

Tenth meeting of the Specialised Committee on Fisheries on 14 May 2025 - minutes

Hybrid (London and video conference)

3:30pm to 4:30pm British Summer Time (BST) and 4:30pm to 5:30pm Central European Summer Time (CEST).

Item 1: Opening of the Specialised Committee and adoption of the agenda

The UK, as host, welcomed both delegations to the tenth meeting of the Specialised Committee on Fisheries (SCF). The parties adopted the provisional agenda for the meeting.

Item 2: Fisheries management and conservation

a) Update on fisheries management and control measures

The UK updated on the progress made with the Celtic Sea demersal Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs) and suggested continued engagement including on FMPs led by the devolved governments. The EU reaffirmed stakeholders' concerns on FMPs and the interest to continue exchanging with the UK on upcoming management measures. The parties welcomed the continued cooperation on plans for future FMPs as well as on the implementation of published FMPs.

b) Celtic Sea technical measures

The parties noted the challenging context in the Celtic Sea and the need to take a holistic view. Both parties are keen that the outputs of this workstream feed into broader joint work on recovery of vulnerable stocks in the Celtic Sea, covered under agenda item 2(c). The UK provided an update on its evaluation of potential joint technical measures to reduce bycatch of Celtic Sea cod and acknowledged helpful technical discussions with the EU around next steps. The EU further noted the usefulness of bringing discussions forward on the recovery of Celtic Seas stocks.

c) Mixed fisheries science and rebuilding

Noting the relevant Written Record ([EU publication](#), [UK publication](#)) commitment, the parties reflected on the response from the International Council for the Exploration of the Seas (ICES) in 2024 to their special request on mixed fisheries science and agreed that the response from ICES and the follow up workshop hosted by ICES have been highly informative to our understanding of how mixed fisheries models operate. The parties agreed that, along with outputs from the Celtic Sea technical measures workstream, the

outputs from the ICES response should inform further joint work exploring whether there are alternative approaches to setting opportunities for the most vulnerable stocks within a mixed fishery, as committed to in the Written Record for 2025. The parties welcomed recent technical discussions on how best to take forward this written record commitment and agreed to continue those discussions and pinpoint areas of action.

d) Pollack commercial and recreational

The parties noted the publication of the ICES benchmark report at the end of April and recent technical discussions following the publication. They highlighted that the benchmark introduces a new methodology for assessing pollack, which will result in a category 1 level assessment for the stock. The parties also noted that recreational catches for pollack are substantial and have been taken into account by the new assessment. The UK noted plans to assess the effectiveness of voluntary guidelines for recreational anglers that were introduced in February 2025.

The new methodology will be used in the advice for 2026, and both parties confirmed their desire to work together on the management of the stock once the advice becomes available in June. The EU noted that it is important that adequate measures are in place to ensure the sustainability of this fishery and that it looked forward to continuing discussions with the UK on this important matter.

e) Skates and rays

The parties reiterated the SCF work to date on skates and rays and confirmed that the report of the expert workshop that took place last September is finalised and will be published as part of the 10th SCF minutes. Both parties are keen to continue discussions on reviewing the outcomes of the report and carefully consider the best approach to potential alternatives to the group Total Allowable Catches (TACs) for skates and rays.

f) Spurdog

On spurdog, the parties submitted a joint request to ICES in February in support of the Written Record commitment to review the effectiveness of the current management measures for the stock. ICES have been requested to consider various management scenarios which will help to improve understanding on the estimated impact of these on the stock, including changes to the maximum landing size. ICES estimate that the outcome of the joint request will be available in October. The parties agreed to send a joint response to ICES to explore possibilities for delivery of an earlier outcome, to allow for it to be considered in negotiations for 2026.

g) Multi-year strategy (MYSt) for Channel king scallops

The parties noted the recent publication of the expert workshop report on MYSt for Channel king scallops. Several technical discussions have taken place this year and the parties are working together to finalise the terms of reference of an informal expert science group to support the development of the MYSt. The parties noted plans for the first meeting of the science group following the SCF meeting, with a view to start discussions

towards a common understanding of science. The joint scientific work, which will result in a joint report, will support the formulation of the MYSt for king scallops.

