

1 **Title: Assessing bait use by static gear fishers of the Scottish Inshore Fisheries: a preliminary**
2 **study**

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20 **Funding Sources:**

21 This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or
22 not-for-profit sectors.

23

24 **Keywords:**

25 Coastal fisheries

26 Bait Biomass

27 Creel Fishing

28 Fisher Knowledge

29 Fisheries Management

30

31

32

33 **ABSTRACT**

34 Approximately 70% of the Scottish fishing fleet target shellfish using baited creels. Bait is an

35 essential component of catch success, but the economic and environmental implications of

36 bait use are unknown. In this preliminary study, a short survey was circulated to members of
37 the Scottish inshore creeling fleet and analysed alongside spatial data from 8 creel fishing
38 vessels. Bait biomass, input into coastal waters through creeling activity, was calculated
39 along with bait types, motivations surrounding the discarding of used bait and the annual
40 estimated spatial concentration. Findings indicate that preferred bait types differ with
41 geographic location and cost the creeling sector approximately £9.8 million annually at the
42 time of the survey, equating to 16.3% of the nominal 2018 shellfish landing value. Data from
43 this research suggests that approximately 13,492 metric tonnes of bait biomass enters coastal
44 Scottish waters through creeling activities annually. Vessel tracks showed fishers returning to
45 certain fishing grounds repeatedly, indicating that bait biomass input is highly localised.
46 Hotspots of fishing activity were calculated to receive up to 75 kg ha⁻¹ and 47 kg ha⁻¹ of bait
47 biomass per fisher annually when fishing *Nephrops* and crab/ lobster, respectively. Bait
48 discarding occurs most frequently at the fishing grounds with convenience being the main
49 motivation. This study provides a baseline for future studies and prompts the consideration of
50 bait use in the management of creel fisheries.

51

52

53 **1. Introduction**

54 The use of bait is a substantial part of catch success in creel fisheries (Chapman and Smith,
55 1978; Siikavuopio et al., 2017). Various physical properties of bait and its usage, such as
56 moisture content, persistence, rate of diffusion and soak times, can impact catch effectiveness
57 (Dorman et al., 2012; Mackie et al., 1980). As a result, fishers are subject to an unavoidable
58 cost:benefit trade-off when selecting bait type; for instance, more expensive bait types may
59 improve catch substantially. Minimising bait costs while boosting bait-related catch
60 efficiency is key to improving the cost-benefit ratio. Five key determining factors of bait
61 choice are likely to be durability in the creel, availability, oiliness, price and target species,
62 however, it is suggested that bait availability and expense largely govern bait choice (de
63 Rozarieux, 2014; Mackie et al., 1980).

64 In Scotland, inshore creeling vessels almost exclusively target European lobster (*Homarus*
65 *gammarus*), brown crab (*Cancer pagurus*), velvet swimming crab (*Necora puber*) and
66 Norway lobster (*Nephrops norvegicus*) within 12 nm of the Scottish coast. Approximately 92
67 % of creeling vessels are <10 m; this figure increases to ~99 % in vessels <15 m (Marine
68 Scotland, 2019). Operational patterns for the fishery are found to relate to vessel size; larger

69 vessels tend to work larger areas and as a result, fish more creels (Mendo et al., 2019a).
70 Creel-caught landings from Scottish vessels amounted to approximately 16,000 tonnes and
71 were worth over £60 million (nominal value) in 2018 (Marine Scotland, 2019).

72 Stock assessment reports identify data gaps including information on growth parameters,
73 bycatch discarding, and factors of catchability such as bait types, soak times and creel
74 densities (Mesquita et al., 2017). Aspects affecting catchability directly impact the economic
75 output of a vessel through the altered catch success of target species. Baiting method (mesh
76 bag or perforated container), the quantity of bait per creel and rebaiting frequency also affect
77 catchability (Krouse, 1988). These decisions are based on inherent ‘fisher knowledge’, gained
78 over a fishing career or by word of mouth. Fisher knowledge has been identified as a largely
79 untapped and valuable data resource for scientific communities (Johannes et al., 2000).

80 The environmental implications of bait choice on benthic habitats within Scottish inshore
81 fisheries are largely unknown. Bait biomass entering coastal waters from creeling activities
82 come from two sources, the first being retained and consumed within a creel when it is
83 soaked. The second is ‘used bait’ that has been taken from hauled creels. This used bait is
84 often discarded by fishers into the marine environment.

85 Parallels may be drawn between the deposition of bait biomass from creeling activity and the
86 widespread practice of discarding deceased non-target and non-quota biomass at sea through
87 EU regulation before the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) reform in 2013 (European
88 Commission, 2013, 2009). The discarding of marketable biomass was typically associated
89 with industrial-scale bottom trawling activities in the North Atlantic (Zeller et al., 2018).
90 Documented impacts of discarding include artificially inflated scavenging seabird
91 populations (Bicknell et al., 2013; Furness, 2003; Tasker et al., 2000), utilisation by benthic
92 carnivores and demersal fish (Catchpole et al., 2005), habituation of marine predators
93 (Moore, 2003) and altered species interactions (Regehr and Montevercchi, 1997).

94 Sourcing bait may also have environmental consequences; transportation carries a carbon
95 footprint, which will likely be higher for fishers operating from the Hebridean Islands,
96 shipping bait from the mainland (D Macinnes 2020, *pers. comm.*, 23 June). There is potential
97 for disease transfer to native wildlife and local aquaculture from bait imports (Murray, 2015)
98 and the question of sustainability of baitfish stocks (Rizzari and Gardner, 2019).

99 The 2017 Creel Fishing Effort Study highlighted a widespread concern over gear saturation
100 with more creels in the water, creating ‘creel on creel’ conflict between fishers for marine

101 space and leading to overfishing of poorly managed locations (Marine Scotland, 2017). The
102 number of creeling vessels in Scottish waters has been increasing steadily since 2013 (Marine
103 Scotland, 2019). Together, this implies an increased demand for bait and higher levels of
104 biomass entering the marine environment. The demand for bait biomass and its cost to the
105 Scottish inshore fishery is unknown.

