



Meeting Details

South West 7efg RFG Meeting

Date	23.09.25
Start Time	14:54
End Time	17:01
Meeting Duration	2hr 7
Location or Platform	MS Teams
Chair or Facilitator	Emily Theobald
Note Taker	Dan Wardle

Attendance

Attendees (Industry):

- Tom Flatt
- Ed Baker (PSFA)
- Colin Chase
- Nathan de Rozarieux
- Mike Lyness
- Tich Preston
- Juliette Hatchman (SWFPO)
- Zuzanna Dusza (SWFPO)
- Steve Parker
- Matt (surname unknown)

Attendees (Regulators):

- Emily Theobald (MMO)
- Anna MacLennan (MMO)
- Helen Stevens (Defra)
- Katie Plumridge (Defra)
- Edward Kirby (Defra)
- Ross Deadman (Defra)
- Sarah Bedingham (MMO)
- Phillipa Carr (MMO)
- Michael May (MCA)
- Katie James (MMO)
- Jacob Bestwick (MMO)
- Andy Carroll (Defra)
- Dan Wardle (MMO)
- Mat Mander (D&SIFCA)
- Samantha Davis (CIFCA)
- Sarah Birchenough (SIFCA)
- Ben Hutchison (Defra)
- Ruth Allin (Defra)
- Paul Dolder (CEFAS)
- Samantha Birch (CEFAS)

Apologies:

- Mike Roach (NFFO)
- Beshlie Pool
- Andrew Pascoe
- Harry Deans (MCA)

Agenda Items

	Item	Presenter	Agency	Recorded Start	Recorded End
1	Introduction	Emily Theobald	MMO	-	-
2	EU – UK Fisheries Negotiations	Helen Stevens & Katie Plumridge	Defra	00:01	09:44
3	Bluefin Tuna Forward Look	Edward Kirby & Ross Deadman	Defra	10:03	43:38
4	Crawfish, Crab & Octopus Update	Sarah Bedingham	MMO	43:56	01:01:26
5	Labelling & Traceability	Phillipa Carr	MMO	01:01:39	01:28:56
6	Quota Uptake Update	Jacob Bestwick & Katie James	MMO	01:29:38	01:56:48

Meeting Recording

This meeting was recorded and can be accessed through the MMO YouTube account via the following link: <https://youtu.be/5v0GrLHT6g8>



Timestamps for the start and end of each agenda item can be found in the table above. The following record is a summarised version of the meeting and includes participant questions.

Agenda Item #1

Introduction – Emily Theobald

Emily Theobald welcomed attendees to the call and reminded the group on the code of conduct for the meeting to remain polite, no swearing, and keep comments short and to the point to allow everyone the opportunity to speak.

Agenda Item #2

EU – UK Fisheries Negotiations – Helen Stevens & Katie Plumridge

Helen Stevens and her colleague Katie Plumridge from Defra negotiations team joined the call to give RFG members the opportunity to provide feedback on stocks of particular interest to industry in relation to Southwest and Celtic Sea stocks in preparation for negotiations between the UK and EU. These views will be used to develop positions to be provided to ministers for sign off and to secure a mandate ready for negotiations. Any feedback is needed over the next couple of weeks, as negotiations will start from the beginning of November.

Helen and Katie presented the current ICES advice for Celtic Sea stocks that have been received so far which can be viewed in the attached presentation.



TO UPDATE CS
stakeholder Septem

Question: Mat Mander asked whether the 3,310t advice for pollack (area 6/7) was based on the recreational component of uptake as well.

Answer: Helen advised that advice is for total removals (including recreational and commercial uptake).

Question: Mat asked for more detail on how Defra is planning to split the quota allocation for commercial and recreationally caught pollack.

Answer: Helen advised that she would take feedback on the call for how stakeholders would like to see this split, and that Defra and CEFAS are currently undertaking an analysis to understand what implications the increased TAC will have for recreational and commercial fishers.

Comment: Mat commented that it would be useful for fishers to understand what the starting position of Defra is to be able to give feedback on the proposals. It is difficult for industry to be the first to suggest how it should be allocated without knowing the proposals.

Agenda Item #3

Bluefin Tuna Forward Look – Edward Kirby & Ross Deadman

Edward Kirby and Ross Deadman from the Defra quota team gave an update on bluefin tuna and sought views from industry on how the fishery is going, as well as thoughts and suggested changes or developments for future. Ed gave a recap of the background of bluefin tuna allocation from 2021 to present and a summary of the 2025 fishery, which can be viewed in the attached presentation. Defra are seeking views to feed into negotiations for the 2026-2028 bluefin tuna fishery, the key questions they would like feedback on are 'what do you think about how the fishery has been managed so far?' and 'what changes, if any, would you like to see?'.



