

REGIONAL FISHERIES GROUP

Meeting Notes Tuesday 31st May 2022

South 7d

15:00 – 18:00 MS Teams call, and Tottingham Manor, Henfield.

Attendees:

Industry and recreational

Bill Brock
Charlie Brock
Chris Wilson
David Curtis
Neil Whitney
Martin Cure
Thomas Moore
Richard Stride
Tommy Russell

Defra

Jon Davies
Andy Carrol
Lydia Osborne
Phil McBryde

MMO

Paul Johnson
Richard Hoskin
Emily Theobald
Ed Baker
Isobel Johnston
Hubert Gieschen
Matt Baxter
Tim Dixon
Courtney Inch
Gurpreet Padda
Adam Kershaw

Policy Lab

Alex Mathers
Pina Sadar
Eliza Collin

CEFAS

Jim Ellis

IFCA

Sam Dell
Tim Dapling

1. Introductions – Paul Johnson, MMO

2. Fisheries Management Plans Update - Jon Davies, Defra

The Fisheries Act (2020) enables Defra and the Devolved Administrations to publish Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs) to help achieve our ambition for sustainable fisheries. The Act describes an FMP as "a document ... that sets out policies designed to restore one or more stocks of sea fish to, or maintain them at, sustainable levels".

Defra see FMPs as an opportunity to significantly improve the way we manage our fisheries into the future. Our FMPs will shift how fisheries management is approached with a greater focus on involving the fishing sector in the management of their activities.

The draft Joint Fisheries Statement (JFS) included a list of proposed FMPs with a timetable for their publication. Defra are reviewing the responses to the JFS consultation, and a final list will be published by November 2022.

- [Consultation draft of the Joint Fisheries Statement.pdf \(defra.gov.uk\)](#)

Defra and the Devolved Administrations are responsible for fisheries in their waters and will prepare and publish plans to meet their needs. The four UK administrations will collaborate on all FMPs,

particularly where stocks are shared, or their fleets operate in the waters managed by another administration. Stakeholders will have the opportunity to contribute to the development of the plans.

The Scottish Government is presently collaborating with Defra, DAERA (Northern Ireland) and Welsh Government to prepare 21 joint FMPs that cover our important and most valuable northern stocks of finfish species. Members of the Inshore Regional Fisheries Groups will have an interest in some of these FMPs. Defra are keen to hear views from RFG members.

FMP title	Fishing area
North Sea Cod FMP	North Sea
West Coast of Scotland Cod FMP	West Coast of Scotland
Atlantic Cod FMP	Rockall, North East Atlantic
North Sea and West Coast of Scotland Haddock FMP	North Sea and West Coast of Scotland
Atlantic Haddock FMP	Rockall, North East Atlantic
West Coast of Scotland Whiting FMP	West Coast of Scotland
North Sea Whiting FMP	North Sea
North Sea and West Coast of Scotland Saithe FMP	North Sea and West Coast of Scotland
Northern Shelf Hake FMP	Northern Shelf
North Sea and West Coast of Scotland Monk/Angler FMP	North Sea and West Coast of Scotland
North Sea and West Coast of Scotland Megrin FMP	North Sea and West Coast of Scotland
Northern Shelf Ling FMP	Northern Shelf
North Sea Nephrops FMPs	North Sea
West Coast of Scotland Nephrops FMP	West Coast of Scotland
Northern Shelf Mackerel FMP	Northern Shelf
Atlantic Scandian Herring FMP	North Sea and Arctic
North Sea Herring FMP	North Sea
West Coast of Scotland (and Clyde) Herring FMP	West Coast of Scotland
North Sea Greater Silver Smelt FMP	North Sea
West of Scotland Greater Silver Smelt FMP	West Coast of Scotland
Northern Shelf Blue Whiting FMP	Northern Shelf

FMPs in English waters

Defra is accelerating its FMP projects in 2022. Our first projects, known as ‘frontrunner’ FMPs, will explore ways of preparing plans to build a shared understanding of everyone’s roles in learning to work in partnership in fisheries management. Lessons learnt from these frontrunner projects will shape our future FMP work.

The current list of frontrunner projects in 2022 are:

- Crab & Lobster FMP
- Whelk FMP
- King Scallop FMP*
- Bass FMP*
- Channel Non-Quota demersal species FMP
- Southern North Sea Eastern Channel Mixed flatfish FMP

*The King Scallop FMP and the Bass FMP are being developed jointly with Welsh Government.

These projects are being taken forward collaboratively with industry groups, Seafish, the Marine Management Organisation (MMO), AIFCAs (Association of Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities), and IFCAs (Inshore Fisheries & Conservation Authorities).

Defra is encouraging our partner organisations and industry groups to collaborate with us in preparing these plans. We are seeking views from a wide range of stakeholders who have an interest and knowledge of their fisheries.