106 In a preliminary study by Saila et al., 2002, creel bait is suggested to be a significant
107 contribution to the increase in populations and landings of American lobster (*Homarus*
108 *americanus*). Bait biomass input equated to an 80% increase in primary production in the
109 Gulf of Maine inshore fishery. Furthermore, bait consumed within a creel by sub-legal
110 specimens was estimated to account for over 20% of landings due to the impact on growth
111 (Saila et al., 2002). Whilst further study is necessary, if verified, the implications of bait use
112 should be a major consideration in the management of shellfish stocks worldwide. Without
113 knowledge of the demand and spatial use in Scotland, the environmental and economic
114 implications of bait use, both positive and negative, are unknown.

115 This study aims to establish a baseline for bait biomass and costs in the Scottish inshore
116 creeling sector as well as gain an understanding of bait use by utilising fisher knowledge
117 through a targeted survey. The study was split into four main objectives:

- 118 • To identify the different kinds of bait being used across Scotland to identify regional
119 differences in demand.
- 120 • To estimate the biomass and the financial costs of bait entering coastal waters as a
121 function of creel numbers.
- 122 • To learn of personal motivations surrounding bait discarding practices by tapping into
123 fisher knowledge and allowing for hypothesis formation.
- 124 • To use a selection of vessel tracks to estimate the seasonal bait biomass input into
125 areas of highest fishing pressure to provide a basis for understanding possible
126 environmental and economic implications.

127 **2. Materials & Methods**

128 *2.1. Survey*

129 This fishery targets crab, lobster and *Nephrops* using baited creels and comprises primarily of
130 vessels <10 m in length. Fishers on the east coast catch only crab and lobster in standard D-
131 shaped or parlour creels. West coast fishers also use D-shaped and parlour creels to catch
132 crab and lobster, along with *Nephrops* which are caught using D-shaped prawn creels

133 (Marine Scotland, 2017). The surveys were targeted at all members of the Scottish inshore
134 static gear fleet who use baited creels within a 12 nm radius of the coast. A 10 minute, 24-
135 question survey was constructed using Qualtrics^{XM} software version 05/06 2020. A draft of
136 the survey was reviewed by a small number of fishers to ensure that the questions asked were
137 appropriate and that the length would not deter other fishers from responding. It was
138 circulated from the 11th June - 5th August 2020 through various contacts within the sector
139 around Scotland, including Johnshaven, the Western Isles and the Clyde Fishers Association
140 (CFA) to ensure both east and west coast were represented. Contacts subsequently prompted
141 their respective fishing communities to complete the surveys with a prize-draw to incentivise
142 survey participation.

143 A mixed-mode survey design, suggested to produce a higher response rate, gave fishers the
144 option of completing the survey online through a customized link/ QR code, a hard-copy or a
145 telephone interview (Wallen et al., 2016). Data from telephone interviews were emailed to
146 the participant to approve the response before entry into the database. Consent was obtained
147 before completion and all data were anonymised. Data held were compliant with the UK
148 Government's General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) (ICO, 2019). Ethical approval
149 for the collection of survey data was granted by the University of St Andrews Research
150 Ethics Committee (UTREC) (Approval Code: BL13442).

151 Part 1 of the survey focussed on vessel details (home port, vessel plate number and target
152 species) and fishing effort to contribute to the quantification of bait biomass. Details included
153 the number of creels, strings shot per day, days fished, length of high and low season and
154 frequency with which creels are checked and rebaited. Part 2 focused on the details of
155 personal bait use, including bait type, quantity, price, source and discarding practices. The
156 questions were a mix of multiple-choice, short answer, dichotomous and open-ended. Vessel
157 lengths were sourced from the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) Fleet Register.

158

159 *2.2. Spatial Data Collection*

160 Positional data were collected between February 2018 and July 2020 under the Scottish
161 Inshore Fisheries Integrated Data System (SIFIDS) project (MASTS, 2016). Eight vessels
162 from around Scotland were fitted with solar-powered or vessel electrically powered Teltonika
163 FMB202 and FMB204 waterproof (IP67) trackers. Trackers contained internal high gain
164 Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS) and Global System for Mobile Communications

165 (GSM) antennas with integrated high-capacity back-up batteries and had an accuracy of <3
166 m. The trackers were configured to record positional GNSS data at 60-second intervals as this
167 was found to be the most effective resolution at which to infer fishing activity (Mendo et al.,
168 2019b).

169 2.3. Survey Data Analysis

170 All data were analysed using RStudio Version 3.6.1 (RCoreTeam, 2019) with some
171 calculations made with Microsoft Excel ® for Microsoft 365 MSO (16.0.13127.20164). Bait
172 types were grouped into different geographic locations. Fisher's exact testing was used to
173 compare bait preferences for each region and the difference in acquisition (caught or
174 purchased bait). The mass per creel of frequently used bait types was compared using a non-
175 parametric Kruskal-Wallis test to determine if any type would have inflated demand on
176 account of being used in larger quantities per creel.

177 2.4. Biomass Estimation

178 The number of creels per string (*CreelStr*) for each fisher were multiplied by the number of
179 strings shot per day (*StrDay*) to give the number of creels shot per fishing day (*CreelDay*)
180 (1).

$$181 \text{ CreelDay} = \text{CreelStr} * \text{StrDay} \quad (1)$$

182 For each respondent, the bait mass used per creel for the different bait types was averaged
183 (*BaitCreel*). This was multiplied by the number of creels shot per day (*CreelDay*) and by the
184 weekly rebaiting frequency (*RebaitFreq*) to give the amount of bait used by a fisher per week
185 (*BaitWeek*), calculated for high and low seasons separately (2).

$$186 \text{ BaitWeek} = \text{BaitCreel} * \text{CreelDay} * \text{RebaitFreq} \quad (2)$$

187 The amount of bait used per week (*BaitWeek*) was multiplied by the number of weeks fished
188 in high and low season respectively (*WeeksFished*) to estimate the mass of bait per season
189 (*BaitSeas*) (3). The resulting high (*H*) and low (*L*) season values for each fisher were added to
190 give the annual bait used per vessel (*BaitYr*) (4).

