference Size) cod. The numbers of cod caught in the test net were 16% fewer than in the control net, but the length frequency plots did not suggest a significant reduction of below MCRS cod.

Clearly, the total numbers of cod caught were not particularly high and were also quite variable on a haul to haul basis.



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