

Summary

	SW RFG
Meeting title	Meeting
Attended participants	37
Start time	11:00
End time	13:02
Meeting duration	2h 2m

Attendees

Industry	ММО	DEFRA	IFCA	
John Balls	Emily Theobald (PMO- Chair)	Andrew Carroll	Emily Condie	
James Roberts	Anna Ni Donnchadha (RFG)	Katie Plumridge	Mat Mander	
Harry Owen	Alisha Patel (RFG)	Andy Welberry	Simon Cadman	
Tich Preston	Courtney Inch (RFG)	Wayne Jeannette	Ricky Pender	
Beshlie Pool	Katie James (Quota)	Ellen Colebrook		
Nicola White	Alex Maydew (FMP)	Eden Hannam	Seafish	
Dave Smith	Chris Collins (FMT)	Phil Green	Richard Caslake	
Steve Parker	French Nicholas (FMP)	Helen Stevens		
Phil Robins	Rachel Thirlwall (FMP)			
Zuzanna Dusza	Neil Smith (Coastal)		CEFAS	
Martyn Youell	Leonie Robinson (FMP)		Samantha Birch	
Unknown number				

Agenda

- 1) Emily Theobald, MMO Welcome & Introduction
- 2) Ellen Colebrook, DEFRA EU Negotiations Q&A
- 3) Katie James, MMO Quota
- 4) Chris Collins, MMO FMT, Crawfish
- 5) Rachel Thirlwall, MMO Celtic Sea and Western Channel Demersal FMP
- 6) Leonie Robinson, MMO Celtic Sea and Western Channel Pelagic FMP
- 7) Alex Maydew, MMO Wrasses Complex and Black Sea Bream FMP
- 8) AOB

Contact details

Quota Team – Katie James / Jacob Bestwick inshorequotamanager@marinemanagement.org.uk

Chris - Fisheries Management Team sustainablefisheries@marinemanagement.org.uk MMO helpline: 0300 123 1032

Celtic Sea and Western Channel Demersal FMP FMP@marinemanagement.org.uk

Celtic Sea and Western Channel Pelagic FMP cswcpelagicfmp@marinemanagement.org.uk

Wrasses Complex and Black Sea Bream FMP FMP@marinemanagement.org.uk

Recording

The meeting was recorded and can be viewed at the following link: Regional Fisheries Group (South West) - Meeting 05-09-2024 - YouTube

1. Emily Theobald, MMO - Welcome & Introduction

Emily introduced herself, as the Principal Marine Officer for the Southwest and the Chair of this meeting.

Emily did not receive any objections to the meeting being recorded nor were there any comments or questions prior to the start of the first speaker.

*NB: The recording has been edited to remove the EU Negotiations segment. These meeting notes include more detail on this section for those not in attendance.

2. Ellen Colebrook, DEFRA - Negotiations Q&A

Ellen introduced herself, as jointly leading the Celtic and Irish Sea team in the EU negotiations division. Ellen stated that DEFRA are currently at the start of the process for preparing for the annual EU UK negotiations that happen around October to December to determine the fishing opportunities for next year.

The starting point for negotiations is the ICES advice published in June/July, and usually DEFRA would have had science briefings on the advice in July. However, due to a cyber-attack on ICES this year, the process was slightly disrupted. There was a session on 1st August that DEFRA led to communicate the ICES advice that had been received so far. Ellen stated that the next stage is to get views from industry on the impact of the ICES advice. Ellen asked the group to share which stocks the group are interested in and stated that DEFRA can then tell the group what the ICES advice is for that stock.

Pollack

An IFCA member commented that the pollack consultation stated that if 156 tonnes were held back it would have a 20% positive impact, however, having a limitation on catch for the under 10 metre fleet is meaningless if there is no restriction on recreational catch.

Q: Industry: The issue commercial fishers are having is with the volume of pollack and bass being landed by angling vessels. This needs to be taken away and looked in to by seniors.

A: DEFRA: DEFRA are aware of the issue and understand how important it is to the industry. DEFRA will be putting advice to ministers on this.

Small eyed ray

Q: Industry: What was the thinking/plans for small eyed ray in 7e for next year, following the sentinel fishery that CEFAS are running? Additionally, Emily asked for clarification on whether that was to continue the sentinel fishery or to push for removal of the non-retention policy on small eyed ray in 7e?