$$191 \text{ BaitSeas} = \text{BaitWeek} * \text{WeeksFished} \quad (3)$$

$$192 \text{ BaitYr} = \text{BaitSeas}(H) + \text{BaitSeas}(L) \quad (4)$$

193 The annual bait used per full-time vessel (where full-time equates to those fishing 52 weeks
194 per year) was averaged (*AveBaitYr*) and was multiplied by the median number of active creel
195 fishing vessels in Scotland, currently estimated at 1,017 (Marine Scotland, 2017) (5). The
196 resulting number is the average bait mass deposited in coastal waters annually (*BaitDeposit*).

$$197 \quad BaitDeposit = AveBaitYr * 1,017 \quad (5)$$

198 2.5. Estimation of costs

199 The number of fishing days per week for high and low season (*FDWeek*) were multiplied by
200 the number of creels shot per day (*CreelDay*) to give creels shot per week (*CreelWeek*) (6).
201 This was multiplied by the number of weeks fished in high and low season (*WeeksFished*) to
202 give the number of creels shot per season (*CreelSeas*) (7). Creels shot per season were
203 combined to give the number of creels shot per year (*CreelYr*) (8).

$$204 \quad CreelWeek = FDWeek * CreelDay \quad (6)$$

$$205 \quad CreelSeas = CreelWeek * WeeksFished \quad (7)$$

$$206 \quad CreelYr = CreelSeas(H) + CreelSeas(L) \quad (8)$$

207 Costs were calculated using the average number of creels shot per day as the price of bait per
208 day was not differentiated between the seasons in the survey. The number of fishing days per
209 year (*FDYr*) was calculated by multiplying the number of fishing days per week (*FDWeek*)
210 by the number of weeks fished for high and low season (*WeeksFished*) (9). To get the
211 average number of creels shot per day (*AveCreelDay*), the number of creels shot per year
212 (*CreelYr*) was divided by the number of fishing days per year (10).

$$213 \quad FDYr = FDWeek * WeeksFished \quad (9)$$

$$214 \quad AveCreelDay = CreelYr / FDYr \quad (10)$$

215 The price paid by a fisher for bait on a typical fishing day (*£BaitFD*) was divided by the mass
216 of bait used per typical fishing day (*MassBaitFD*) to give the cost of bait per kilogram
217 (*£BaitKG*) (11). The cost of bait per kilogram was multiplied by the amount of bait remaining
218 at the end of a fishing trip (*BaitRemain*) to give the price of the remaining bait (*£BaitRemain*)
219 (12).

220 $\text{£BaitKG} = \text{£BaitFD} / \text{MassBaitFD}$ (11)

221 $\text{£BaitRemain} = \text{£BaitKG} * \text{BaitRemain}$ (12)

222 The price of the remaining bait (£BaitRemain) was subtracted from the original price paid by
 223 a fisher for bait on a typical fishing day (£BaitFD) to give the actual cost of bait used per
 224 fishing day (CostBaitFD) (13). The cost of bait per creel (CostCreel) could then be calculated
 225 by dividing the actual cost of bait used per fishing day by the average number of creels shot
 226 per day (AveCreelDay) (14).

227 $\text{CostBaitFD} = \text{£BaitFD} - \text{£BaitRemain}$ (13)

228 $\text{CostCreel} = \text{CostBaitFD} / \text{AveCreelDay}$ (14)

229 The cost of bait per creel (CostCreel) could then be scaled up to a personal cost-per-year
 230 (FisherCostYr) by multiplying it by the number of creels shot per year (CreelYr) (15). The
 231 costs were averaged across all full-time survey respondents who fish 52 weeks per year
 232 (AveFisherCostYr) and multiplied by 1,017 to give an approximate industry-wide value
 233 (BaitCostYr) to bait purchased in Scotland for use in the creeling sector (16).

234 $\text{FisherCostYr} = \text{CostCreel} * \text{CreelYr}$ (15)

235 $\text{BaitCostYr} = \text{AveFisherCostYr} * 1,017$ (16)

236 *2.6. Bait discard motivations*

237 First, the preferred bait discarding site was determined. Participants chose between discarding
 238 bait at the fishing grounds, in the harbour or in transit. Fisher’s exact testing determined if the
 239 geographic location was a dependent factor in the preferred bait discarding site. Motivations
 240 surrounding discarding practice were coded (Table 1) and categorised by discarding site
 241 (fishing grounds, harbour and in transit). The percentage of fishers quoting each belief was
 242 determined.

Table 1

Descriptors for the codes given to fisher reasons and motivations surrounding the discarding of used bait at either the fishing grounds, in the harbour, or in transit.

Code	Descriptor of reasons/ motivations
Attractant	<i>Believes bait discards will attract new animals to the fishing grounds.</i>
Convenient	<i>The easiest solution for getting rid of used bait.</i>
Feed Birds	<i>Seabirds consume discarded bait. Beliefs of convenience, the desire to get rid of rotten bait and the belief that there will be no effect on the benthos are</i>

	<i>inferred.</i>
Feed Benthos	<i>Believes that benthic organisms will consume discarded bait.</i>
Feed Stock	<i>Believes that discarded bait will feed the target species.</i>
No Discards	<i>No bait is discarded.</i>
No Effect	<i>Discarded bait is believed to have no effect on the benthos.</i>
No feeding stock	<i>Believes that fed lobsters will not enter creels.</i>
None	<i>No reasons or beliefs were given.</i>
Preserve fishing grounds	<i>Believes that bait should not be discarded at the fishing grounds.</i>
Preserve Harbour	<i>Believes that bait should not be discarded in the harbour.</i>
Rotten bad	<i>Believes rotten bait will not catch anything so bait is discarded to prevent rot.</i>
Rotten good	<i>Believes that rotten bait will improve the catch of lobsters and so is retained.</i>
Safety	<i>Safety reasons stated, e.g. the discarding of used bait prevents the deck from becoming slippery.</i>

243

244 2.7. Spatial Data Analysis

245 Positional data were available for eight creeling vessels, 4 from the West Coast and 4 from
 246 the East Coast, between February 2018 to July 2020. Data from each vessel were divided by
 247 year and further subset into meteorological seasons with spring spanning 01st March – 31st
 248 May, summer from 01st June – 31st August, Autumn spanning 01st September – 30th
 249 November and Winter from 01st December – 28/29th February the following year. Seasonal
 250 data with fishing trips recorded in all three months were considered complete and isolated for
 251 the revisit analysis. The SIFIDS project developed an algorithm to infer fishing activity by
 252 differentiating creel hauls from that of vessel steaming (Mendo et al., 2019b). This algorithm
 253 was applied to the vessels tracks to filter hauling activity only.

