



# Marine Management Organisation

**Date:** 22 October 2024, 13:30-14:25

**Location:** MS Teams

**Subject:** Wrasses Complex FMP Working Group 1

**Attendees:**

Name	Job title
Kate Drewery	Defra, Non-Quota Species Team
Grant Horsburgh	Defra, Non-Quota Species Team
Lauren Stewart	Defra, Wrasse academic
Antony Jensen	University of Southampton
Mike Bennett	Recreational fisher, The Fisherman's Cafe
Edgar Moxom	Commercial fisher, Plymouth University liaison
Sarah Clark	Devon & Severn IFCA
Sarah Birchenough	Southern IFCA
Imogen Wright	Southern IFCA
Jen Lewis	Sussex IFCA
Felix Ameye	Seafish
Zachary Radford	Cefas
Jim Ellis	Cefas
Martin Peverley	Natural England
Stewart Singleton-White	Angling Trust
MMO FMP Team	

**Apologies:**

Name	Job title
Kieran Hyder	Cefas

## **Agenda:**

### **1. Welcome and Introductions**

- The aim of this meeting is to provide an overview of the [Wrasses Complex Fisheries Management Plan \(FMP\)](#) project and gather initial feedback on what we need to focus on going forward, working together to co-develop the FMP. Subsequent Working Group (WG) meetings will focus on more detailed topics such as evidence, goals, and management opportunities.
- The MMO thanked members for their participation.
- Due to similar stakeholder interests, the Wrasses Complex FMP and Black Seabream FMP are being developed in tandem. Working Group meetings for the two projects will be held as consecutive sessions to enable the most effective and efficient engagement for members.

### **2. Working Group Terms of Reference (ToR)**

Working Group members have been asked to consider and review the ToR, providing comments or amendments to the MMO FMP team by 1st November 2024. It will be assumed that the WG ToR has been accepted in the absence of feedback

Please find the published WG ToR here:

[WC FMP BSB FMP Working Group WG Terms of Reference ToR .pdf](#)

### **3. Overview of the Wrasses Complex FMP**

Please see the WG meeting presentation given for further detail on what was discussed during this overview.

[Presentation slides for the WC FMP BSB FMP WG meeting 1 on 22 October.pdf](#)

### **WG questions**

- WG member queried whether the decline in commercial landings will be examined in more detail to provide clarity on the effort and number of vessels involved. The lower statistics in 2023 may be due to the decline of the Devon live wrasse fishery.

- WG member questioned whether the 77 vessels reportedly involved in the fishery in 2023 were inclusive of both recreational and commercial harvesting.
  - MMO responded that this value will be commercial and may include bycatch.
- WG member asked whether there is still an active live wrasse fishery on our coast.
  - WG member responded that there were 5 active boats this year on the South coast.
- WG member queried whether there should be a commercial fishery for wrasse at all. This is a demand-led fishery driven by what the salmon farmers want.
  - MMO responded that future demand for the live wrasse is likely to decline, something we've seen already in the reduction of vessels landing live wrasse, and as wrasse farming and other methodology to deal with lice in salmon farms develops. The FMP does not have jurisdiction over markets for the usage of wrasse, and not here to close fisheries down if sustainable, but it can consider methods to ensure the fishery remains sustainable if required.
- WG member highlighted that there has been an increase in lice on other fish species; this may be due to the decline of wrasse.
  - WG member noted that they have seen some isopods on different fish species in the Channel.
  - MMO responded that this may be something the FMP looks to investigate further.
- WG member mentioned that there is a PhD student in Scotland working towards an initial stock assessment for wrasse. **ACTION – MMO to contact WG member for more details.**
- WG member queried whether the MMO knows what market the commercial landings are being sold to if they are not being used for human consumption.
  - MMO responded that this is something that could be investigated alongside the desire to quantify pot bait usage. Noted that species specific reporting is currently not particularly good.
- WG members queried the estimated weight of wrasse reported to be retained by recreational fishers. This value seems large given that wrasse is not typically kept for consumption.

- MMO emphasised that in many cases, including the retained catch of wrasse, recreational values recorded by the Sea Angling Diary have high survey errors due to the low values recorded.
- WG member explained that it is important to note the survey errors with the Sea Angling Diary. There are few wrasses retained each year, and they may be kept for several reasons besides consumption. As a result of the low retention rates, the scale is relatively uncertain and there is high survey error. By contrast, the errors for returned catch are much smaller due to the increased rate of reporting, which helps to increase the reliability of the values calculated. Cefas provide the FMPs with text on this.
- MMO responded that although the percentage error was not included within the initial presentation, it is well understood and always considered amongst the team when using the data. ***The presentation was updated following the meeting to include an appropriate caveat.***

#### **4. Discussion: Issues and opportunities**

The MMO invited WG members to discuss the issues and opportunities that the FMP could focus on within the first iteration.

##### **WG feedback**

- WG member discussed particular IFCA legislation and the strict geographic components of codes of practice. Highlighted that there may be concern amongst their colleagues if geographical restrictions were expanded across a whole district.
  - MMO responded that this could be discussed during formal engagement. The live wrasse fishery is spatially discrete and the code of conduct for live wrasse seem sustainably managed. They would need to consider the national scope of the FMP.
- WG member queried whether the live wrasse fishery presents the greatest threat.
  - MMO responded that IFCA's have provided data on the live wrasse fishery, which they have been working on. The sales of live wrasse are very robust, and this data can be presented. As far as they were aware, there is very little reporting of pot bait.
  - WG member responded that it would be useful for the live wrasse data to be reported to gain a full understanding of the industry.

- WG member recommended investigating the impact of the removal of wrasse on lice abundance. There is potential that the reported increased lice presence in certain areas may be due to climate change. Recommended assessing whether there are changes in lice abundance in areas where there is no wrasse fishery.
- WG member highlighted the need to understand the main risks. The live wrasse fishery may be in decline, need to understand, and quantify species use outside of this fishery. There is good data on live wrasse fishery catches and landings, but not for other sectors e.g., bycatch. Need to understand the scale of these elements before weighing up the risks of different sectors. Need to understand where demand is likely to go in the future. Queried whether the team have investigated the use of cultured wrasse in aquaculture, or whether the fishing industry believe wrasse is useful for pot bait.
  - MMO responded that discussions have been had with aquaculture on the continuation of the live wrasse fishery. It is important to note that they must consider the whole fishery on a national scale.
- WG member asked if the team have looked at whether any of the landings of wrasse are exported to the EU. There is anecdotal evidence that its limited use as a food fish is likely to come from the EU.
  - MMO responded that this is something that can be investigated from the landings data.

## 5. Next Steps

Please see the presentation given to the WG for further information on next steps.

## 6. AOB

- WG was encouraged to circulate the Wrasses Complex FMP & Black Seabream FMP online survey to any contacts they have - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wrasses-complex-fmp-and-black-seabream-fmp-online-survey>

The MMO highlighted that if any members had any further points they would like to put forward, please send them via email ([fmp@marinemanagement.org.uk](mailto:fmp@marinemanagement.org.uk))

## Appendix 1: Actions

Reference	Action description	Assigned to
22/10/2024/01	MMO to contact WG member for more details regarding the PhD student who is working towards an initial stock assessment for wrasse in Scotland.	FMP team