

# FishingFocus

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## Reducing discards

The second phase of the demersal landing obligation (discard ban) starts on 1 January 2017.

This summer the North Sea and North Western Waters regional groups formally agreed their respective Joint Recommendations for the implementation of the second phase of the demersal landing obligation in 2017. The second phase is based on these recommendations. Both regional groups were advised by the fishing industry, which included UK industry views.



The Marine Management Organisation (MMO) has issued guidance for the fishing industry on the second phase. This sets out the species which must be landed according to the gear type used, the sea area being fished in and, potentially, previous fishing track records. The species currently affected are haddock, whiting, sole, plaice and Nephrops in both the North Sea and North Western Waters; plus cod and Northern prawn in the North Sea; and hake, pollack and megrim in the North Western Waters.

To help fishermen land the fish they had previously thrown back and to reflect the fact that species subject to the landing obligation will no longer be discarded, there was an increase in England's quota for those species for the first phase of the demersal landing obligation in 2016. We'll also be seeking quota uplifts for the second phase.

① You can see the [MMO's guidance](#) and the [North Sea](#) and the [North Western Waters](#) regional groups' recommendations.



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs



In recognition of the importance of marine and fisheries for EU Exit, Defra has re-created a separate directorate. For me this means a very welcome return to fisheries and I look forward to working with you all again.

At this time of year a major focus of activity is always working with the Devolved Administrations and stakeholders across the UK to identify UK priorities for the December Fisheries Council. As usual, we'll be seeking the best possible opportunities for UK fishermen in line with scientific advice (see page 3).

Another priority is ensuring the smoothest possible introduction of the next phase of the demersal landing obligation and at December Council will be seeking quota uplifts to support this. European Maritime and Fisheries Fund grants are also available to help the introduction of the landing obligation (see page 3). We're also pressing ahead with plans for a 'Blue Belt' of marine protected areas (see page 5).

Alongside our 'business as usual' activities, we're listening to your views on making the most of new opportunities when we leave the EU to realise our vision of clean, healthy, safe, productive and biologically diverse oceans and seas.

Neil Hornby  
Acting Director, Marine and Fisheries

### UK queen scallop fishery

UK administrations are seeking views on proposals to improve the management of the UK queen scallop fishery in the Irish Sea. The proposals include increasing the minimum size of scallop that can be retained and options for restricting access to the fishery.

📍 You can respond to the [consultation](#) which closes on 3 January 2017.

### Marine protected area consultation

The MMO has issued a call for evidence to inform MMO draft site assessments for marine protected areas (MPAs) in English inshore waters. These assessments will help the MMO ensure current and potential fishing activities don't have a negative impact on habitats and species in these MPAs.

📍 You can find the [consultation](#) which is open until 12 December 2016; the [draft site summaries](#), and read about [understanding marine conservation byelaws](#), and [managing fisheries in marine protected areas](#).

### Avoiding spurdog by-catch

Defra, the MMO and Cefas (Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science) are working with the Shark Trust and Cornish Fish Producers' Organisation on the next phase of a trial of a spurdog by-catch avoidance tool. This follows a significant effort by the UK to secure a by-catch allowance enabling us to further develop and promote this novel approach to managing potential 'choke' species under the landing obligation. Six vessels will now be trialling the spurdog by-catch reporting tool in the South West, using a variety of gears such as trawls and nets. Fishermen joining the pilot project have a dispensation from the MMO to allow landing of dead spurdog. The fishermen will be providing real-time, daily reports of their spurdog by-catch. Advisory maps will be prepared from the reports to inform fishermen where there is a risk of encountering spurdog.

📍 You can find out more about the [Spurdog by-catch avoidance programme](#).

## December Fisheries Council

We're currently working with the Devolved Administrations and stakeholders from across the UK to identify UK priorities for the December Fisheries Council.