254 Spatial data were visually inspected for errors using the ‘leaflet’ package in RStudio (Cheng
 255 et al., 2019). Coordinates outside the study area, along with duplicated data were removed.
 256 Vessels were observed revisiting certain locations within their fishing grounds. To calculate
 257 the number of revisits in a season, the function *rasterize()* from the R package ‘*raster*’
 258 (Hijmans, 2020) was used to count the number of fishing trips that occurred within a grid of
 259 resolution 100 x 100 m (1 ha). A resolution of 1 ha allowed for the number of revisits to be
 260 calculated on a fine spatial scale and for comparison with values given in previous research
 261 (Saila et al., 2002). Individual fishing excursions could be identified by a unique trip
 262 identification number, which when mapped, permitted the calculation of the number of
 263 revisits per 1 ha grid cell. From each seasonal subset and for each vessel, the maximum
 264 number of revisits in a season was recorded. The average maximum revisits across each

265 meteorological season was then calculated. The maximum number of revisits enabled the
266 calculation of the concentration of bait entering creeling hotspots per meteorological season.

267 2.8. Seasonal bait biomass input estimate

268 The number of *Nephrops* and crab and lobster creels on a string that would fall within 1 ha
269 was calculated (*CreelNumber*). This was multiplied by the average amount of bait used per
270 creel (247.35 g) to give an estimate for the average bait input into that hectare for a single
271 fishing event (*Bait/ha*) (17).

$$272 \text{ Bait/ha} = \text{CreelNumber} * 247.35 \quad (17)$$

273 The mass of bait per hectare (*Bait/ha*) was then multiplied by the number of average
274 maximum revisits for each season (*AveMaxRevisit*) to determine the seasonal bait input
275 (*SeasBaitInput*) for a fishing hotspot (18).

$$276 \text{ SeasBaitInput} = \text{Bait/ha} * \text{AveMaxRevisit} \quad (18)$$

277 Rebaiting was assumed with every revisit and bait mass was assumed equal between
278 *Nephrops* creels and crab and lobster creels. In some instances, vessels were observed
279 returning to the same locations every season, therefore, it was appropriate to sum the seasonal
280 masses (*SeasBaitInput*), yielding an annual figure (*BaitConcYr*) (19).

$$281 \text{ BaitConcYr} = \text{SeasBaitInput(Spring)} + \text{SeasBaitInput(Summer)} + \text{SeasBaitInput(Autumn)} + \\ 282 \text{ SeasBaitInput(Winter)} \quad (19)$$

283 3. Results

284 29 survey responses were obtained: 12 surveys (41.4%) from the east coast (E), 12 surveys
285 (41.4%) from the Outer Hebrides (OH) and 5 surveys (17.2%) from the west coast mainland
286 and Inner Hebrides (WMIH). Respondents fished from vessels ranging from 4.78 to 13.41 m
287 in length, with 3 respondents (10.3%) targeting *Nephrops*, 4 respondents (13.8%) targeting
288 lobster, 1 respondent (3.8%) targeting swimming crabs and the remaining 21 (72.4%)
289 targeting various combinations of the above in combination with brown crab. 17 respondents
290 (58.6%) fish 52 weeks per year and the remaining 12 (41.4%) fish between 17 and 44 weeks
291 per year. The 2017 Creel Fishing Effort study revealed that the mean number of creels
292 deployed per vessel by *Nephrops* fishers is 926. West coast crab and lobster fishers deploy an
293 average of 294 creels per vessel and east coast crab and lobster fishers deploy an average of
294 455 creels per vessel (Marine Scotland, 2017). Trip lengths were found to vary with region.

295 James et al., 2018 report that vessels from the Outer Hebrides conducted significantly longer
 296 trips over greater distances compared to those on the east coast in Fife. The mean trip length
 297 of Outer Hebridean vessels was 7.49 h with a mean distance of 36.8 km, compared to a mean
 298 of 5.1 h and 24.9 km for Fife-based vessels (James et al., 2018).

299 *3.1. Analysis of bait types*

300 On the east coast (E) (n = 12), mackerel (*Scomber scombrus*) is the most popular bait
 301 accounting for 45.2% of the bait types used (Fig 1). A further 29.0% of bait used is fish heads
 302 and frames from processing plants. In the OH (n = 12), 31.0% of bait used is mackerel. A
 303 further 24.1% of bait used is herring (*Clupea harengus*). Fishers from the WMIH (n = 5), use
 304 a more even spread of bait types, with herring accounting for 21.4% of bait used and haddock
 305 (*Melanogrammus aeglefinus*), spotted dogfish (*Scyliorhinus canicula*) and heads and frames
 306 each accounting for 14.3% of bait used. A significant difference in bait types was detected
 307 between the geographic locations, though with the small sample size for each location, this is
 308 an interesting observation that warrants further investigation (Fisher’s Exact Test with
 309 simulated p-value based on 2000 replicates: $p = 0.005 \mid n = 29$).

