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Fisher to Fisher Engagement – A roadmap to build capacity in the English inshore fleet to participate in Regional Fisheries Groups.

(MMO1389b)

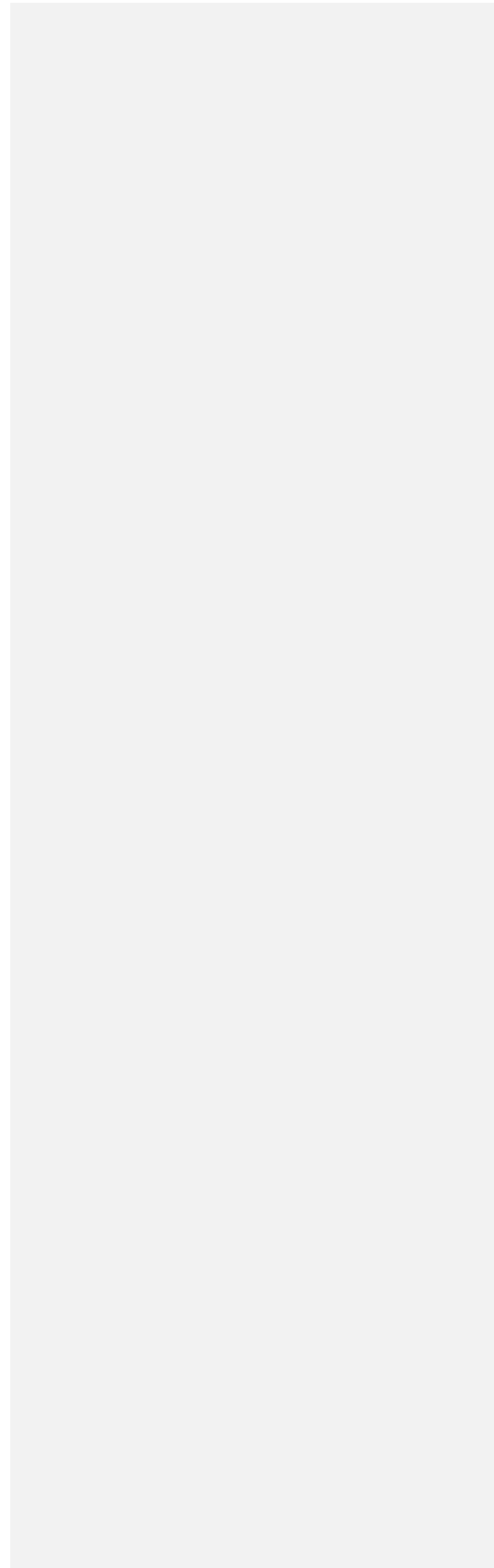
Report prepared by:
Howell Marine Consulting



...ambitious for our seas and coasts



Report prepared for:
Marine Management Organisation



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Figure 1: The MMO logo.	Error! Bookmark not defined.
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1. Synopsis

This document sets out a conceptual roadmap that is intended to communicate an approach that the MMO and Defra could adapt to map out a sustainable route to building capacity in the inshore fleet to engage and organise to participate in fisheries management through the MMO's engagement with the fishing industry, especially the RFGs. The roadmap is informed by the work delivered under project MMO1389 and builds on 3 key recommendations of that study:

- to use what is already there and works
- to prioritise funding
- and to implement continuity through a programme

The roadmap was drafted to supplement the engagement and participation capacity building actions proposed in the final report for MMO1389 and summarised in this document because, as noted universally by interviewees for MMO1389, the inshore fleet in England faces disadvantages in terms of engagement and participation under the current system of fisheries management. Reversing that situation will take time and numerous actors, requiring a programme and continuity, including of funding. The roadmap weaves together a suite of engagement and participation capacity building actions, termed F2F (fisher-to-fisher) actions, and a process of clarifying participation for the inshore fleet relative to the RFGs (termed F2F:RFG actions).