We've already made a good start for 2017 fishing opportunities in the Coastal States negotiations on mackerel in the north-east Atlantic, where we secured the continuation of the 2014-18 arrangement for allocating the share of the stock. This will lead to the UK achieving an increase of about 11% on last year's quota – which translates into about £15m of extra fishing opportunities for the UK fleet.

For EU quota stocks, we're continuing to make progress towards more sustainable fishing with more now being fished at Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) – but there's more to be done.

Our starting point for the December Council will therefore be to support the management of stocks at MSY in 2017 wherever possible. We'll also be seeking quota uplifts to ease the introduction of the demersal landing obligation (see page 1).

Overall, we're aiming to secure the best possible opportunities for UK fishermen in line with scientific advice on the state of fish stocks. This approach will help us to secure the sustainable stocks which are essential for a profitable long term future for the fishing industry and a healthy marine environment.

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## European Maritime and Fisheries Fund

The MMO has offered £4.8 million of funding to six Fisheries Local Action Groups (FLAGs) under the European Maritime Fisheries Fund (EMFF). This funding will enable the Cornwall, Dorset and East Devon, Hastings, Holderness, North of Tyne and North Thames FLAGs to take forward their local development strategies to benefit and develop fisheries, coastal communities and the wider supply chain infrastructure.

The MMO is also inviting applications for funding for projects focusing on CFP reform; improving health and safety on vessels; enhancing the quality or value of catch; investing in port and harbour infrastructure; and helping processing of seafood or general investments in aquaculture. The closing dates for the 2017 MMO grants panels for considering EMFF applications for projects costing £100,000 or over will be published soon.

The Chancellor will guarantee all EMFF projects approved before the UK leaves the EU. This will provide further certainty to fishermen, seafood businesses and other organisations seeking EU support whose projects meet domestic strategic priorities and deliver value for money. Where projects secure EMFF funding before we exit, payments will be guaranteed even after the UK has left the EU. The MMO will continue to have responsibility in England for the allocation of EMFF money to projects and agreements in line with these conditions and the wider rules on public spending.

① You can find out more about [Fisheries Local Action Groups \(FLAGs\)](#); read blogs about the [development of the FLAGs](#); and find [information and guidance](#) on submitting an EMFF application including dates of future grants panels when confirmed.

## The Cod Plan amendment

The radical amendment of the Cod Plan will take effect from 1 January 2017. Under this amendment, the days at sea regime will be discontinued. This 'effort' regime has become an obstacle to the successful implementation of the landing obligation because it impedes the adoption of sustainable fishing practices.



The Total Allowable Catch (TAC) setting elements of the plan will also be removed. However, the agreement recognises the need to take into account appropriate minimum and precautionary biomass levels.

In reaching this agreement, the EU institutions acknowledge the considerable improvements in selectivity and cod avoidance that fishermen have made over recent years and the agreement stresses the importance of continuing and developing these moving forward.

The new plan is a temporary measure that is compatible with the landing obligation (see page 1). As a result, North Sea cod will come under the landing obligation for some gears from next year.

The new plan will be superseded by forthcoming multi-species management plans for each relevant sea area.

## Deep sea fisheries

There is now an informal agreement between the Presidency, European Parliament and Commission on a package of measures to regulate deep sea fisheries in EU waters. The measures will protect deep sea species and vulnerable marine ecosystems and manage deep sea fisheries in a proportionate way. The Deep Sea Fisheries Regulation will secure a '3-way lock' on deep sea bottom trawling activity. An 800m depth ban on bottom trawling in deeper waters will protect vulnerable marine ecosystems there. The package includes protection for specific areas with vulnerable marine ecosystems in waters shallower than 800m by closing them to bottom trawling. A 'fishing footprint' will restrict the activities of targeting vessels using bottom trawls to within established fishing grounds.

UK fishing industry representatives and environmental groups, particularly through the Deep Sea Conservation Coalition, have worked closely with Defra, the Devolved Administrations and others to help shape the Regulation.

The Regulation is going through its final adoption process, culminating in the European Parliament vote on it which is expected in December. The new measures are likely to come into force early in 2017.

