



Marine
Management
Organisation

Celtic Sea and Western Channel demersal Fisheries Management Plan:

2024 Stakeholder Engagement feedback

Date: April 2025



...ambitious for our seas and coasts

Background	3
Summary of commercial feedback.....	4
Species Prioritisation	4
Key concerns	5
Opportunities	8
Key opportunities raised were:.....	8
Management solutions	8
Evidence	9
Summary of recreational feedback.....	10
Species Prioritisation	10
Key concerns	10
Opportunities	11
Management solutions	11
Evidence	11
Summary of wider stakeholder feedback	12
Online survey	12
Species Prioritisation	12
Key concerns	12
Other issues raised	13
Summary	13
Useful Information	14

Background

The Celtic Sea and Western Channel demersal Fisheries Management Plan (FMP) covers English and Welsh waters of International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) divisions 7e, h, j, k and includes the following species:

Family	Species
Gadiformes	cod, haddock, pollack, whiting, blue ling, round nose grenadier, saithe.
Lophiformes	monkfish, anglerfish.
Pleuronectiformes	Plaice, sole, megrim, four spot megrim.
Elasmobranchs	Deep water sharks, thornback ray, small eyed ray, shagreen ray, blonde ray, sandy ray, spotted ray, cuckoo ray, mediterranean starry ray, round ray, sailray, starry ray, undulate ray, round ray, blue skate, white skate, long-nosed skate.
Spariformes	red seabream.
Nephrops	Nephrops.

The Marine Management Organisation (MMO) is the delivery partner responsible for preparing the first draft of this FMP, which is due to be published by Defra by the end of 2025¹. FMPs are developed collaboratively with interested stakeholders. As a critical step in the preparation of this FMP, MMO engaged in the Celtic Sea and Western Channel regions with stakeholders with an interest in demersal species. This was done in a range of ways including in-person events, quayside conversations and webinars to give all interested stakeholders an opportunity to contribute. Through this engagement, MMO were able to gather a range of views and feedback on key issues, opportunities and management solutions for demersal species covered by the FMP. It was also an opportunity to identify any additional supporting evidence and future evidence requirements and/or gaps that will help the preparation of the FMP.

This document is a summary of those stakeholder discussions during 2024 and represents the views of stakeholders and are not MMO opinion. The feedback has been summarised and is not attributable to any individual or organisation. These are the opinions of wider stakeholders which we would like to share for transparency and to encourage further discussion.

¹ [Annex A: List and publication dates of FMPs \(amended December 2024\)](#)

Summary of commercial feedback

Engagement in the FMP areas took place throughout October and November 2024. On 17 October 2024, a pilot event was hosted by Defra and industry in Cornwall where the FMP was discussed in a workshop. Stakeholders from the commercial fishing industry were also invited to attend a series of drop-in sessions and quayside events that were advertised through direct contact, industry groups and social media posts. The sessions were held in Brixham, Plymouth, Mevagissey, Newlyn, Ilfracombe and Padstow. A wide range of individuals such as vessel owners and industry group representatives were present across both the Cornwall event and the port visits. At these events, attendees were encouraged to provide information on topics such as species prioritisation, key concerns and opportunities and management solutions and evidence needs.

Stakeholders' views have been summarised into the following themes below.

Species Prioritisation

Based on the feedback, species were broadly prioritised as:

1. Gadoids (in particular pollack, cod, haddock)
2. Flatfish (sole, megrim, plaice)
3. Lophius (monkfish/anglerfish)
4. Skates and rays
5. Nephrops

Prioritising by economic importance was a dominant factor, and high priority ratings for gadoids (in particular pollack, cod, haddock), Lophius (monk/anglerfish), flatfish (in particular sole, megrim, plaice) and was a common theme. Comments were made that monkfish stocks appear to have increased over the previous five years.

Comments on economic factors included reference to an increase in certain species' stock levels, such as monkfish, leading to it becoming a target species. The economic importance of monkfish for trawlers and inshore boats was also highlighted, as both a target and bycatch species, noting that it is landed all year round by beam trawlers.

Haddock was also highlighted as an important species for the South West for the trawl sector.

Skates and rays were highlighted as a staple for inshore trawlers.

Nephrops were noted as a high value, developing fishery in the Celtic Sea and Western Channel, although targeted mainly by the Scottish fleet.

Key concerns

Key concerns raised were:

Total Allowable Catch (TAC) issues: TAC concerns related to the impact of TAC fluctuations, and also the need for TAC realignment, specifically for sole and plaice in ICES areas 7a/e/f/g. Comments were made that these issues created a lack of stability in the sole fishery.