A: DEFRA: This is a matter of negotiations, and something that is on the agenda to discuss with the EU. Regarding Emily's question, it would be a UK aspiration to continue with the scientific fishery for now. It is late in the year and there is not enough data collected so CEFAS would want to continue collecting more data to determine the impact on the stock, however, this will be dependent on resourcing.

Ellen stated that there is a session with CEFAS on 19th September. This will be a Q&A session and an opportunity for industry to ask questions directly to CEFAS.

Questions, Comments & Answers:

An industry member commented that one of the problems is that there is no consistency for commercial fishers.

3. Katie James, MMO - Quota

Katie introduced herself as being from the MMO Quota team.

A copy of the presentation can be found here:



Katie stated that currently, the team are in a cross-year swap window looking at any excess stocks for 2024 and possibly releasing the ones that are not needed to obtain top stocks for 2025. For example, with sole 7e, normally get between 70 to 90 tonnes from negotiations, however, with a 9% cut (predicted from ICES advice), it will mean an additional 80 to 100 tonnes of sole 7e is needed to support the fleet. The team will address pollack in a similar manner.

Katie presented on Sole 7e gear up take for over 10-meter and under 10-meter comparing years from 2021 to 2024. *Please refer to the presentation for further information.*

Katie presented the same information on Undulate Ray in 7d, and e. Please refer to the presentation for further information.

Banked quota

Katie stated that there was a catch limit review consultation that was advertised on .gov.uk on 1st September 2024 regarding the requests to use the banked quota for pollack. The banked quota is decided 12 months in advance and therefore, before the 0 TAC for pollack came into place. Katie stated further information on the data can be found on the .gov.uk website on the weekly spreadsheet and if anyone needs any help with the data to get in touch with the quota team *(contact details are at the beginning of this document)*.

Katie explained that the MMO sought advice from CEFAS, before deciding on whether to use the banked quota. The decision was made not to use the banked quota to increase catch limits for this year because the UK will not receive banked quota for next year. Katie stated that given the ICES advice for pollack is currently 0 TAC for 2025, it is likely that similar amounts will be received next year. The team will not know what that amount is until the Sector of State (SOS) determination is published in December. However, the team have worked to trade in additional quota and will continue to do so for 2025.

Katie concluded by stating that all comments and discussions from the meeting will be fed into the quota team and wider fisheries management team.

Questions, Comments & Answers:

Bass

Q: An industry member stated that the bass stocks are looking good, however, there has been no change or increase in what is allowed to be caught.

A: The quota will be decided at EU negotiations.

Pollack

An industry member stated that he had rang other POs as they also hold quota for pollack and managed to get an extra 10 tonnes for a trade with Katie (Inshore fleet) for some Mackerel which we can use in trades, which is an example of working together.

Another industry member stated that some fishers were helped when the pollack quota changed but others weren't. It was unfair to penalise those fishers who only target pollack for few months of the year because it still impacts financial earnings and has meant additional work throughout the summer months this year.

Small eyed ray

An industry member commented that there has been a ban for small eyed ray for years and nothing has been done about it, nor has the restrictions been lifted.

Katie stated that she is aware of a CEFAS project that is ongoing on small eyed ray. Emily stated that the scientific fishery is still happening in 7e and that is planning to happen again next year for data gathering before it can go to negotiations. Emily reiterated that the MMO are aware that it is difficult for fishers particularly in the Mounts Bay area where the 7e and 7f line cut through the centre of the fishing grounds. There are discussions happening about this with several teams to find possible solutions.

Banked Quota

Q: IFCA: Was the consultation more like a notification of the banked quota decision instead of a consultation?

A: Katie: The forum was used to share the information about the decision and the factors that had been considered to get to the decision. All the information was published on the .gov.uk page for anyone to access. This was done at the request of industry so that the team could share the outcome to everyone.

Q: IFCA: It appears that the decision not to use banked quota is going to affect the under 10-meter fleet the most. There is no confidence that there is going to be any meaningful restrictions on the recreational fishery.

A: Recreational fishers sit with DEFRA, and as it was previously mentioned in this call, DEFRA are currently putting proposals to Ministers.