① You can read more about the [Deep Sea Fisheries Regulation](#).

# MARINE PROTECTED AREAS

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## Completing and managing the 'Blue Belt'

The UK Government remains committed to completing the 'Blue Belt' of marine protected areas (MPAs), filling all remaining ecological gaps in the network and ensuring sites are well managed.

For tranche 3 Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs), we'll be mainly drawing sites from the remaining recommendations made by stakeholders in the MCZ Regional Projects. Where we've identified gaps in the network that can't be addressed by any of the remaining recommendations, Natural England and JNCC (Joint Nature Conservation Committee) are developing alternative options.



As with tranche 1 and 2 MCZs (designated in 2013 and 2016), we'll continue to work closely with local and national stakeholders before the formal

consultation. This is helping us understand the potential benefits and impacts of designating specific sites, and to consider options for the conservation aims to be achieved while minimising the impact on sea users. We'll consult formally on sites in late summer 2017, before designating sites in 2018.

The regulators are continuing to develop proposals for fisheries management measures for inshore and offshore sites in the MPA network. We expect measures for all tranche 1 MCZs and European Marine Sites to have been identified and subject to public consultation, where necessary, by the end of 2016. For new sites, we expect appropriate fisheries management measures to be identified within two years of designation. European Marine Sites still form an important part of the Government's 'Blue Belt' commitment and as such all regulators will continue, and are still obliged, to apply the requisite protection measures in line with the current regulatory framework.

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## MPA management – a view from the regulators

The MMO and Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities (IFCAs) continue on track to deliver MPA management to contribute to meeting the Government's 'Blue Belt' commitment. For European Marine Sites and tranche 1 MCZs the MMO has implemented four new byelaws and IFCAs 27 new byelaws and 13 voluntary measures. They expect that about 15 more byelaws will be needed to complete the management of designated European Marine Sites and the 27 tranche 1 MCZs. The MMO and IFCAs consult on all proposed byelaws before seeking the Secretary of State's approval for them. The MMO quality assures all IFCA byelaws and works with Defra, JNCC and Natural England to develop offshore MPA management measures.

The MMO and IFCAs continue to work with the MPA Implementation Group, which includes fisheries and marine conservation interests, to plan for the introduction of management measures for the 23 tranche 2 MCZs to be in place by January 2018. The IFCAs and MMO will continue to work at pace with Defra, JNCC, Natural England and the Environment Agency to deliver the 'Blue Belt'.

# SEAFOOD AND SEA ANGLING

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## Seafood Industry Expert Working Group

Earlier in the year Defra set up the Seafood Industry Expert Working Group to develop a plan to support the future economic success of the seafood industry in England. Fisheries Minister, George Eustice, appointed Group members from across the seafood chain to increase collaboration and use the full expertise available from across the industry.

The Group's expert members are drawn from Seafish, British Ports Association, National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations, New Under Ten Fishermen's Association, Shellfish Association of Great Britain, British Trout Association, Scottish Aquaculture Research Forum/Fisheries Innovation Scotland, a retailer and two seafood companies.



The Group will build on the work undertaken by the Seafish taskforce, set up in 2015, which developed a vision for the seafood industry in 2040.

The Group will be preparing an action plan for the seafood sector which identifies and prioritises actions for industry, Seafish, government and other key players for achieving the Seafood 2040 vision. It is due to report to Ministers in 2017. The Group is currently developing its programme of work.

① You can read the [Seafood 2040 vision](#).

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## Sea angling 2017 survey

Sea anglers are being invited to take part in a survey which will provide estimates of recreational catches. The data will help the UK Fisheries Administrations and Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities (IFCAs) to build a strong evidence base on sea angling to stand alongside the extensive data on commercial fishing.



Where management measures are needed for both recreational and commercial fishing to conserve fish stocks, accurate data on sea angling catches will ensure measures are based on the best available evidence. The survey will also generate new data about the economic value of sea angling to the UK economy. The survey is commissioned by Cefas and undertaken by Substance.