Quota trading: Concerns were raised over the perceived impact of quota trading by organisations with little or no connection to the fishing industry.

Choke concerns: Choke issues were raised, in particular the impact of cod as a choke species.

Stock recovery: The need for stock recovery was raised, specifically for pollack stocks.

Lack of stock assessments: Concerns were raised regarding the lack of stock assessments.

Removal of 5% scallop bycatch limit: Concerns were raised regarding the impact of the removal of the 5% scallop dredge by catch limit, highlighting that this may have led to targeting of sole.

Inadequate enforcement: Concerns were raised over the apparent reduction in MMO enforcement.

Slow decision making: Concerns were raised regarding slow regulatory decision-making.

Spatial squeeze: Concerns were raised over spatial squeeze concerns, specifically regarding proposed offshore windfarm projects.

Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) re-certification: Concerns were raised regarding MSC re-certification, in particular for monkfish and the need to demonstrate compliance with bycatch indicators.

Seal management: Concerns were raised about the perceived impact of seal predation, such as seal predation on fishing net catches.

Wreck netting: Concerns were raised regarding the impact of wreck netting, such as overfishing of a particular target species.

Recreational pollack catches: Stakeholders raised concerns regarding the level of recreational angling pollack catches, in contrast to the zero TAC quota applied to commercial fishing activities.

Lack of influence on EU negotiations: Concerns were raised regarding the lack of influence on UK/EU negotiations.

Other stocks: concerns were raised regarding the impact of the pollack ban on other stocks, such as skates and rays, due to fishers needing to target other species to make up for the loss in income.

Closed seasons: comments were made that spatial-temporal measures such as closed seasons for skates and rays stocks led to displacement of effort and consequent impacts.

Seabed regulation: comments were made that there needs to be clarity on who and how the seabed is regulated.

Monkfish/anglerfish ID: comments were made there needs to be guidance on monkfish/anglerfish ID, to enable differentiation.

Mixed fisheries: comments were made that prohibited catch in a mixed fishery will always lead to discard.

Market turnover: comments were made on the apparent downturn in market turnover.

MMO engagement: comments were made that the MMO should reach out to the wider fisheries sector, not just fishers, including wider local communities reliant on the fishing economy.

FMP process: comments were made that clarity on the FMP process is needed.

Marine Protected Areas (MPA): concerns were raised on proposed MPA designation, in particular in St Austell Bay, and any consequent fishing restrictions.

Non-UK vessels: comments were made as to whether FMP measures will apply to non-UK vessels when fishing in UK waters.

Recreational charter boats: comments were made that charter boats for recreational fishing should be treated as commercial vessels, and any commercial fishing measures should be applied to those operating them.

Marine planning: a comment was made that the marine planning seascape plans could be improved. An example to consider was the 2011 Natural England Seascape approach, which was a good example of the Natural Capital Approach.

Wreck netting: concerns were raised regarding the impact of wreck netting, and that there should be a close season restriction for this fishing method. Other comments were made that the negative perception of netting was incorrect, and that netting was a selective gear type.

Trawler fleet: comments were made that the west coast trawler fleet was greatly reduced now, and only one trawler currently in operation.

Industry decline: comments were made that there is a general decline in the industry due to various factors, including fisheries regulation and EU exit.

MCA vessel licensing requirements: comments were made that MCA restrictions have caused a problem, and that a grace period is needed before obtaining necessary MCA licenses, as prospective fishers may not be suited to the industry.

Hinkley Point: Concerns were raised regarding potential impacts due to Hinkley Point power station; fish appear to have disappeared from the location over the last two years, and replaced with sharks, e.g. smoothhound.

Shore-based owners: comments were made that vessels used to be owner-skipper, now owners are shore-based, and fishing doesn't stop.

EU Fishing rights: concerns were raised regarding a perception that after 2026 EU fishers will fish in UK via Grandfather rights.

Diversification: comments were made that there are few species to diversify to. An example was Lyme bay. Following Lyme bay closure, boats moved to crab and lobster fishery, which impacted on existing crab and lobster fishers. Comments were also made that fishers need the ability to switch species, depending on season and fish availability. It was also commented that fishing licences pigeonhole people. It was also highlighted that small vessels are limited to what they can catch in their location.

Costs of entering the fishing industry: Comments were made that people entering the profession can't afford new licences, and entry is therefore only realistic for those who can inherit a licence. In addition, comments were made that the cost of training new recruits is high.

Pollution impacts: Concerns were raised regarding the impact of pollution including land run-off.

Minimum Landing Sizes (MLS): comments were made that MLS measures have the effect of transferring effort to medium sized species.