OFFICIAL -
20250923 - BFT SW F

Question: Ed Baker commented that Edward had mentioned Defra will be negotiating for an increased share but expect the UK to have roughly the same as we have now, and asked Edward to expand on how much of an increase share Defra will be negotiating for.

Answer: Edward clarified that Defra will be trying to negotiate for an increase in the UK share, and the amount will be in development between now and November with Ministerial views. Defra are hoping to base this on what the demand is across the recreational and commercial fisheries. Where he mentioned that we expect the TAC to be the same over the next 3 years, he meant that once the TAC and quota is set in November, that will not be changed for the next 3 years.

Comment: Ed commented that there is a desire for bluefin tuna licences to last for more than one year and a desire for more commercial fishery licences. This would create a UK fishery that buyers could trust to provide a good quality product. There is also concern that the recreational fleet are killing more bluefin tuna than they have quota for, not deliberately, but through the practice of catch and release.

Response: Edward advised that this is feedback that has been received before and would be interested in discussing with Ed in more detail.

Comment: Colin Chase reiterated the desire to have licences that last for more than one year, stating that it stands to reason to have the best trained and equipped people helping to manage the fishery. A 12-month licence prevents fishers from fully investing and committing at the level the fishery deserves and is expensive from an operator's perspective.

Response: Edward stated that it is important to strike a balance between building the fishery with people best placed to deliver it sustainably and spreading out the opportunity rather than locking it down to a small number of people.

Comment: Tom Flatt commented that licences lasting at least 2 or more years makes sense from a fishing perspective due to the work involved in establishing buyers and purchasing equipment etc.

Question: Samantha Davis asked if we did get an increase in commercial quota, would Defra think about increasing the number of licences or the quantity of fish per licence?

Answer: Edward stated that Defra are keen to hear views of what industry believe would be the best option or combination of options, but ultimately it will depend on how much to some extent on how much additional quota we get. If it is only a small amount, this will limit the options. There are other challenges including ministerial views on what they want to do with the quota.

Question: Mat Mander asked what evidence is being used for proposals to negotiate for an increased TAC. Mat commented that this is a lucrative fishery with potential to benefit many,

the key in developing the fishery will be negotiating an increase in TAC. Mat suggested that as there would be a stable quota for 3 years, that should be the period that applies to licences to address the above points, if others agree through consultation. Mat also commented that a capped fishery presents its own risks with monetary value and so should be managed carefully.

Answer: Edward listed the types of evidence available including tagging and recreational data from Thunnus UK and the CHART programme, commercial landings, hookups and bycatch data, and demand from recreational and commercial applications for licences. In terms of what fishers can contribute, views such as those given in this meeting on how to grow the fishery and encourage investment across supply chains will all form part of the evidence as well. Edward asked for clarity from Mat regarding the 3-year period applying to licences.

Response: Mat stated that there is logic to give licences for the full 3 years (2026-2028) as it would give certainty to those who have invested in the fishery. Mat also commented that Defra should continue to hold the licences to safeguard the potential to open more opportunities across the fishery.

Comment: Nathan de Rozarieux commented that it is a shame the opportunity wasn't offered to pollack fishers on a first refusal served basis when the zero TAC was introduced, stating that they would have been the right candidates to take it forward with expertise in hook and line fisheries. He also commented that there will be split views on length of licences depending on whether fishers have a licence currently or not, suggesting that those who do will want it for 10 years, while those who do not would want it to last 6 months. Nathan also commented that it would be interesting to have a reserve list of 2-3 vessels that could be reallocated quota if uptake is low. Nathan then commented that the fishery is currently too binary and seems to be a 'closed shop' for those on the outside and stated that in future if evidence showed licensed vessels aren't catching their full allocations, there would be room for extra vessels to join the fishery.

Question: Edward asked Nathan whether having a reserve list could present a problem as fishers would have to purchase expensive gear or make vessel modifications part way through the fishery to be able to access it. Would this be a blocker to applicants?

Response: Nathan suggested that there could be a tick box on the application of 'if there was a reserve list, would you want to be on it and would you be able to take up the fishery at short notice?'. If someone is willing and able to then they may purchase, borrow or hire gear to start to learn the fishery or to finish off their annual fishing plan. It would be a way to get more people in the fishery and upskill them.