① You can find out about the survey and how to join in by emailing: [seaangling2017@substance.net](mailto:seaangling2017@substance.net)

## South Marine Plans



The MMO is inviting views on the draft South Marine Plans.

① You can find out more about the [consultation](#) which closes on 27 January. If you have any questions, please email [planning@marinemanagement.org.uk](mailto:planning@marinemanagement.org.uk)

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## Developing the next phase of England's marine plans

Following consultation in the spring, the MMO published the [Statements of Public Participation](#) (SPP) for the north east, north west, south east and south west marine plans in July. The SPPs set out how and when stakeholders can be involved in developing the next phase of marine plans.

Alongside work on the Statements of Public Participation, the MMO has run a [Call for Issues with Supporting Evidence](#) for each of the plan areas. The Call, which closed in August, asked stakeholders about potential challenges and opportunities in the marine plan areas over the next 20 years. During the Call the MMO held workshops in each of the four plan areas. The workshop discussions are reported in [issues information sheets](#).

After consultation in the spring, the MMO has also published the [Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report](#). This new style of report includes a number of report cards, which clearly and succinctly set out the key areas that the Sustainability Appraisal will consider. These are biodiversity, cultural heritage, geology, seascape and landscape, water, air quality, climate, communities and economy.

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## Inshore Vessel Monitoring System

The MMO is working with IFCA's to develop and use an inshore vessel monitoring system (IVMS) as a management tool for marine protected areas and inshore fisheries.

The project has produced a specification for IVMS devices for vessels less than 12 metres. The specification details mandatory requirements for a device in order for it to be effective as a compliance and monitoring tool.

Following rigorous testing, the MMO has now approved three devices. The MMO will now work with the IFCA's to implement the devices.

① You can find out more on the [IVMS](#) or contact [IVMS@marinemanagement.org.uk](mailto:IVMS@marinemanagement.org.uk)

# MARINE NOISE AND LITTER

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## Marine noise

Defra and JNCC have developed a [Marine Noise Registry](#) to record the activities humans are doing in UK seas that produce loud noise over a short period (impulsive noise).

Underwater noise from human activities can affect marine organisms from fish to marine mammals in a variety of ways, from masking sounds used to communicate and find food, to physical injury and even death. Understanding



when and where noisy activities take place will inform our research on the impacts of noise, particularly on vulnerable species like dolphins and porpoises.

In August 2016, the Marine Noise Registry began collecting data on the location and date of impulsive noise generating activities. Data are extracted from current licensing processes where possible, or provided by developers using a simple online form. This is mandatory in some cases and voluntary in others. Activities include impact pile driving, geophysical surveys (seismic, sub-bottom profiling and multibeam echosounders), explosives, military related sonar and some acoustic deterrent devices. From late 2016, information held in the Registry will be presented annually on noise distribution maps at: <http://data.gov.uk>.

Developing this Registry was a commitment we made in the [UK Marine Strategy](#). The data in the Registry are also feeding into a Europe-wide registry that we're working on through OSPAR (the Oslo and Paris Convention for the Protection of the North-East Atlantic).

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## Ghost fishing gear

Ghost fishing gear is any fishing equipment or fishing-related litter that has been abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded. Ghost gear is a major threat to animals in our oceans, entangling, injuring or killing thousands of animals every year. An estimated 640,000 tonnes of fishing gear is added to our oceans annually. As most fishing gear is made of plastic it persists in the oceans for centuries, accumulating year on year.

World Animal Protection's Sea Change campaign aims to prevent ghost gear entering UK waters and to protect species affected by it.

① You can watch World Animal Protection's [film](#) which helps fishermen protect their business from the blight of ghost gear and you can read about [ghost fishing gear](#).

### FishingFocus – Your views

If you have any comments on Fishing Focus, please email: [fishingfocus@defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:fishingfocus@defra.gsi.gov.uk) or write to: Fishing Focus, Defra Marine and Fisheries, Nobel House, 17 Smith Square, London SW1P 3JR.