Item 3: Fishing opportunities, including scientific coordination

a) Sole in area 7hjk roadmap and plaice in area 7fg roadmap

The parties underscored the importance of improving the scientific basis for the assessments of plaice in area 7fg and sole in area 7hjk and noted plans for an expert workshop for the 2 stocks, which will take place on the 3 June. This aims to inform a joint roadmap for each of the stocks, looking into incorporating new data into ICES advice and identifying remaining data gaps.

b) Lemon Sole roadmap

On Lemon Sole, the parties noted that the biological stock is expected to be benchmarked by ICES in 2027, while additional data collection may not be needed. The parties agreed to continue engaging on the item, including requesting that ICES provide a list of options for improving the stock assessment as part of the benchmark.

c) Rockall cod roadmap

The parties noted the meeting between experts from the UK and Ireland to improve the evidence base for the stock, which currently has a category 6 status, and agreed on the importance of progressing work to improve the science. They discussed the recent report from the Scottish Marine Directorate, which has been considered by the Celtic Sea ICES working group.

d) Horse mackerel ICES advice request

The parties took stock of the progress to date, referring to the recent joint request to ICES and recalling their commitment to continue engagement on horse mackerel in the coming months.

e) Blue Ling

The UK gave an update on the ongoing project to identify the biological source of blue ling in ICES division 4a. The results are expected by the end of October 2025 and will likely be presented to the SCF in early 2026.

f) Seabass ICES catch allocation tool

The parties recapped the progress on the item to date, noting the recent technical discussions, including a joint discussion with ICES in March focusing on the intended use and the limitations of the catch allocation tool. The outcome of the seabass benchmark is expected this year, but the report is delayed and unlikely to be available in time for the expert working group preparing the advice for 2026. The parties have agreed to send joint

letter to ICES, following up the request to update the catch allocation tool and additionally requesting any available evidence to assist with reviewing closed seasons.

Item 4: Control and enforcement, data exchange

a) Monitoring, control and surveillance arrangements

The parties noted that the text on joint arrangements on monitoring, control, and surveillance is being concluded, and the expectation is for it to be adopted an SCF recommendation once internal procedures are finalised.

b) Common technical guidelines for interoperability of Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM) systems for pelagic sector in North-East Atlantic

The parties noted the ongoing work on developing common technical guidelines for interoperability of REM systems in the pelagic sector of the North-East Atlantic. The parties agreed to continue the work on the guidelines which are expected to be endorsed by SCF. The parties agreed to expand the scope of the work to additional fleet sectors, as necessary.

c) Data sharing United Nations and Fisheries Language for Universal Exchange (UN/FLUX)

The parties noted the importance of exchanging relevant information on fishing activity and the geographic position of vessels. The parties welcomed the progress on joint arrangements for data sharing, to be formalised through an act of the SCF, and noted the ongoing work on the annexes.

Item 5: Any other business (AOB)

None.

Item 6: Closure

The UK, as host, closed the tenth meeting of the Specialised Committee on Fisheries.

[Approved by the Joint Secretariat of the Specialised Committee on Fisheries]

Annex 1: List of participants in the sixth meeting of the Specialised Committee on Fisheries

EU delegation

- EU Co-Chair of the Specialised Committee on Fisheries
- European Commission officials
- Delegation of the European Union to the UK official
- Representatives of EU member states

UK delegation

- UK Co-Chair of the Specialised Committee on Fisheries
- UK government officials from Department for Environment, Food and Rural and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
- Scottish Government officials
- Northern Ireland Executive officials
- Welsh Government officials
- Isle of Man Government officials
- Government of Jersey officials
- States of Guernsey officials
- Marine Management Organisation officials
- UK Mission to the European Union officials

Annex 2: Non-quota stocks (NQS) landings

Cumulative UK and EU landings of non-quota species from each other's waters. Each year these figures will be updated quarterly with provisional figures available from the most recent data exchange between the parties.

Table 1: UK NQS landings (tonnes)

Year	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4
Provisional 2025 totals	2,498	4,504	No data yet	No data yet
Final 2024 totals	2,423	4,708	7,297	10,621

Table 2: EU NQS landings (tonnes)

Year	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4
Provisional 2025 totals	10,400	12,874	No data yet	No data yet
Final 2024 totals	5,766	9,494	13,337	19,723

Annex 3: Expert workshop report on skates and rays

The parties, as part of the SCF, held an expert workshop on skates and rays and produced a report. This report has been published on GOV.UK and EC.EUROPA.EU:

- [Skates and rays expert report \(GOV.UK\)](#)
- [Skates and rays expert report \(EC.EUROPA.EU\)](#)