Comment: Ed Baker stated the Plymouth fishers would like to see more vessels get the opportunity than increasing the quota beyond 3 tonnes. He will forward further comments from his members to Edward.

Question: Samantha Davis asked whether Defra are anticipating a push from devolved administrations to have more recreational quota out of the overall UK allocation.

Response: Edward responded that there is potentially interest in starting or increasing the size of recreational fisheries, but this does not necessarily mean more quota as it depends on how the analysis suggests the amount of quota that needs to be set aside for the number of permits. As both the commercial and recreational fisheries are relatively new, Defra are still learning the best way to manage them. Ruth Allin from Defra added that we expect demand for recreational to grow and anticipate other administrations and crown dependencies to seek to open recreational fisheries in due course. The suspected direction is towards more recreational fishing, subject to sufficient quota being available, but there are many variables.

Question: Steve Parker asked what the purpose of quota for recreational fishing is and whether this is to allow them to land and sell or just to eat it.

Response: Edward advised that recreational fishers are not allowed to kill, eat or sell the catch, it is a catch and release fishery. The quota is set aside for accidental deaths in the fishery to be reported back to ICCAT.

Comment: Steve suggested it should be communicated as unintentional discard rather than quota.

Question: Tom Flatt asked about the criteria for selection being lowered this year to increase the number of applicants eligible for being selected, commenting that this reduces the chances of higher scoring applicants getting a licence, and degrading the level of fishing. Tom asked if it would make more sense to give 10 of the 15 licences to the higher scorers and then give 5 licences to those who scored lower, to maintain a high level of fishery.

Response: Ed commented that this is one of the more difficult areas to balance to avoid the fishery only being accessible to a small number of people, while maintaining a higher standard of fishing. Ed is keen to receive suggestions of how the selection process can be improved.

Agenda Item #4

Crawfish, Crab & Octopus Update – Sarah Bedingham

Sarah Bedingham from the MMO Fisheries Management Plan Implementation team gave an update on workstreams relating to the octopus bloom, further updates can be found at the South West RFG webpage: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/regional-fisheries-groups-south-west-7efg>. Sarah then went on to give updates on the southwest crab trial and the crawfish seasonal closure, which can be viewed in the attached presentation.



RFG update Sept 25
Crawfish.pdf

Question: Samantha Davis asked for more information on what types of technical measures would be considered going forward and whether the south west crab trial group will continue to support investigation into effort management.

Answer: Sarah advised that the crab trial group will continue and be a vital part of the decision-making process. With regards to technical measures there are considerations including gear soak times, net specifications and mesh size. There have also been suggestions around catch limits. These will be investigated from a feasibility, enforcement, policy and legislative perspective, beginning during the next closure period.

Comment: Nathan de Rozarieux commented that there needs to be a clear sense of direction and aim for the crawfish fishery, whether is to sustain the fishery, or to manage the decline. Nathan also commented that a seasonal closure only provides a 2% change in mortality rate and so more powerful management such as effort, permits or quota management need to be considered and discussed before this can be considered as management. He also commented that there should be further analysis of the data given there is now a 5-year time series to work with, and Colin from Cornwall IFCA can feed in further information.

Comment: Steve Parker commented that care needs to be taken not to implement a blanket area for mesh size increase, as this can have knock on effects for other fisheries in 7e.

Steve compared this to bass management measures which have led to an increase in bass stocks, but decrease in mackerel.

Question: Mat Mander asked whether there is a risk of not including the small section of the 'trouser leg' in the closure, where fishers may claim that they have caught crawfish in that area during the closure. Mat also asked whether the octopus, crab and lobster data has been broken down to port level, as the narrative from the octopus bloom seems to indicate that everyone has benefited from it, when the reality is that not many have and there has been negative impacts to a large portion of the static gear fishery.

Answer: Sarah advised that this portion is ICES Area 8, while the closure only applies to area 7. Most crawfish are caught close to shore, and so for ease of management, area 7 has been used for the closure. Regarding octopus data, Sarah suggested including links to more detailed data including at a port level that people can view if they wish to.

Comment: Mat emphasised that this higher level of detail is more widely available than just where people may be interested to look further into it.

Response: Sarah will put Mat's views forward to the relevant parties.

Agenda Item #5

Labelling & Traceability – Phillipa Carr

Phillipa Carr from the MMO compliance team delivered a presentation on labelling requirements for fish products and the importance of traceability in the supply chain, which can be viewed in the attached presentation.



Labelling
Updates_RFG.pdf

Question: Steve Parker asked how this will affect the average fisher, what are they meant to do other than the catch record? Advising that currently they land catch in fish boxes, with the name and PLN of the vessel, to the market and do not add labels or chits to the boxes.