To get in touch, send us a message to FMPs@Defra.gov.uk

- A question from industry: “What’s the point of an FMP with no legal obligation and therefore no accountability?” Jon Davies (Defra) responded by saying that FMPs become legally binding by binding government and regulators to deliver the management measure which are identified as needed within the plans”.
- A question from industry: “An FMP is a document that contains policies but is not the regulatory instrument. You reassured us those changes can be made to the FMP, but I imagine the process is not as agile as that suggests. It would take a long time to make changes to whatever regulations are in place.” Jon Davies responded by explaining that the regulatory process can run parallel to the FMP process. Plans can identify key needs and drivers and place the obligation on the regulators to make sure that happens. If there was an urgent need to change a regulation, that could be done in parallel to the FMP. These plans must be reviewed and updated no longer than every 6 years. The expectation is that any regulatory changes that occur during that time frame would be updated into the plan.

3. Bass Fisheries Management Plans (FMP) - Alex Mathers, Policy Lab

The presentation contains more detail:



Policy Lab_RFG
presentation_new.pdf

- A question from Industry: “How will industry work in conjunction with Defra to put this FMP together? Do you have a structure in mind for the delivery of the FMP and does that involve a co-management element? It is important to get representation within these groups right.” Policy Lab responded by saying that they have a set out plans for the year ahead and that these get passed to Defra. We hope to use RFGs, Fin Fish Industry Advisory Group and other forums so that industry can help Defra develop the plan as part of a shared approach to fisheries management. Recognise that we need to sketch this out, and we have a few months yet to do that.
- A question from Industry: “Some of the issues regarding the bass fishery are complicated and there may be significant data gaps. The timing seems too short to work through some of those issues. Will the first bass FMP deal with a relatively small number of issues, with the harder issues dealt with over time?” Policy Lab responded by saying that the content of the Bass FMP will be decided by stakeholders during the co-design process. We need to ensure a strong evidence base that supports the direction stakeholders want to take the Bass FMP in. All FMPs will be iterative and evolve. There will be a prioritisation of issues, however this doesn’t mean that other issues can’t be picked up and addressed further along in the process.
- A question from Tim Dapling (IFCA): “What is the intended scope of the FMP in terms of ecosystem protection for juvenile stages of bass? Will areas important for recruitment be looked at?” Phil McBryde (Defra) responded by saying that the FMP will be focusing on maintaining or restoring populations of a species would need to consider different life stages and important spatial areas.
- A question from Industry: “Where do Cefas sit in the FMP evidence process?” The response was that Cefas will be involved with the Bass FMP. There will be an evidence plan produced which will help scope and set out the available evidence and identify the gaps.
- A question from Industry: “What is the geographical extent of the Bass FMP?” The Bass FMP will encompass England and Wales.

4. Channel Non-Quota Species FMP – Isobel Johnston, MMO

The presentation attached contains more detail:



20220530 Channel
Demersal NQS FMP.p

Fisheries Management Plan Team: fmp@marinemanagement.org.uk

- Question from industry: “Will the Channel Islands be included in this FMP? Secondly, will other non-quota species not on the list be included?” The MMO responded by saying that they are currently engaging with the Channel Islands to establish their interest in involvement. We recognise that there will be more species of interest to fishers and the initial list is not set in stone.
- Question from a Recreational Angler: “From a recreational perspective, will Salmon, Seatrout, Mullet and Bream be included? They seem to be excluded, and all have important recreational value.” The MMO responded by explaining that Salmon and Seatrout are outside the remit of the Channel Non-Quota Species FMP. They are species that were not picked up through the JFS process as they are not commercial fisheries. Engaging with

fishers allows them to pick up on species of interest that they may not have landings data for, but that have recreational value. They can add Mullet and Seabream to our list for consideration.

Action: Isobel Johnston to ask Jon Davies for information about why Salmon and Seatrout are excluded from the FMP process.

- A question from industry: “Non-quota species are caught by UK and non-UK vessels. What legal obligations are the MMO/UK government under to engage/consult with non-UK parties in this process. What autonomy does the UK have in defining the management plan?” The MMO responded by saying that they recognise that there are not just UK vessels fishing non-quota species in UK waters – this is something they will be considering.

5. Quota – Ed Baker

There is more detail in the presentation below:



South 7d RFG Quota
Presentation May 202

Reminder to contact: InshoreQuotaManager@marinemanagement.org.uk with questions and quota enquires.

6. Development of Scientific Projects – Jim Ellis, Cefas (online)

- The Southwest small-eyed ray project report will soon be available.
- Hoping to re-establish the Small Fish Survey in area 4c this year and seeking further funding to expand this to 7d in the future.
- Issues raised regarding Sole in 7d have also been raised for the North Sea. North Sea stocks will be having a benchmark assessment by ICES in a few years. Anything that can be learned from this and applied when looking at 7d stocks will be.

7. Marine Protected Area byelaws - David Rowlands, MMO

You'll find more detail in the presentation here:



South 7.d.
Presentation.pdf

- A statement from industry: “Displacement is never viewed as a whole, only in isolation of the site being considered at the time. Need to be looking at the cumulative effects.” David Rowlands responded by saying that during Stage 3 we will be looking at every site, including the 13 sites outlined as part of Stage 2, and will be considering the issue of displacement.