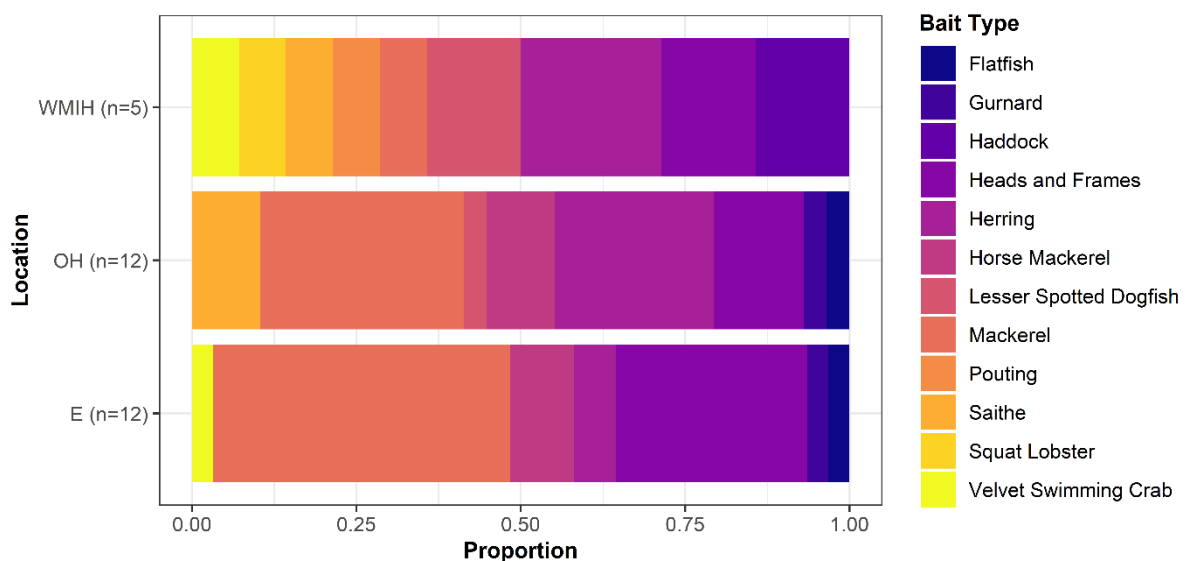


Figure 1 Proportions of each bait type used, categorised by location. (WMIH: west coast mainland and Inner Hebrides | OH: Outer Hebrides | E: East Coast). Fisher’s Exact Tests revealed that geographic location is not independent of the bait type preference, therefore preferred bait types differ significantly with region. The limited data available provides an interesting observation and warrants further investigation.

310 Overall, the most frequently reported bait types were mackerel (62.0%, n = 18), heads and
 311 frames (41.4%, n = 12), herring (41.4%, n = 12), horse mackerel (*Trachurus trachurus*)
 312 (20.7%, n = 6) and saithe (*Pollachius virens*) (13.8%, n = 4). When the mean amount of bait
 313 (g) per creel for each bait type was compared, no significant differences were found between

325 spotted dogfish (*Scyliorhinus canicular*), haddock (*Melanogrammus aeglefinus*), saithe
 326 (*Pollachius virens*), velvet swimming crab (*Necora puber*), pouting (*Trisopterus luscus*) or
 327 squat lobster (*Galathea sp.*). The average percentage of bait caught per fisher is 12.8% \pm
 328 4.6% (n = 28).

329 3.2. Biomass and financial cost estimates

330 The annual bait deposition as a function of creel number for the active inshore creeling fleet
 331 was estimated at 13,492 \pm 3,402 metric tonnes (mt), with a minimum estimate of 793 mt and
 332 a maximum estimate of 47,596 mt. This was based on the average creel fisher using 13,267 \pm
 333 3,346 kg of bait per year (range = 780 – 46,800 kg).

334 The mean cost of bait per creel equated to £0.12 \pm £0.02 (range = £0.00 – £0.54) (Fig 3).

335 When scaled up to a fleet level, the annual cost of bait to the industry was estimated at
 336 £9,793,421, based on the average active fisher spending £9,629 \pm £1,323 (range = £2,496 –
 337 £23,028) annually. Fishers who catch large proportions of their bait or have a relationship
 338 with processing plants reported a spend of £0.00; all were located on the mainland (n = 4).

339 3.3. Reasons and motivations for bait discarding

340 Fisher’s Exact testing determined that geographic location is independent of the preferred bait
 341 discarding site. Fisher motivations were pooled across geographic locations and instead
 342 separated by bait discarding site (Fisher’s Exact Test for count data: p = 0.102). 75.9% (n =

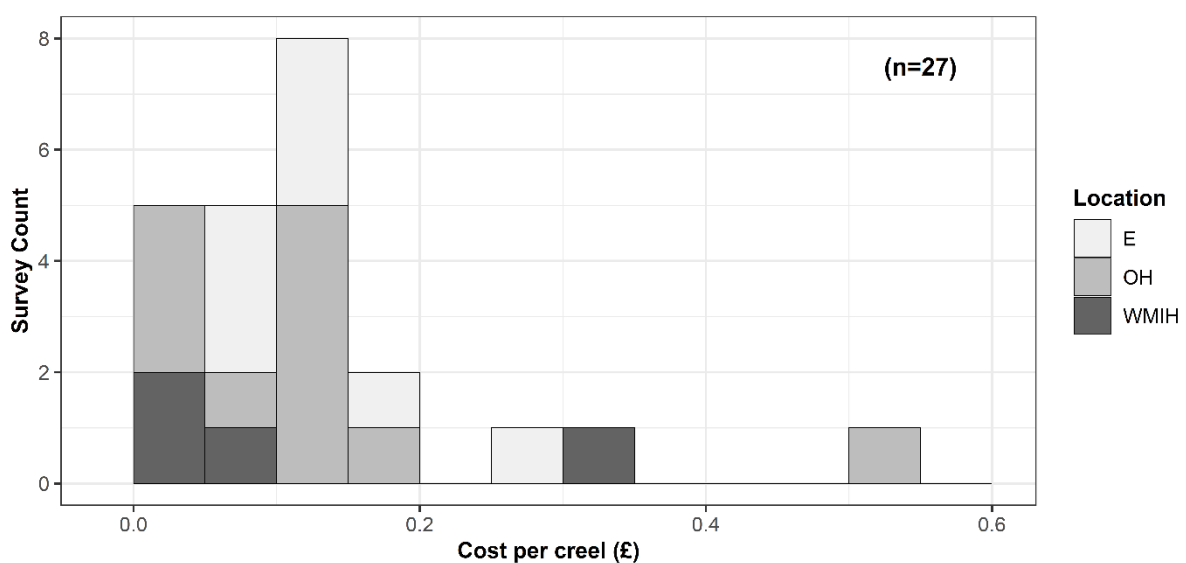


Figure 3) Cost of bait per creel for each of the 27 survey participants that yielded the data necessary to calculate these figures. Costs were split by geographic location. (E = East coast | OH = Outer Hebrides | WMIH = West coast mainland and Inner Hebrides). The mean cost per creel is 12p \pm 2p (Min = 0p | Max = 54p).