An industry member commented that every quota is now important to the fleet because so much opportunity has been restricted. If there is quota available, it should be utilised to prevent further opportunities being taken away. Additionally, the quota should be used during the harder times of the year and not let it build up to December.

Q: IFCA: Did the other EU countries get banked quota and are they using it? A: Katie: Not sure what France etc are doing with their banked quota, this would be something that DEFRA would be able to share more information on. Further information will be shared.

Q: IFCA: If other EU countries are using the banked quota, can a review be done on the MMO decision to use banked quota?

A: Katie: DEFRA would need to answer this question. Further information will be shared.

Q: Industry: What is the 140 tonnes reference to pollack?

A: Katie: It refers to the banked quota. The MMO made the decision not to use banked quota due to the potential impacts on recovery from the ICEs advice and advice sought from CEFAS. The team are happy to share the September catch limit review which does explain why banked quota is not going to be used next year. September 2024 Catch Limit Review - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Q: D&S IFCA: Who made the decision on the banked quota? A: Katie: The MMO through the Fisheries Management Team

4. Chris Collins, MMO - FMT, Crawfish

Chris introduced himself as being from the MMO Fisheries Management Team and would be providing an update on the latest crawfish consultation.

A copy of the presentation can be found here:



Chris provided a background to crawfish where he stated that crawfish have increased rapidly over the past 5 years, particularly in 2023 where data showed the crawfish had almost doubled from the previous year.

Chris presented the following timeline:

- October 2023 codesign workshop where discussions took place on the various options for crawfish management, including closures and MCRs increases.
- November 2023 consultations were held which resulted to implement a closure of the fishery from 5th February 2024 to 30th April 2024.
- 1st January 2024 MCRs change was implemented (from 95mm to 110mm).

- February 2023 meeting held in Newlyn where discussions took place on current issues and further options for crawfish management.
- July 2024 consultation was launched and several port drop in events held in Newlyn, Cadgwith, Newquay, St Marys and Isle of Scilly.

The July consultation had various questions on closure options which were: no closure, a closure option from 1st November 2024 to 31st May 2024 or a closure option from 1st December 2024 to 31st May 2024. There were also questions inviting suggestions of other closure options and the possibility of rolling any closures over to the next year to prevent further consultations. Chris stated that they hoped to announce the outcome of the consultation by October, subject to all necessary steps being completed and final approval being received. This will include online publication of a decision document and a one pager as well as social media, emails and communications through the RFGs.

Chris concluded by giving thanks again for those who were involved in the consultation and port visits as well as stating that if you have any questions or queries, please email or call our helpline. Contact details can be found at the beginning of this document under contact details.

Questions, Comments & Answers:

Q: Industry: Industry and stakeholders have expressed their concerns about the crawfish fishery and have been clear that they want to see it very well managed so that it is a sustainable fishery long term. The latest consultation that came out from the MMO was extremely narrow in what it was asking from industry. There were several points raised on additional closure periods during winter and spring. Why are other things industry have raised not been considered? (for example, effort management).

A: Chris: Those concerns are being recognised, as crawfish sit within the Crab and Lobster FMP, any future work will be done in line with that. Priority limitations and resource restrictions are essentially the main reason behind it. Chris also stated that there was no intention to implement any other measures for the next season outside of the crawfish closure at this stage, however, the team are going to monitor the crawfish landings and share any concerns and information with DEFRA etc.

5. Rachel Thirlwall, MMO - Celtic Sea and Western Channel Demersal FMP

A copy of the presentation (for sections 5, 6 and 7) can be found here:



Rachel led the presentation and stated that herself and Nicholas French lead on the FMP. It is a joint FMP between DEFRA and the Welsh Government, and it covers English and Welsh waters of ICES area 7efgh. It covers numerous demersal species which are:

•	Monkfish / anglerfish	•	Blue ling	•	Cod	•	Haddock
•	Pollack	•	Round nose grenadier	•	Saithe	•	Whiting
•	Four spotted megrim	•	Deep water sharks	•	Thornback ray, small eyed ray, shagreen ray, blonde ray, sandy ray, spotted ray, cuckoo ray	•	Skates and rays (nei*)
•	Plaice	•	Sole	•	Megrim	•	Red seabream

Nephrops

The species in this FMP needs to go through a prioritisation exercise. This could be looking at species in scientific order, prioritising the groups single species or looking at a mixed fishery approach. It will be decided based on any feedback that has been received from stakeholders and through conversations with DEFRA policy colleagues.