2. Context

The Marine Management Organisation (MMO), as a delivery body and regulator for England's seas, has a strategic vision ([MMO2030 Strategic Plan](#)) that sets how the MMO will support the implementation of Defra's 25-Year Environment Plan and the Fisheries Act 2020. The vision is clear about the importance of collaboration and working relationships to achieve the MMO's goals. Goal 4 identifies co-management as a means of transforming regulation, and Goal 6 identifies active participation by the fishing sector as a means of enabling sustainable fisheries.

Whilst the over 10m fleet is well organised and represented in fisheries management, the non-sector inshore fleet is highly diverse, fragmented, and often uncoordinated, meaning they are under-represented in collaborative fisheries management. The MMO is therefore seeking to strengthen the capacity of inshore fisheries to engage and participate in fisheries management. To better understand how they can achieve this, the MMO has commissioned a series of complementary studies exploring the challenges and barriers to participation and to identify potential solutions.

The HMC-led Fisher-to-Fisher (MMO1389) project, included a literature review and extensive stakeholder interviews which, along with outcomes from the ICF-led Fisher Engagement Capacity Needs (MMO1383) and Fisher Network Analysis (MMO1341), highlighted the multiple, complex reasons why inshore fishers don't currently engage with fisheries management. Some of the key challenges that must be addressed are the need to:

- find more funding for engagement as it is *“difficult to keep organisations running due to a lack of funding and the time it takes to represent and get people in the room together”*¹
- develop and maintain trusted working relationships between stakeholders within fisheries and between fisheries and regulators: *“Trust is difficult... [it requires] bridge building”*²
- address stakeholder fatigue and the overwhelming quantity of consultations stemming from multiple institutions and agencies: *“There is too much engagement and outreach”*³
- identify and articulate the benefits of engagement and participation: *“Overcoming apathy...everyone is exhausted”*⁴
- communicate the fisheries management process, to overcome the sense that information given is not passed on and used by regulators and policy makers: *“Feedback has slowed down and leaves people thinking what next?”*⁵
- increase the capacity of inshore fishers to engage, organise, and participate constructively: *“Articulation, education, and confidence with management paperwork. Regarding small-scale fleets, they aren’t that confident with words and when they attend meetings ... and sense a lack of sympathy and confidence [it] lessens engagement. It is all about capacity development.”*⁶
- increase representation of inshore fishers within fisheries management forums.

MMO1389 identified a **suite of actions** that could help address these needs, improve inshore fishers’ ability to self-organise and, ultimately, better engage in fisheries management. **Regional Fisheries Groups (RFGs) were highlighted as an important participation focal point** for inshore fishers, and which would benefit from investment and capacity to be strengthened in parallel to these actions.

3. A zero-draft roadmap

The roadmap presented here is a conceptual overview of who and what needs to come together, and when, to deliver a programme of actions that will build capacity in the inshore fleet to participate equitably in RFGs, and for RFGs to become a primary conduit for fisheries management information. The zero draft is deliberately high-level and is intended to stimulate critical delivery partners to agree and coalesce around a shared vision and a map of what preparation and development are necessary to develop and implement a coherent approach that can sustain delivery partners over a multiyear endeavour. A staged process is recommended to incrementally align with and gain commitment from internal and external delivery partners. Firstly, to ensure alignment and commitment at MMO and Defra levels,

¹ Quote from MMO1389 interviewee I9

² Quote from MMO1389 interviewee I8

³ Quote from MMO1389 interviewee I6

⁴ Quote from MMO1389 interviewee I2

⁵ Quote from MMO1389 interviewee G1

⁶ Quote from MMO1389 interviewee A2

then with key partners such as IFCAs, NFFO, and Seafish, and then with inshore fisheries organisations and representatives.