22) of participants reported that they discard used bait at the fishing grounds. A further 17.2% (n = 5) discard bait in transit between the fishing grounds and the harbour. 3.4% (n = 1) discard of used bait within the harbour and 10.3% (n = 3) do not discard any bait on account of having none remaining or because fed lobsters do not enter creels (G Mckie 2020, *pers. comm.*, 8 July). The total percentage exceeds 100% as fishers were able to select multiple answers. The percentages of each reason given were only calculated for those discarding bait at the fishing grounds (n=22; Fig 4) and in transit (n=5). The sole participant that reported discarding used bait in the harbour did not give a reason for doing so. The most quoted reason for discarding bait at the fishing grounds or in transit was convenience (63.5%, n = 14 and 40.0%, n = 2 respectively). Other reasons given for discarding bait in transit included feeding the birds (20.0%, n = 1), no effect (n = 1), preserving the fishing grounds (n = 1), and getting rid of rotten bait (n = 1) (see Table 1 for descriptors).

3.4. Seasonal bait biomass estimations for fishing hotspots

Between February 2018 and July 2020, the eight vessels recorded 997 fishing trips. As the seasons were considered separately for each vessel each year, a total of 33 seasons of data were counted; the average number of maximum revisits per season is reported (Table 2). The spacing of creels per string was given as 12.6 m for *Nephrops* and 21.6 m for crab and lobster

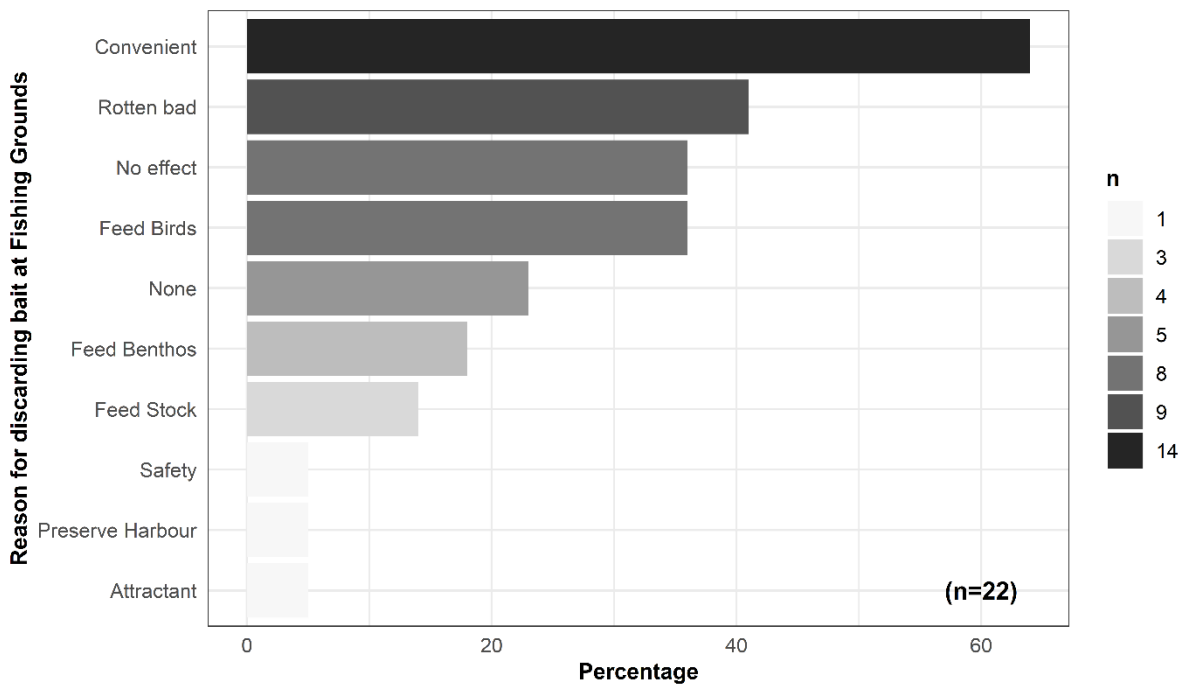


Figure 4) Coded reasons given by 22 survey participants that discard used bait at the fishing grounds. Participants often gave multiple reasons, so the number of fishers (n) that gave a particular reason, has been documented with a colour gradient; see the legend on the right for the number of participants giving a particular response. See Table 1 for code descriptors.

360 strings (D Macinnes 2020, *pers. comm.*, 20 August). The number of creels on a string falling
 361 within a hectare was calculated as 8 for *Nephrops* creels and 5 for crab and lobster creels. The
 362 estimated bait biomass input into seasonal fishing hotspots for *Nephrops* and crab and lobster
 363 creels are reported (Table 3). For those sites revisited every season, the biomass per unit area
 364 per year could be up to 75.0 kg ha⁻¹ for *Nephrops* hotspots and 46.9 kg ha⁻¹ for crab and
 365 lobster hotspots.

366

Table 2

Average number of maximum revisits calculated for each meteorological season based on complete seasonal data subsets from 8 creeling vessels between February 2018 and July 2020. 33 seasons were recorded as each season was considered individually per vessel, per year. For example, this could represent 6 seasons or 2 vessels per season.

Season	Average maximum revisits	Standard error	Number of seasons (n)
Spring	10.17	2.43	6
Summer	12.20	1.96	5
Autumn	8.09	1.12	11
Winter	7.45	0.92	11

367

Table 3

Mass per hectare estimated values of bait biomass input into creeling hotspots per season for the *Nephrops* and crab and lobster fisheries in Scotland.