The FMP is complex; the reason these species were chosen to be together is the aim of taking an ecosystem and mixed fishery approach to developing the FMP. There is also a lot of management that already exists for the species, including TACs, and therefore the team need to look at what is already in place and understand what is or what isn't working.

The team aim to begin in-person engagement in October and November this year. A survey should be launched in a few weeks to gather feedback on the FMP species and existing management. It is important to be signed up to the interested stakeholder engagement list to receive notification of when the survey is live. This will also be sent through the RFG network as well.

A working group is being established with the first meeting planned at the end of September. To get involved, please contact the team. (contact details are at the beginning of this document).

Questions, Comments & Answers:

Q: Industry: When you refer to demersal, are you referring to bottom trawling? A: Rachel: The FMP covers demersal species in the Celtic Sea and Western Channel meaning species that live on or just above the sea floor. The title does not mean that the FMP only covers demersal gears, and it will cover a range of gear types used to catch demersal species.

Q: Industry: Why were recreational fishers involved in the consultation if referring to towed gears?

A: Rachel: Recreational fishers are a stakeholder under the Joint Fishery Statement and therefore need to be included in conversations around potential management and will have an interest in the FMP as some will catch the species covered.

Q: Industry: From a commercial perspective, is this FMP relating to towed gear or species in general?

A: Rachel: The FMP refers to the species in general with any gear type.

Q: Industry: On the list of species red mullet was not listed, where would this lie? A: Rachel: One of the things the team are looking at is what other species may need to be included in the FMP. Red mullet is covered in 7e by the Channel Demersal FMP but not covered by f, g or h in this FMP.

Q: Industry: Dutch fly seiners have a big effect on red mullet, the worry is if both FMPs cover the same species will it be under the same umbrella because the areas are different and are completely different fisheries even though the target is the same species?

A: Rachel: Fly seining is picked up through measures in the Channel FMP already for 7e and 7d which are now in the processes of being implemented. Red mullet is not within the remit of the Celtic Sea and Western Channel demersal FMP.

6. Leonie Robinson, MMO - Celtic Sea and Western Channel Pelagic FMP

Leonie introduced herself as the Principal Evidence Specialist in the MMO Evidence and Evaluation team. Leonie stated that this section covers the same area (Celtic Sea and Western Channel) as Rachel covered previously but for pelagic species. The pelagic species covered are:

- Herring
 Sardine
 Horse mackerel
 Anchovy
 (pilchard)
- Greater silver smelt

Leonie stated that the team started working on this FMP earlier due to supporting resource in DEFRA's mNCEA programme (marine Natural Capital and Ecosystem Assessment). The mNCEA programme is looking at more collaborative and ecosystem-based approaches to decision making. The team are taking this approach with developing this FMP. This pilot in delivering a more ecosystem-based and collaborative approach will hopefully inform working across all FMPs going forward.

The team are aware of certain stakeholder concerns such as, why these species, why is mackerel not listed and why is greater silver smelt on the list. These questions are being considered by team. Leonie explained the reason why mackerel is not listed in this FMP is because there is a whole UK Mackerel FMP being developed by the Scottish Government. The team are working with the Scottish Government so that they can keep up to date with the development of the Mackerel FMP, can inform the Scottish Government of the work that is being done for the Celtic Sea and Western Channel Pelagic FMP and can share stakeholder views. The FMP partnership group is a way that stakeholders and government can start to feed information, concerns or recommendations about the management of mackerel.

Leonie explained that the evidence and evaluation team are leading on the engagement for the FMP, which includes forming a partnership. A partnership is like

that of a working group; however, the team are trialling working in partnership with industry in this FMP to see to how this works between stakeholders and government. The purpose of the partnership is to draw on the expertise of fishers and other stakeholders to co-develop the plan. If stakeholders want to be part of the partnership and/or have an interest in being part of the wider engagement for the FMP, they should contact the team. The next meeting will likely be towards the end of October where discussions will be had on the goals and what industry want to see from the management of these stocks.