4. Vision statement

The vision statement is both the start and end point of the roadmap. Building on interviews with the MMO and Defra, a draft vision has been proposed as a starting point. The outcome of the roadmap, if successfully implemented, would be that:

“By 2027, through capacity building in engagement and representation and a co-developed participation mandate, inshore fisheries are equally well represented in RFGs. RFGs are established as the primary vehicle for communications between government agencies, managers, fisheries representatives, and by extension those represented, with respect to fisheries management within the region serviced by that RFG.”

The route to developing the roadmap, the programme strategy, and implementation is outlined in the following four stages.

4.1 Stage One - Preparation – completion August 2024

Working from an agreed vision, the MMO and Defra work together to set out a high-level draft of the roadmap. This draft is aligned with key policy and delivery teams, notably the RFG and fisheries teams demonstrating the commitment and coordination between MMO and Defra as the two critical delivery partners. The roadmap is an easy to understand, strategic tool that will support socialisation with clear messaging of why and how the programme aligns with higher-level goals (**strategic alignment**), how delivery partners and teams can achieve those goals and the resources required (**resources**), a timeline for delivery and milestones (**timeline**), and an indication of who else needs to be involved and why (**dependencies**).

4.2 Stage Two - Socialisation – completion December 2024

At this stage the roadmap development expands to bring aboard key delivery partners, including AIFCA and IFCAs and potential delivery partners for the programme of F2F actions. Stage two would result in an iteration of the roadmap that has clear messaging of mandates, responsibilities, commitments, and timescale, and that clearly communicates to external bodies how the proposed programme of activities aligns with fisheries policy and delivery bodies and forms the backbone for consultation and strategy development in stage three.

4.3 Stage Three – Finalisation – completion July 2025

Recognising that programme delivery across multiple delivery partners in a contentious area requires an actionable strategy, stage three will lead to the final

iteration of the roadmap, which will have consulted with fisheries stakeholders broadly, and that results in a costed and funded approach to delivering the strategy that defines the F2F actions programme and that provides clarity about engagement and participation of the inshore fleet in RFGs, and about the strategy components including planning for unbalanced power dynamics and participation rules.

4.4 Stage Four – Implementation – completion December 2025

Stage 4 sees the implementation of the programme, with parallel workstreams to develop and implement the strategy, implementation of the F2F action programme, and of implementation of the workstream bringing inshore fisheries stakeholders and representatives into the RFGs, and to establish RFGs as a primary conduit for fisheries management information. With the strategy in place, the combined delivery of the F2F actions and the evolution of the governance system to enable inshore fisheries participation will roll out and lead to the vision being realised in 2027.

5. Roadmap infographic

The roadmap has been brought together into an infographic (follows) that seeks to convey in a single image a coordinated programme led by the MMO that will enable effective engagement and participation by inshore fisheries in fisheries management. The intention is that teams and external actors can coalesce around the image and revise and edit it to deliver a persuasive case for funding and resourcing specific actions towards effective engagement and participation.

Supporting fisheries participation capacity building through the Regional Fisheries Groups - a roadmap

The roadmap is like a racetrack or circuit that starts at the red dot and proceeds clockwise from there, eventually leading to realisation of the vision.