Season	Biomass input <i>Nephrops</i> (kg ha ⁻¹)	Biomass input crab and lobster (kg ha ⁻¹)
Spring	20.12	12.57
Summer	24.14	15.09
Autumn	16.01	10.01
Winter	14.75	9.22

368

369 4. Discussion

370 Survey techniques were combined with spatial data to better understand bait use in the
 371 Scottish creeling fleet with a focus on regional bait types, estimates of biomass deposition
 372 and cost, discarding motivations and the concentration of bait at fishing hotspots. Despite the
 373 limited sample size of 29 fishers, the geographic spread, detail and convergence of responses
 374 suggests that this study provides a critical first step for further study into the environmental
 375 and economic implications of bait use in the fishery. Bait costs of approximately £9.8 million
 376 every year, represent more than 16% of shellfish first sale landing value. Optimising the use
 377 of bait could potentially reduce this cost. Approximately 13,500 metric tonnes of bait
 378 biomass is being deposited annually in relatively discrete areas within coastal waters which
 379 may have localised ecological impacts which deserve further investigation.

380 Preliminary assessment suggests that bait types differ significantly between geographic
381 location. Clear preferences for mackerel (45.2%) and fish heads and frames (29.0%) were
382 reported on the east coast, with mackerel and herring preferred in the Outer Hebrides. A
383 small sample size for the west coast mainland and Inner Hebrides yielded inconclusive
384 results, though it appears bait types may be more varied. Similar findings were observed in
385 the 2017 Creel Fishing Effort Study, conducted by Marine Scotland. For the east coast
386 fishery, near-equal proportions of mackerel and heads and frames to this study were reported
387 (Marine Scotland, 2017). As their analysis of bait types was partitioned through fishery type
388 rather than location, results for the west coast and the western isles differ; similarities include
389 larger proportions of herring and lesser proportions of heads and frames in both west coast
390 locations. Marine Scotland found herring to be a clear preference for *Nephrops* fishers, likely
391 accounting for the higher proportions seen on the west coast where the *Nephrops* fishery
392 resides. Our results indicate that fishers may use less bait mass in *Nephrops* creels than they
393 do in crab and lobster creels; however, more research is required to determine the differences
394 in bait types and masses per creel between the fisheries.

395 The differences in bait types due to location observed here were expected; fishers on the
396 mainland have easier access to waste from processing plants than those on the Hebridean
397 islands leading to higher usage of heads and frames (J Riley 2020, *pers. comm.*, 11 July).
398 Mainland fishers potentially have an advantage over their island counterparts in sourcing bait
399 sustainably and economically through the repurposing of fishery waste. Mainland fishers may
400 also have a cost-benefit advantage due to bait transportation costs incurred by island-based
401 fishers.

402 No significant differences in bait acquisition were detected between the geographic locations.
403 Bait is either solely purchased or purchased and caught. This suggests a high dependence on
404 external sources and sensitivity to market prices. Baitfish supply, availability and therefore
405 sustainability, is crucial for the longevity of the creeling sector. A lack of bait has been cited
406 as a major driver preventing creel fishers from going to sea (Mendo et al., 2019c). This is
407 often overlooked in a fisheries management context, particularly with single-species models
408 which can be ignorant of wider ecological concerns (Hilborn, 2011).

409 Mackerel was the most frequently caught bait type; likely due to high catch rates during
410 annual mackerel runs, and because licenses are not required for personal use. A mackerel
411 handline license is only necessary when catching 2+ tonnes over 6 months (Marine

412 Management Organisation, 2020). This is a potential loophole for acquiring bait in an
413 unregulated manner. It is, however, worth considering the environmental and economic
414 benefit yielded from personally catching bait as this reduces the carbon footprint of haulage
415 and nullifies the cost associated with purchase and transport. Research into the monetary
416 value of caught baitfish is needed to determine industry reliance on caught bait and the true
417 values of bait in creeling activities.

418 When contrasted with discarding practices of other fleets, the annual bait input into coastal
419 Scottish waters is small (13,492 \pm 3,402 metric tonnes); annual discards for Scottish
420 demersal fishing vessels in the West of Scotland were estimated at 30,000 metric tonnes
421 between 1988 and 1993 (Stratoudakis, 1997). With UK fleet-wide discarding from mobile
422 gear, biomass consisted largely of deceased fish that either sink to the seabed to be consumed
423 by benthic scavengers or eaten by seabirds and other marine predators (Bicknell et al., 2013;
424 Bozzano, 2002; Moore, 2003). Conversely, creel bait biomass entering the system is largely
425 pre-consumed in the creel by undersized individuals and non-target species. Undersized
426 individuals and non-target species are then returned to the sea under the assumption that they
427 have high survivability, given in Article 15 of the CFP (European Commission, 2013). Under
428 these circumstances, bait may act as a supplementary food source. In terrestrial systems,
429 supplementary feeding of garden birds is reported to alter behaviour, growth rates,
430 reproductive output, population dynamics and trophic interactions (Robb et al., 2008). Recent
431 research also indicates that increased densities of birds using feeders increases disease
432 transmission (Moyers et al., 2018). Targeted supplementary feeding in coastal waters may be
433 a similar driver for ecological change in the marine environment. A more detailed
434 understanding of the implications is essential; this additional food source may bolster local
435 target species populations or allow undersized individuals to reach minimum landing size
436 (MLS) faster. Indeed, Saila et al. (2002) find that bait may be a substantial contribution to
437 lobster production as a function of increased biomass per unit area. Further research into the
438 proportion of undersized individuals entering Scottish creels and their rate of bait
439 consumption is needed.

440 The annual cost of bait to the creeling industry is approximately £9.8 million, excluding the
441 additional value of caught bait. Scottish creel-caught shellfish landings were valued at
442 approximately £60 million in 2018 (not adjusted for inflation) (Marine Scotland, 2019). The
443 cost of creel bait equates to around 16.3%, indicating that bait is likely a considerable
444 expenditure for a creel fisher.

445 Bait was primarily discarded at the fishing grounds, the most cited reason being convenience.
446 An analysis of the motivations surrounding discarding practices revealed some contradictions
447 and offered several hypotheses for future study. Several lobster creelers (n = 8) discard used
448 bait assuming that rotten bait is ineffective. Two respondents retain rotten bait believing it
449 attracts lobsters. If the latter can be empirically proven, lobster fishers may be able to reduce
450 bait costs and biomass, helping to minimise overheads and reduce demand.