The FMP is currently in the preparation phase, where the team have been gathering evidence through partnership and wider stakeholder information supplied to the team. The phase also includes drafting the main FMP and drafting evidence statement and record of stakeholder engagement. Regular engagement will continue which includes, a survey, port visits and 2 more partnership meetings.

Whilst DEFRA are leading the development of this plan overall, they are working closely with the MMO and Welsh Government. As it is a joint plan, all recommendations will need to go through and be considered by both DEFRA and the Welsh Government.

The FMP will be submitted in spring next year and then go into the publication stage.

Questions, Comments & Answers:

Q: Industry: Is there a reason sprat is not being considered?
A: Leonie: Sprat have their own FMP; however, the team will be considering feeding in what's already been discussed and developed into the Sprat FMP. The team are currently liaising with the Sprat FMP team to ensure that the regions are being considered.

7. <u>Alex Maydew, MMO – Tranche 4 Wrasses Complex and Black Sea Bream</u> FMP

Alex introduced himself as the Principal Fisheries Manager and will cover the Wrasses Complex and Black Sea Bream FMP. The species covered are:

- Ballan
 Corkwing
 Goldsinny
 Cuckoo
- Rock cook

Alex stated that the commercial landings are dominated by live wrasse fishery, in the south/southwest fish caught by potting and Scottish salmon farming. However, the team are aware that there are underlying landings from wrasse bycatch and pot bait usage. The species are important both commercially and recreationally, particularly for shore-based anglers and some charter interest. Key species within reef ecosystems and whilst they are abundant in the south and southwest, they are very much habitat dependent and therefore, there are concerns of the impact of species removal on the ecosystems. They are a slow growing species and ballans which are the key commercial species are hermaphrodites which makes it tricker to manager them. They are mostly inshore species although some offshore landings (probably

associated with towed gears). There is also no stock assessments and very little species supporting specific reporting.

Alex stated that he was going to provide key points on Black Sea Bream and Gilthead Bream:

Black Sea Bream (Spondyliosoma cantharus)

- The species are migratory, the juveniles recruit into estuarine and coastal environments. The adults do come back to nest in April to June.
- They are targeted by commercial and recreational vessels during the nesting period (April to June).
- Nesting black bream are a designated feature of MCZs.
- There is no stock assessment and there are some concerns around the lack of species-specific reporting (e.g. landings under generic bream codes, which is approx. 450 tonnes a year)
- Hermaphrodite, concerns around specific targeting of males.

Gilthead Bream (Sparus aurata)

- The FMP title has not been amended yet due to legal issues of amending the JFS text, but the species has been added due to stakeholder feedback and evidence of increased abundance.
- Southwest focus but there is evidence that there is an eastly spread along the channel and further north.
- An important recreational species, but some landings from nets
- There is no stock assessment and there are concerns around the lack of species-specific reporting.
- Hermaphrodites

Alex explained the different stages for developing the FMP and stated that it is like the other FMPs in that it has a scoping stage which is about gathering evidence. For this FMP the team have commissioned specific evidence products which has included working with CEFAS and other government bodies but also external consultants to develop reports and literature reviews. The next stage is the preengagement stage, this stage is before the team come out to talk to stakeholders to understand stakeholder base and get initial feedback. The engagement stage follows, which uses workshops, working groups to gather feedback on draft management options and evidence gaps etc. If stakeholders are interested in engagement, please contact the team *(contact details in contact section of this document)*.

The online survey will be released on 6th September 2024 and the link will be circulated via social media and government channels. The focus is to understand industry thoughts on the fisheries, existing management and evidence. The team are also going to conduct informal stakeholder engagements between now and Christmas and virtual meetings. The working group invites are set to be sent out at the end of the month, and it will follow with formal workshops early 2025 based around 4 or 5 locations across the south coast which will focus on the detailed conversations around management and potential outcomes of the FMP.

Questions, Comments & Answers:

Q: Industry: Regarding the wrasse, is there concern over removal of ecosystems? A: Alex: The concern is about the removal of wrasse from reef ecosystems and the impact that it is going to have on other fish species. We have heard anecdotal reports of other fish species exhibiting increased parasite numbers and it's something that will be explored further through this FMP.

8. <u>AOB</u>

Existing FMPs

Q: Industry: Is there a reason why we have not seen any implementation or direct effect from current FMPs. For example, bass. The restrictions on bass have been in place for a long time and having access to that fishery would be beneficial because of the pollack situation.