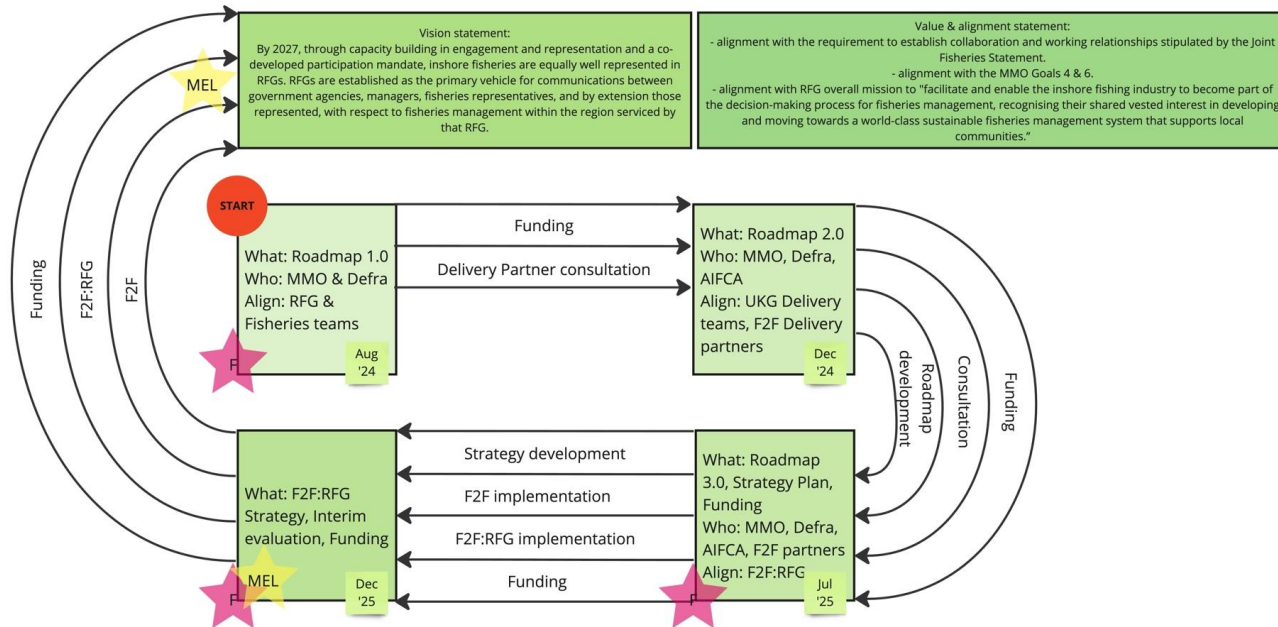
Each box along the path is a milestone, with outputs defined (what), who is involved in getting to the milestone (who), and who will be aligned at that point (align). Each lane between milestone represents a process that leads to the next milestone.



MEL = Monitoring, Evaluation, & Learning point



F = Funding gateway, delivery of previous leads to passing gateway



F2F = Suite of actions to strengthen fishers' capacity to participate

- "How-to" guides
- Tools to enable anonymous input
- Participation training/up-skilling participation
- Specialised facilitation and novel approaches
- Small-scale fisheries spokesperson/champion
- Representation payments for small-scale fisheries associations
- Targeted organisational support financing
- Blended finance participation fund

F2F : RFG = plan to clarify and enable inshore fisheries participation through RFGs and supporting RFGs to evolve into the key fisheries management communication conduit.

6. Key Considerations

This roadmap and associated actions confer implications on the delivery bodies, particularly MMO, that require engagement and debate with senior leadership, implementing teams and external partners, to create a strategy capable of delivering positive change in a charged and stressful environment.

6.1 Long-term commitment

Implementing this roadmap will require buy-in and long-term commitment not just from the MMO senior leadership team, but also Defra and the MMO's implementing team and external partners. Change of this kind does not happen overnight and will take a minimum of five years for outcomes to be fully realised. This commitment will also need to extend to ensure adequate sustainable financing and resources are available within government.

6.2 Funding for fishers

Evidence gathered across MMO1389 and MMO1383 has highlighted that a lack of long-term funding is a major barrier for inshore fishers to self-organise. Interviews point to a reluctance within Defra and the MMO to directly pay fishers to attend meetings. Interviews also point to the difficulty accessing fisheries funds to support organisations. The Fisheries and Seafood Scheme (FaSS) has funded the establishment of successful initiatives such as the Lyme Bay Fisherman's Community Interest Company but are unable to provide funding for the ongoing salaries and running costs, contributing to a lack of long-term sustainability. In addition, many fishers struggle to operate within a complex funding environment. This leaves many Fisherman's Associations and other organisations constantly seeking funding to survive and fishers' representatives who are paid to attend meetings with no job security. Interviewees across the regulatory, industry, and science spectrum pointed to the importance of continuity as a means of building trust, knowledge, and constructive collaboration. Funding over a longer term will present something tangible that will incentivise engagement.