- A question from industry: “Is there anything to stop aggregate dredgers from moving in?” David Rowlands response was that aggregate dredging will undergo a similar assessment. If it is found to affect conservation objectives, any application would be rejected.
- A question from a recreational angler: “Will this work consider the kelp bed regeneration that has happened in Sussex because of the ban of bottom-trawled gear?” The response was that Kelp beds are different habitats to the ones being looked at (offshore, circalittoral) so that example would not be relevant.

8. Scallop Closure – Call for Evidence Hubert Gieschen, MMO

The call for evidence has now closed but was open during the time of this meeting. Hubert Gieschen contact number: 0208 2256947.

Email: hubert.gieschen@marinemanagement.org.uk or effort@marinemanagement.org.uk

9. I-VMS Q&A - Matt Baxter, MMO

For any questions relating to i-VMS, please email: ivms@marinemanagement.org.uk or call the i-VMS helpline on: 01900508618.

- A question from industry: “We have ordered the device, but it hasn’t been fitted yet and we only have 16 days left to get it sorted. The process to get the money back is complicated, some fishermen are struggling. This deadline should be extended.” Matt Baxter’s responded by asking the industry member to contact the i-VMS team with the details and we can organise the grants team to give them a call to help guide them through the process.
- A question from industry: “Who will have access to the data?” Matt responded by saying relevant fisheries authorities, MMO internal teams, Cefas and the MCA.
- A question from industry: “With the access the MCA has, does this mean the data can be used to assist search and rescue operations?” The answer was yes.
- A question from industry: “After the two-year warrant expires, who will repair the equipment if it breaks and pay for the repairs?” Matt responded by saying that the funding is available only for the initial installation of the device. The contract is between the vessel owner and the supplier. This could change in the future.
- A question from industry: “Could this data be used by industry to assist us in constructing our arguments for displacement of the fishing industry? Would for example a PO, or the likes of NFFO, be granted access to this data for this use if they had permission from the vessel owners?” Matt Baxter responded by saying that this would have to go through the right channels, but theoretically yes. I-VMS, alongside the Catch Recording app, will create a wealth of data that will give us a better understand of what is happening in the sea. Long-term, this will provide huge benefits to the inshore fleet.
- A question from industry: “We are currently being told that if there are issues with our device (within the 2-year warranty period) that we have to contact the MMO. Are you saying that this is not the case? Who do we contact after the 2-year period?” Matt Baxter responded by saying that in regard to technical issues relating to a device, the responsibility lies with the supplier and vessel owner.

- A question from industry: “How do we know if our device is transmitting?” Matt Baxter responded by saying that if we do not receive data from a vessel, we would first contact the supplier to get an understanding of what might not be working with the unit. The supplier would then contact the vessel owner.
- A question from industry: “Are the suppliers privy to the data?” Matt Baxter responded by saying, yes, but they are governed by the Data Protection Act and therefore cannot share the data with third parties.
- A question from industry: “You want the data so why do we have to pay? I already carry AIS, why do I need a second unit?” The response was that AIS is not as accurate and isn’t data locked (you can turn AIS off). I-VMS will capture data even when there is no signal and then transfer the data to the hub when signal returns.

10. AOB – Paul Johnson, MMO

- A point from industry: The position of the group on fly-shooting.

ACTION: RFG team to include this in the agenda for the next meeting.

- It would have been useful to have had a section at the start of the meeting going through actions from the previous meeting and the progress of those actions (specifically the action concerning beach replenishment that was being discussed with the marine licensing team).

ACTION: RFG team to chase this and feed back to the group during the next meeting. RFG team to include a section in the next meeting about previous actions.

Appendix 1

Stock	Under 10s	Over 10s
Cod VIId	No comments	A question from industry about Cod: “We want to see a high catch limit in November and December as this is when it is needed most. The catch limit could then be lowered throughout the summer.” Ed Baker (MMO) responded by saying that our approach has been stable catch limits for stable access. Uptake data seems to suggest we have enough quota, even with higher uptake throughout the winter months. Appreciate the suggestion that lower catch limits in summer prevent landings of lower quality fish. We can consider this.
Plaice VIId & e	No comments	No comments
Skates & Rays VIId	<p>A question from industry: “For quarter 1 it is illogical to consider a quarterly catch limit. For quarter 2 and 3 I can see the logic, but I’m only a small part of the fishery so the question would have to be asked to all.” A response from another industry member: This is an autumn and winter fishery therefore we would hope that there is still a reasonable catch limit available then. Would be uneasy at the idea of quarterly quota as it causes pulses of high intensity fishing. Last winter saw a huge amount of fishing effort in Poole and Christchurch bays by vessels from outside the area. We would prefer the catch limit to be kept at a steadier level, maintain a reasonable level of effort throughout the year, to prevent spikes in both effort and markets.</p> <p>A question from industry: “How come the South East and South West have higher tonnages? We want a level playing field for skate.” Ed Baker responded by saying that 7e is assessed separately. It is a different</p>	No comments

	stock of skate and therefore has a different quota allocation and different catch limits. TAC management areas are political decisions that do not always align with ICES stock advice.	
Undulate Ray VIId & e	No comments	No comments
Sole VIId	No comments	No comments
Western Mackerel	No comments	No comments
Herring IVc & VIId	No comments	No comments