Answer: Phillipa advised that everything landed should have an accompanying label for each 'lot' to ensure the information is passed to the next stage of the supply chain. Each box of the same species, caught in the same area, is considered as a lot and so would need a label or unique identifier along with the required information.

Question: Steve suggested that this would be difficult for trawlers with up to 18 different species to label each box and asked what happens with mixed boxes of fish. Steve also asked what the timeline with this is and suggested there needs to be clear and simple guidance on what is required.

Answer: Phillipa advised that there is [online guidance](#) available on this, including mixed boxes of fish which can be labelled but would need to meet specific criteria. The team are creating a poster and additional handouts for coastal staff to raise awareness of the requirements. There is no set timeline yet of when this needs to be complied with and MMO are currently in a more supportive phase.

Question: Mat Mander asked whether these requirements will have any impact on non-powered vessels as they can't meet some of the labelling criteria mentioned and present a risk to traceability.

Answer: Phillipa advised that these requirements currently only apply to commercially licensed fishing vessels.

Question: Mat asked whether non-powered vessels have been identified as a risk more widely in traceability, highlighting that there is a disconnect between achieving traceability and not addressing the same issues with non-powered vessels.

Response: Phillipa advised that the MMO are aware of this risk, but she is not part of a team working on this. The incentive of labelling is to ensure accurate information moves through the supply chain directly from the source. This would also support the changes in export requirements that are due in January 2026

Question: Steve Parker asked how the physical labels would reach the consumer if each stage of the supply chain must add additional labels which will get wet from the fish.

Answer: Phillipa advised that the labels need to be available for the next step in the chain so that they have accurate information to then pass onto the next stage. They will not need to keep the original labels, just the information.

Question: Steve asked why the information can't be taken from the electronic logbook or submitted electronically to the merchant.

Answer: Emily Theobald advised that the merchants don't have access to the catch data as it would be a breach of General Data Protection Regulation. Emily suggested that in an ideal world, the labels could be replaced with a QR code or barcode that is printed, advising that French, Dutch and Spanish boats already have high quality labelling on each box. There would need to be a technical infrastructure in place to support this. Emily suggested whether this could be something trialled on a small scale and asked whether Nathan de Rozarieux could add to.

Comment: Nathan de Rozarieux suggested that there should be funding to develop the catch recording app to add a mechanism to email this required information as a report to the chosen merchant or agent at the push of a button. This could then be imported onto the sales note system and then passed along the chain. Nathan commented that physical labelling is a step in the wrong direction.

Comment: Emily Theobald commented that from an MMO perspective, there would need to be some form of physical label with names and PLN so that officers are able to identify where it has come from.

Question: Nathan de Rozarieux asked whether a regulatory impact assessment has been carried out on this, suggesting that a case study should be conducted with local fisherman if there hasn't been. Nathan also asked what the parent regulation is or what has changed and is driving this. Nathan suggested that there be a de minimis exemption for inshore vessels to reduce the impacts on the fleet.

Response: Emily and Phillipa advised that these requirements are from the [control regulation](#) and have been required for a while, these are now being enforced to bring the labelling up to standards.

Question: Juliette Hatchman asked whether this was being driven by the EU, stating that some of her members have concerns with the incoming EU export requirement changes.

Answer: Phillipa advised that the labelling requirements are a separate issue that MMO are aware will support the EU changes.

Comment: Juliette requested that there should be an agenda item at a future RFG meeting for EU export changes.

Response: Anna MacLennan advised that the MMO IUU (illegal, unregulated and unreported) team have done some engagement already but are planning on doing further engagement in October.

Comment: Steve Parker reiterated that the information is already available in the catch recording app, there should be a way to automatically forward that information on.

Agenda Item #6

Quota Uptake Update – Jacob Bestwick & Katie James

Jacob Bestwick and Katie James gave an update on quota uptake and catch limits for ICES areas 7efg for the under and over 10m non-sector fleet, which can be viewed in the attached presentation.



SW Quota
presentation Septer

Comment: Steve Parker flagged that there hasn't been any mackerel this year inshore in Lyme Bay and so would like to see more traded with the Dutch pelagic vessels for other stocks.

Comment: Steve advised that skates and rays area 6/7 excluding d are an important stock and asked for assurance that we will be able to maintain a 10 tonne catch limit. Steve also flagged that it's important to recognise that gillnetters who can no longer target pollack will be adding effort to rays compared to previous years. Previous years can only show trends.