If implemented, early in the process, **Defra and the MMO will need to discuss and agree on the principles and governance of professionalising⁷ the inshore fleet including how to incentivise and sustain inshore representatives, including financially, and to redefine how fisheries industry funds can be accessed by and distributed to** fishers' organisations to survive from start-up to a point where they are self-sufficient, or to bring associations back from the brink where there are clear fisheries management benefits of doing so. A supporting recommendation is that Defra and the MMO explore blended finance funds to resolve the challenges of payments to fishers and to offer a triple-win for government, fishers and private sector actors with an interest in sustainable fisheries, such as supermarkets.

⁷ As in the tension between a profession and a livelihood.

7. Quick wins

Should the long-term commitments required to deliver the roadmap prove to be politically and organisationally challenging at present, building on the F2F action programme identified for MMO1389, there are individual actions which the MMO could implement, fund and support to provide some quick wins to start the process:

1. Almost immediately it will be possible to implement the use of smart tools to enable anonymous input at all fisher participation events such as workshops and RFGs.
2. Funding could be provided almost immediately, potentially through FaSS, to enable NFFO or Fishing into the Future (FITF) to develop a series of 'How to Guides' that are pitched at the right level for the audience.
3. Coordinate and consolidate efforts and actions across F2F actors and fishing industry groups targeted at inshore fishing sector engagement and participation.
4. Terms of reference, terms of engagement and other guidelines for fishers in how to participate at RFGs and other participatory processes could be refreshed in preparation for broader RFG reform and expansion.
5. Funding, potentially through FaSS, and more MMO staff time could be provided to help organisations, such as Fishing into the Future, further develop and expand their Fisheries Resource Education Programme to reach and upskill more fishers.

Full details of these actions, including the preconditions and considerations for success, resourcing implications and potential partners, financing and relevant tools and technologies, are set out in the main Fisher-to-Fisher (MMO1389) project report, and an overview of the suite of actions is set out below.

8. Suite of actions

8.3 "How to guides"

Setting up any kind of fisheries organisation can be challenging for fishers, who often don't know, or lack confidence in, how to access funding, establish governance structures and how to interact with the fisheries management system. Building on work being conducted by the Lyme Bay CIC, step-by-step guides for fishers and fisher representatives could be developed. A guide can reach more people and be more useful to some fishers and community members as they can learn at home with no loss of earnings from in-person training. The guides could also supplement FMP partner, and similar, events. Guides could cover how to:

- establish a fisheries community interest company
- establish an inshore fisheries representative body
- effectively engage in fisheries management
- access funding to support governance capacity building

Commented [AP1]: Solutions from the interviews and HMC?

Commented [IC2]: Closed and future opening is not clear at this time.

Commented [IC3]: What actions are being referred to here?

Commented [IC4]: The original ToR was co-developed with the groups and agreed in 2021/22 - it is definitely due an update. Important to keep the information concise and not split across multiple documents.

Commented [IC5]: Upon review would not consider this a quick win - resourcing is likely to be limited in the future due to budget limitations and FaSS is unlikely to open soon, making this unfeasible as a quick win.

Commented [IC6]: This is also in development/being bid for by an established CIC.

Commented [IC7]: Clarity on what this means - assuming a fishing association of some kind?

Commented [EW8R7]: Could be an association, this could also be guidance on the process of selecting a representative for the inshore fleet in an area, terms of reference, period of rotation, how that person can participate through RFGs etc

Commented [IC9]: Something similar already exists from FITF: [Communicate - The Fishing Porthole](#).