451 Nine respondents believe that discarded bait does not affect the benthos. Four respondents
452 believe that discarded bait feeds the benthos and a further three claim that bait discards feed
453 their target species with one indicating that bait discards may act as attractants, bringing new
454 stock into the area. Conversely, one respondent assumed negative connotations, claiming that
455 lobsters satiated by discarded bait will not enter the creels. The response of the benthos and
456 target species to bait discards is crucial to determine best practice. Whilst nearly all fishers
457 surveyed discard used bait (n=26), many stated that discards consist largely of bones. Nine
458 respondents also reported seabirds consuming discarded bait. Used bait discards are likely a
459 small proportion of the biomass entering coastal waters through creeling activities.

460 Creel fishers return to some fishing locations, creating localised hotspots of fishing activity.
461 Bait biomass from creeling activities is more concentrated at these localised hotspots. Pre-
462 Landing Obligation, discards from beam trawl fisheries in the North Sea were estimated to be
463 between 5.8 kg ha⁻¹ and 40.6 kg ha⁻¹ (Garthe et al., 1996). Bait input for Scottish creeling
464 hotspots was estimated at 46.9 kg ha⁻¹ for crab and lobster and 75.0 kg ha⁻¹ for *Nephrops*
465 annually. Saila et al. (2002) calculated an annual input of 85 kg ha⁻¹ in the Gulf of Maine
466 lobster fishery equating it to a very productive fishery yield and a subsidy for secondary
467 productivity. As quantities of bait akin to their findings enter the marine environment in
468 Scotland, it is suggested that creel bait may have wider ecosystem significance by affecting
469 local ecosystem functioning (Saila et al., 2002; Waddington and Meeuwig, 2009). Carbon
470 deposition is of particular interest; organic carbon from bait biomass is deposited on the
471 seabed through the faeces of undersized creel-caught and non-target individuals on their
472 release, and from the discarding of uneaten creel bait. Baiting introduces extra nutrients into
473 the localised marine environment. In an aquaculture context, organic carbon deposited below
474 sea pens from faeces and uneaten feed is associated with anoxic sediments, the formation of
475 bacterial mats, eutrophication and harmful algal blooms (HABs) (Forrest et al., 2007). This
476 nutrient enrichment may damage nearby sensitive habitats such as seagrass beds and their
477 associated epifauna (Lee et al., 2015).

478 Marine Scotland's Creel Fishing Effort Study highlighted the desire for direct management
479 intervention regarding gear-saturation and fishing effort (Marine Scotland, 2017). The
480 implications of bait use may prompt alternative management strategies for shellfish stocks.
481 One such idea is that of 'sea ranching', which has been cited as a management and
482 conservation measure (Anand and Soundarapandian, 2011). Sea ranching is widely proposed
483 as the release of artificially reared juveniles into the marine environment with the intention of
484 harvest once MLS is reached (Bell et al., 2008). In the UK, Several Orders and Regulating
485 Orders for shellfisheries can be obtained, giving a fisher exclusive management and fishing
486 rights to designated areas of the seabed (DEFRA, 2012). They are principally used for
487 cultivating mussels and oysters but can be extended to other shellfishes including crab and
488 lobster. If bait input positively impacts growth and reproduction of target species, bait could
489 be used as a supplementary food source that effectively "ranches" creel-caught shellfish for
490 more predictable catch success. It is clear from on-going research that some static gear fishers
491 focus their fishing effort in quite discrete areas displaying a pattern of use akin to
492 "ownership" (M James 2020, *pers. comm.*, 19 November). This being the case, the ability to
493 perhaps formalise such status would open up the potential for novel approaches to managing
494 fishing activity and effort whilst optimising catch and reducing overall environmental
495 impacts.

496 The response rate of the survey remains unknown on account of the method of dissemination.
497 Once partitioned, sample sizes restricted the power to confidently determine trends and as
498 such, results should be interpreted with caution. A power analysis is necessary to determine
499 the number of responses required to be representative of the creel fishing sector, however,
500 vessel lengths and target species reported by survey participants were consistent with the
501 broader fishery. Discrepancy between survey results and previous research arises with weeks
502 fished annually; survey responses suggest that almost 60% of creel fishers fish 52 weeks per
503 year. Results of the 2017 Creel Fishing Effort Study indicate that fishing effort, measured by
504 number of creels deployed, reduces substantially over the winter months (Marine Scotland,
505 2017). We suggest that a combination of weather conditions restricting fishing, particularly in
506 the winter months, together with changes in the catchability of the target species as a function
507 of water temperature and reproductive state for example, that a more realistic duration would
508 be approximately 40 weeks per year for the majority of vessels operating in this sector. The
509 survey may have attracted biased responses from creel fishers concerned over certain aspects
510 of bait use, such as the improvement of the cost-benefit ratio through bait types. Despite the

511 potential bias and limited number of survey responses, the areas identified for future study
512 remain relevant.

513 *4.1. Conclusions*

514 This preliminary research intends to open a dialogue between fisheries scientists, managers
515 and creel fishers concerning bait use and to instigate hypothesis formation for future research.
516 The overarching goal is to create an awareness of the magnitude and possible implications of
517 bait use within the creeling sector and to work towards better practices that maintain or
518 improve catches whilst minimising expenditure and negative environmental consequences.
519 Doing so will likely require careful management and prompts further consideration from
520 management authorities. All findings and subsequent research will inform management
521 strategies that are sensitive to the needs of the creeling communities and environment alike.

522 **Acknowledgements**

523 Thanks to Ivar McBay and Duncan Macinnes, and the group of fishers who commented upon
524 the draft survey and those involved in the Regional Inshore Fisheries Groups who distributed
525 the survey. Also, thanks to the SIFIDS project supported by the European Maritime and
526 Fisheries Fund for the use of fishing vessel track data. We are particularly indebted to all the
527 creel fishers who put their time and thought into answering the creel bait survey, without
528 whom this research would not have been possible.

529

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