Climate change: comments were made on the impact of climate change. Surface temperature appears to have increased from 17 to 20 degrees C. This has apparently led to disappearance of lobster stocks. Comments were made that there are also associated issues such as algae and jellyfish.

Under 10metre (U10m) fleet: comments were made regarding concerns over decline of the U10m fleet, previously there were 14 vessels, but now reduced to two.

Infrastructure: comments were made regarding concerns the harbour and infrastructure will disappear.

Impacts on tourism: comments were made that reduction in the fishing industry could have impacts on tourism, as one of the main tourist attractions in the region is visiting working ports.

Larger vessels impacts: comments were made regarding the impact of the arrival during January, February, March of bigger vessels from beyond the over 6 nautical mile (nm) limit.

Ring netters: comments were made that ring netters are an issue.

Opportunities

Key opportunities raised were:

Species shift: comments were made regarding taking advantage of species shift due to warming waters. Fishers noted that they are seeing octopus and sponge crab. Also, dolphins are more common, and tuna sightings have been recorded close to the shoreline. In addition, there appears to be an increase in bream and red mullet. There is also an apparent increase in worm coral, due to warming waters.

Species rebrand: megrim was highlighted as benefitting from a market branding as “Cornish sole”.

Nephrops fishery: Developing a local nephrops fishery was highlighted as an opportunity.

Management solutions

Proposed management measures were:

Quota trading ban: this was to address quota trading concerns.

Technical measures: proposed measures included increase mesh size, Minimum Conservation Reference Size (MCRS), and cod end. Comments included suggestions that MCRS for skates and rays should be set to catch mid-sized specimens.

Closed seasons: these were proposed as a solution to protect stocks such as at sensitive spawning periods.

Remote Electronic Management (REM) (UK and EU vessels): this was proposed as a means of addressing enforcement concerns as well as addressing evidence gaps.

Dredge bycatch limit: Reinstatement of the 5% scallop dredge bycatch limit was raised as a solution to the perceived targeting of sole.

Enforcement: comments were made that more effective enforcement was a potential solution.

Real-time management: comments were made that real-time management including quicker responses to issues was a potential solution.

Gear technology: comments were made that innovate gear technology, allowing for more power efficiency and less effort.

Precautionary approach: comments were made that the precautionary approach should be applied.

Pollack solutions: various suggestions were given including; bag limits; a spawning close season; MCRS increase from 30cm to 45cm; a mesh size increase. An annual pollack catch limit was suggested, for example three tonnes, which could be spread through the year.

Recreational FMPs: comments were made that there should be an FMP focussing on recreational fishing.

North/South Devon fisheries: comments were made that north and south Devon fisheries should be separated and distinct, due to the differing tidal regimes, resulting in North Devon vessels effectively operating as offshore vessels.

Voluntary closed seasons: comments were made that voluntary closed seasons should be considered.

Effort management: comments were made that effort management is the only solution, e.g. pot limits, catch limits, days at sea. It was highlighted that boats have evolved and are more efficient, therefore reduction in effort was needed. It was suggested that those who abide by reduced effort would be rewarded with more quota.

Decommissioning: comments were made that a vessel decommissioning scheme is required.

Market engagement: comments were made that there is a need for dialogue with the market, to understand each other's requirements.

Evidence

Potential evidence gaps included:

Technology: Use of technology was suggested as a means of addressing evidenced gaps. This included the following technology: REM, Vessel Monitoring System (VMS), Catch app, Geofish data.

Evidence gathering: comments were made that fishers could help in gathering evidence, including trawl surveys.

Nursery identification: comments were made that work in identifying nursery location was needed.

Stock definitions: comments were made that sole stock definition and evidence gathering on sole genetics is needed, in particular to identify distinct sole stocks in ICES areas 7e and h.

Summary of recreational feedback

On 14 November 2024, a webinar was held in collaboration with the Angling Trust, during which stakeholders from the recreational sector were invited to share their views and ask questions regarding the FMP.

On 31 October 2024, the FMP team attended a Recreational Sea Fishing Forum Hosted by Defra and this was another opportunity for recreational fishers to ask questions and provide feedback on the FMP.

Stakeholders' views from both events have been summarised into the following themes below

Species Prioritisation

Pollack: Pollack was highlighted as an important species as it contributed to food security for families of recreational fishers.

Cod: cod was highlighted as an important species for recreational fishing. Comments was made highlighting the apparent decrease for this species for inshore recreational anglers in the Isle of Wight.

Other species: comments were made that species such as sea grey, thick lipped and thin-lipped mullet have some form of protection, as they are becoming increasingly popular with recreational fishers.