Response: Katie James advised that additional tonnage has been traded in, and the catch limit kept lower to ensure there is sufficient quota available to maintain the catch limit for the remainder of the year. Jacob added that there is potential to trade in additional quota if required. Katie added that there may be some quota coming back from the Quota Application Mechanism (QAM) where it hasn't been used.

Comment: Steve flagged that there are a variety of factors that affect gear type uptake of sole, such as closed seasons for scallops, vessels switching to beam trawling and other emerging fishing opportunities. This should be taken into consideration in predictions, rather than what quantities are caught, and when, compared to previous years.

Cancelled Agenda Item

MCA Updates – Harry Deans

The MCA is meeting with the main Federations today to discuss revising the Small Fishing Vessel Code.

MCA has also reached out to a group of fishermen who attend these forums to seek their views and suggestions on the Small Code and will present those to this meeting as well. At the time of writing (27 August 2025) only one response has been received. We still welcome views and suggestions at any time.

As talked about at the last meeting, some of the key areas for discussion will be:

Simplify chapters to ease identification of what apply to a person's vessel

Remove duplication with the Construction Standards;

Refer to vessels as pre or post 2007 to ease understanding;

Simplify Chapter 3 on Stability so requirements depending on fishing method are in one section each;

Reference now made to MGN503 as the single source of information on conduct of stability tests

Where vessels would need to demonstrate being fit for purpose, to bring these requirements into one section per Chapter, rather than spread through the Chapters;

Guidance on required standard for LSA and Fire fighting equipment now included as Annexes (as was previous the case in earlier Codes)

We now take operating history and equivalence into account when assessing freeboard;

We have a wide range of options for vessels for equivalence to achieve waterfreeing requirements

New Code will set out Radio equipment required for each Sea Area;

Fit for Purpose conditions to be accepted at subsequent inspections, subject to modifications and condition;

We are developing documents that will help owners pick the requirements applicable to them from the Code.

- There will be 8 guidance documents:
- Less than 7m Open vessel Built before 16/7/2007
- Less than 7m Open Vessel Built on or after 16/7/2007
- Less than 7m Decked Vessel Built before 16/7/2007
- Less than 7m Decked Vessel Built on or after 16/7/2007
- 7m – less than 15m Open vessel Built before 16/7/2007
- 7m – less than 15m Open Vessel Built on or after 16/7/2007
- 7m – less than 15m Decked Vessel Built before 16/7/2007
- 7m – less than 15m Decked Vessel Built on or after 16/7/2007

Anyone else with thoughts on how they'd like to see the code changed, can email fishing@mcga.gov.uk

Action Items Summary

	Task	Owner
1	Feedback that industry need to know Defra's starting position with regards to splitting opportunities for pollack quota between recreational and commercial sectors.	Helen Stevens
2	Discuss detail of Plymouth fisher's feedback with Ed Baker in relation to bluefin tuna licences.	Edward Kirby
3	Breakdown octopus, crab and lobster data by port to be made available through links on gov.uk or infographics. Raise the importance of this being made widely available with colleagues.	Sarah Bedingham
4	Ensure guidance and handouts on labelling requirements are in simple English are and made available to attendees and wider industry when complete.	Phillipa Carr

5	Pass on the comments relating to issues with labelling requirements to wider compliance team.	Phillipa Carr
6	Consider adding agenda item to next SW RFG meeting for IUU export requirement changes and advertise engagement opportunities planned for October 2025.	Anna MacLennan

Thank you for attending this Regional Fisheries Group meeting. If you would like to be added to the mailing list or contribute in any other way, please contact the MMO Regional Fisheries mailbox: regionalfisheriesgroups@marinemanagement.org.uk or find out more via the Regional Fisheries webpage: [Regional Fisheries Groups - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/regional-fisheries-groups).

Next Meeting

Date: TBC – approximately 3 months' time

Time: TBC

Location or Platform: MS Teams

Contacts

Team: RFG South West Lead – Anna MacLennan

Email: Anna.Maclennan@marinemanagement.org.uk

Number: +447584885023

Team: South West PMO – Emily Theobald

Email: emily.theobald@marinemanagement.org.uk

Team: Bluefin Tuna Commercial – Edward Kirby

Email: bft.commercial@marinemanagement.org.uk

Email: Edward.Kirby@defra.gov.uk

Team: Inshore Quota

Email: inshorequotamanager@marinemanagement.org.uk

Number: Katie James: 07747 638 655, Jacob Bestwick: 07469 443 840

Team: Maritime and Coastguard Agency – Harry Deans

Email: fishing@mcga.gov.uk