A: Emily: The process is not quick and from an MMO perspective there is no update on bass as it is led by DEFRA.

A: Nicholas: These comments help the MMO in the development of the FMPs as well as future FMPs. The tranche 1 and 2 FMPs which have been published are being implemented, although a slow-moving process, something should come very soon.

Q: Industry: One of the main concerns is that changes are coming but industry are completely unaware of what those changes are. Additionally, there are phrases in the Bass FMP that focus solely on the negative aspect of fishing with a net which is not what most commercial fishers think but has been said from recreational fishers. There has been no evidence (which has been publicly made) to support these negative comments apart from the input from recreational fishers. No evidence has been shared that shows netting is detrimental to the fishery, and most commercial fishers don't agree because with gill nets fishers can target a specific species and can target size of that species. This is an example of the measures that aren't being explained or supported with evidence.

A: Nicholas: The comments show that the team needs to improve the visibility of what's happening and make it more transparent.

A: Anna: Will find out the latest developments on the bass FMP and share with everyone that is interested.

Q: Industry: My vessel does not have a bass entitlement and therefore cannot catch any bass and must discard thousands of pounds worth of bass every single year because of how the bass entitlement is. It is unnecessary and does not help with conservation. It would be helpful to speak to the bass team in the next meeting to understand the thinking behind the bass measures.

A: Emily: The bass team will be contacted, and your thoughts shared.

Diversification

An industry member shared their frustrations on the closure of species that is there in abundance, specifically pollack but also bass, shellfish etc. It was stated that it feels like the word diversification is mis used, in that MMO, DEFRA and other government officials can close fisheries immediately and say fishers can diversify,

when they cannot because of financial constraints, gear differences and stock availability.

Another industry member stated that diversification was not financially affordable and the lack of stability from government does not allow for diversification.

Additionally, another industry member stated that the government has made a blanket decision on pollack, and this has resulted in 1 fisher leaving the industry (under 10m) and the expectation is that more will follow. The decision was not made locally, as the fishery on Isle of Scilly is sustainable. Blanket bans should be done on a smaller scale for under 10-meter vessels.

Leonie stated that her team have been looking at the idea of diversification and whether it makes any sense for industry. From the evidence team, there is strong evidence that people cannot adapt in the way that is assumed they can in decision making. The team are working with MMO and DEFRA to further investigate the ability to diversify and openly talk about how the assumption cannot be made for people to diversify and how it has and is affecting decision making.

Emily thanked industry for the comments and wanted to reiterate that the points will be fed back to the relevant teams and asked industry to continue to communicate via forums like this.

Co-management

An industry member stated that the term co-management has been used a lot since Brexit. People are getting despondent because of the lack of action coming from the consultations and the uncertainty that comes from the consultations. Although communication is increasing and the way the MMO communicate has improved fishers are still waiting for the co-management element.

Another industry member commented that the reason why fishers don't attend these consultations/meetings is because they are at sea.

Other

Q: Industry: Is there anyone to speak to or anybody that can help regarding possibly putting in an appeal to carry bass entitlement to an over 8-meter boat to enable diversification?

A: Emily: Will call regarding the bass entitlement

Q: Industry: Is there an update on capped licences for the end of this year potentially being scrapped so that all licences will be full?

A: Andy: The cap was lifted again temporarily this year and DEFRA are hoping to publish a government response on whether the cap will be permanently lifted by the end of the year. It has been held up for numerous reasons.

An industry member further commented that the issue of capping was brought up with the new fisheries minister at the meeting in Brixham a few months ago.

Q: Industry: Is there any signs of whether the cap is going to be scrapped as originally proposed?

A: Andy: Given the new government and new ministers we cannot say what they are

going to. Please call in a couple of weeks and we can discuss the progress of it. A: Emily: Will pass over Andy's contact details

The meeting was concluded at 13:01:58

Thank you for attending this Regional Fisheries Group meeting. If you would like comment on these or previous minutes, be added to this groups contact list or contribute in any other way please contact the MMO Regional fisheries Mailbox: regionalfisheriesgroups@marinemanagement.org.uk or find out more at the Regional Fisheries Groups webpage: Regional Fisheries Groups - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)