Key concerns

Key concerns raised were:

Economic/social importance: the economic importance of recreational fishing was highlighted, such as the supporting industry e.g. tackle shops. Other economic factors highlighted were the positive tourism benefits, especially in the southwest, outlining that recreational anglers are willing to travel to pursue their interest.

Recreational/commercial balance: the importance of achieving a sustainable balance between recreational and commercial fishing sectors was highlighted.

Multi-year approach: comments were made that questioned the effectiveness of the yearly approach to ICES advice, and that a multi-year approach would be more effective.

Opportunities

Species shift: comments were made on the increase in cuttlefish and squid numbers, and the fishing opportunities this provides.

Wellbeing: the mental health benefits of recreational fishing was highlighted.

Management solutions

Proposed management measures were:

MCRS: it was highlighted that the MCRS should reflect the size in which a species can spawn at least once.

Mixed fishery approach: comments were made that a mixed fishery approach should be taken, reflecting that multiple species are caught together.

Closed seasons: comments were made that spatial and temporal closures should be used as a means of protecting stocks at sensitive periods.

Evidence

Potential evidence gaps included:

Economic data: comments were made that economic data associated with recreational sector, such as tourism spend, should be obtained.

Bycatch data: comments were made that further information on commercial bycatch should be obtained, including target species, gear types, catch composition, and any temporal/spatial data.

Compliance: comments were made that REM data and Inshore Vessel Monitoring System (iVMS) data coupled with commercial landing data, should be used to improve compliance.

It was also commented that the importance of evidence and data gathering should be made within the fisheries sector.

Summary of wider stakeholder feedback

In addition to the engagement outlines above, the FMP team also engaged with stakeholders through an online survey and existing forums such as Regional Fisheries Group Meetings, Finfish Advisory Group Meetings and a webinar event for environmental non-governmental organisations (eNGOs).

Stakeholders' views from the above engagement channels have been summarised into the following themes below.

Online survey

The online survey relating to this FMP closed on 31 January 2025. Comments from the survey is being analysed and will be included in the planned complete engagement summary document for this FMP.

A review of the survey responses indicate participation from different sectors within the fishing sector including commercial fishers, producer organisations, recreational fishers, eNGOs, academia and supporting businesses. Responses comprise a variety of comments regarding expectations and concerns for the FMP, which will be helpful for guiding FMP development. Themes raised include concerns around the environmental sustainability of key stocks, habitat degradation and the importance of data collection.

Species Prioritisation

Pollack: This highlighted as an important commercial species.

Key concerns

Zero TAC species: comments were made that there seems to be no prioritisation of zero TAC species in the FMP.

Technical measures: comments were made that there is a Scientific, Technical and Economic support to the Common Fisheries Policy (STECF) review on the Technical Conservation measures already which concluded that the measures are not working.

Ecosystem based approach definition: comments were made that Ecosystem based approach relating to fisheries management is clearly defined in the Fisheries Act (2020) so there is no need for further work on its definition.

UK/EU negotiations: a comment was made on how FMPs influence UK/EU negotiations, such as the Specialised Committee for Fisheries (SCF), and the need for FMPs to align with negotiations.

eNGOs involvement: it was highlighted that eNGOs should be involved in all FMP working groups.

Other issues raised

There were other issues raised during the engagement that are currently outside the scope of the FMP. However, they have been passed on to the relevant MMO and Defra teams and are summarised below.

Other issues raised included:

- Issues with the Catch Recording App and the ability to record discards.
- Quota allocation for the inshore fleet should remain with the inshore vessels.
- Spatial squeeze
- Lack of consultation engagement with fishers on local marine developments

Many of the topics above are discussed at the Regional Fishery Group meetings. This is the forum to discuss these points with government and scientists and fishers are welcome to attend these meetings in their regions.

Summary

The feedback collected from commercial fishers, recreational fishers, and wider stakeholders highlights several key areas of agreement and divergence. While there is a shared recognition of the importance of species prioritisation and the need for effective management solutions, sectors differ in their specific concerns and priorities, especially around TAC, enforcement, and stock assessments.

There will be further opportunities for stakeholders to feed into the draft FMP through the planned public consultation, which is due to be launched in late 2025, dates to be confirmed.

In the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact the FMP team if you have any further feedback.

Useful Information

MMO Contact Details

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

Regional Fisheries Group Team:

regionalfisheriesgroups@marinemanagement.org.uk

Gov.uk pages

[Celtic Sea and Western Channel demersal Fisheries Management Plan \(FMP\) development - GOV.UK](#)

Defra FMP Blog: [Welcome to the Fisheries Management Plans blog! – Fisheries Management Plans](#)