Commented [EW10R9]: Agree. Next steps could be identifying what tools exist like the fishing porthole and bringing those into the roadmap, potentially expanding the reach of the porthole. There still needs to be clarity around the link into fisheries management, what the collaborative process means.

8.4 Tools to enable anonymous input

There are multiple examples of competition, rivalries and intimidation with some fishers feeling unable to provide their opinions at in-person and virtual meetings. Enabling fishers to provide anonymous, real-time input via technologies such as Slido, Miro (or other online whiteboards), is something that could be implemented quickly and easily to provide a more equitable process and more representative outcomes.

8.5 Participation training/up-skilling participation

A major barrier to participation is a lack of confidence in taking part in meetings and how management processes work. Supporting or providing training to inshore fishers with a focus on enabling constructive participation in fisheries management through increased understanding of what participation and consultation involves, what expectations are, how to get involved would help address this. Participation training can help to overcome participation and trust concerns and would encourage active participation in engagement and collaboration from all stakeholders involved. It would also help in building relationships and support greater understanding of the regulatory and management system further enabling future participation and engagement. There is potential to develop, in parallel, a participation MOU or similar that requires accountability of those participating in, for example, RFGs.

8.6 Specialised facilitation and novel approaches

Fisheries meetings tend to be formal and run to a set formula which can allow dominant voices to disrupt proceedings. A general facilitator is a neutral party with no vested interest in fishing and fisheries management and who has the skills and presence to facilitate the participation of multiple stakeholders in fisheries management meetings, ensuring all voices are heard. This intervention proposes that a specialist facilitator company designs, and initially runs, an equitable and innovative process for RFG formal meetings to minimise disruption, improve engagement and to enhance attendance through demonstration of constructive meetings for inshore fishers or their representatives. If not already in place, Terms of Reference and Rules of Engagement should be established to moderate behaviour.

8.7 Small-scale fisheries spokesperson/champion

A SSF spokesperson or champion would be tasked with coordinating communications between fishers and fisheries managers. This concept has been raised by several research programmes and a suitable title for this role would need to be agreed. Ideally candidates would be one-step removed from regulators, but with good access to them, for example through RFGs. The role could potentially operate through an implementing partner, but the candidate would need to be an excellent communicator with good knowledge of the system to be able to represent SSF effectively. There are large regional variations so a standard terms of reference would support coherence between regions.

8.8 Representation payments for small-scale fisheries associations

Loss of potential earnings is a commonly cited barrier to participation at meetings that happen during fishing hours. One potential solution would be to set up a similar fund to the Defra Facilitator's Fund which supports individuals who act as facilitators to bring together groups of farmers, foresters and other land managers to improve environmental outcomes in their local area. It would provide direct payment via per diems to a nominated representative of Fisheries Associations and other formal organisations to attend RFGs and FMP meetings.

8.9 Targeted organisational support financing

Existing organisations with a role in engagement and participation, such as associations and CICs, are financially vulnerable. Retirement, burn-out and lack of sustainable funding leads to reduced capacity in those organisations or the end of those organisations. While multiple positive examples of organisations exist, those interviewed report financial and administrative concerns. Targeted funding, for example to enable recruitment of administrative personnel, or personnel with the skills required to strengthen associations, which are distinct skills from those required by vessel owners, or to provide security of future funding could strengthen the capacity and effectiveness of such organisations.

8.9 Blended finance participation fund

Blended public-private sector funds can unlock private sector funding with security provided by seed-money from UK government. Blended finance models are becoming increasingly popular within government and can provide longer-term sustainable financing. Potential private sector partners are supermarkets, chain restaurants etc. that are benefiting from improved, collaborative, fisheries management. The fund could pay for nominated fishermen to attend meetings etc. where no associations exist, but alternatively could provide funding for FAs, CICs etc to pay for representatives. If successful, and over time, the fund could also be used to fund, for example, fisheries infrastructure and adaptations required to address climate change.