AGREED RECORD OF FISHERIES CONSULTATIONS BETWEEN THE UNITED KINGDOM, THE EUROPEAN UNION AND NORWAY FOR 2026

5 DECEMBER 2025

1 A United Kingdom Delegation headed by Mr Colin FAULKNER, a European Union Delegation headed by Ms Cristina RIBEIRO, and a Norwegian Delegation headed by Ms Ann Kristin WESTBERG met in the periods from 27th to 30th October in Oslo, 17th to 20th November in Edinburgh and 1st to 4th December in Brussels to consult on mutual fisheries relations including the management of shared stocks for 2026.

2 The Heads of Delegations agreed to recommend to their respective authorities the fishery arrangements for 2026 as outlined in this Agreed Record, including Annexes I to XI and Tables 1, 2 and 3.

3 The Delegations underlined their determination to cooperate, in their mutual interest, in securing continued responsible fisheries and ensuring the long-term sustainability and optimum utilisation of shared stocks.

4 The Delegations acknowledged the lack of progress in concluding a trilateral framework agreement, the aim of which is to provide the basis for their future cooperation and to ensure the long-term sustainability and optimum use of their shared stocks. The Delegations confirmed their ambition to conclude that agreement by the end of 2026.

5 The Delegations agreed that the scope of this Agreed Record should be the stocks occurring within the areas under the jurisdiction of all three Parties.

6 The Delegations noted that certain arrangements between the Parties, including but not limited to arrangements for access to waters, quota transfers, licencing of vessels and other conditions for fishing in the respective zones of fisheries jurisdiction, may be regulated by bilateral arrangements.

7 The Delegations agreed to exchange information relevant to stocks within the scope of this Agreed Record on a timely, efficient, and transparent basis: for example, information relating to quota transfers, access arrangements, catches, and any relevant management measures. The Delegations further noted the benefits of continued close collaboration and information exchange.

8 The Delegations agreed that management measures and sharing of stocks as per Table 1 are without prejudice to possible future arrangements between the Parties.

9 In that context, the Norwegian Delegation signalled their intention to invite the other Parties to consultations with a view to revisit and review the sharing keys for some of these stocks.

10 The Delegations agreed to hold an intersessional meeting in late May or early June 2026, the aim of which will be, amongst other things, to review progress on the actions set out in this Agreed Record. They agreed that they would use that opportunity to establish a TAC for sprat in ICES Division 3.a and Subarea 4.

11 The Delegations agreed that chairing of consultations will rotate on an annual basis, starting from 1 January of every year, until 31 December, and that the EU will exercise the role as chair for 2026, followed by Norway in 2027 and the UK in 2028. They agreed that meeting dates should be set well in advance, and no later than 30 days before the meeting, to allow for securing necessary meeting venues and for delegations to be able to make travel arrangements in due time before the meetings. In this regard the Delegations agreed to hold a meeting in early February 2026 to plan their activities for the year ahead.

12 The Delegations agreed that the chair will be responsible for ensuring that all Parties will be included in all communications with ICES, which arise out of this trilateral forum, on shared stocks.

13 JOINTLY MANAGED STOCKS

13.1 The Delegations agreed, as an ad hoc approach for 2026, to consider cod, haddock, herring, plaice, saithe and whiting to be jointly managed stocks. Each Party's share of each stock for 2026 is shown in Table 1.

13.2 The Delegations noted the importance of taking into account fishing patterns and the necessity of avoiding a choke effect that would lead to the premature closure of demersal fisheries, and/or increased unreported discarding, within the wider mixed demersal fisheries.

13.3 The Delegations acknowledged that, although all Parties have introduced legislation that prohibits most forms of discarding of fish, discards remain a serious problem and are contributing to the sub-optimal utilisation of fisheries resources.

13.4 The Delegations agreed to work towards improving exploitation patterns and reducing unwanted catches and discards using technical measures to improve the selectivity of fishing gear; closed seasons and areas; as well as any other appropriate measures. They acknowledged the usefulness of complementary technical measures to achieve those objectives.

13.5 The Delegations agreed to apply the inter-annual quota flexibility (IAF) schemes as set out in Annexes II and VI. For 2026, the IAF scheme will apply to haddock, herring, plaice, and whiting.

13.6 In light of the de minimis and high survivability exemptions contained in its landing obligation, the EU Delegation informed the UK Delegation and the Norwegian Delegation of its intention to continue in 2026 to adjust from the EU quotas the estimated amounts of the discards.

13.7 In light of the de minimis and high survivability exemptions contained in its landing obligation, the UK Delegation informed the EU Delegation and the Norwegian Delegation of its intention to continue in 2026 to adjust from the UK quotas the estimated amounts of the discards.

14 LONG-TERM MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

14.1 The Delegations reaffirmed their commitment to having long-term management strategies (LTMS) in place for jointly managed stocks. To that end, the Delegations agreed to develop, by the intersessional, a plan to achieving this commitment, involving ICES and

national institutions in the design. The timeframe under which this commitment shall be achieved will form part of the plan's development.

14.2 The Delegations noted the ICES response regarding a timeline to deliver a long-term management plan for saithe in Subareas 4 and 6 and in Division 3.a (North Sea, Rockall and West of Scotland, Skagerrak and Kattegat), and agreed that this work should proceed. This request is outlined in Annex IV.

15 COD

15.1 The Delegations noted the ICES advice for 2026 that, when the MSY approach and precautionary considerations are applied, the TAC for Northern Shelf cod should be 0 tonnes. The Delegations also noted the ICES advice that, when the MSY approach without precautionary considerations is applied to the Northwestern and Viking sub-stocks and when the MSY approach with precautionary considerations is applied to the Southern sub-stock catches in 2026 should be no more than 8670 tonnes, 3610 tonnes and 0 tonnes respectively. This adds up to no more than 12,280 tonnes for 2026.

15.2 The Delegations noted that ICES estimates that discards and BMS landings are at 18% of total catch (by weight) in 2024. ICES projects a discards rate of 17.2% of total catch (by weight) in 2025.

15.3 The Delegations noted the difficulties of translating that advice into the four TAC management areas also due to unknown levels of mixing between the sub-stocks.

15.4 The Delegations agreed that the quota allocation to Division 6.a should continue to be determined within this trilateral forum, as was the case in 2024 and 2025, noting that 6.a is part of the Northern Shelf cod advice. The Delegations recalled that in the 2024 Agreed Record they had agreed that they would seek to devise a methodology that better aligns ICES sub-stock based advice with effective TAC area management. They had noted that the allocation of quotas to each TAC area should form part of considerations to underpin the sustainable management of the stock in future years. The Delegations had noted that this approach would require further work, and therefore agreed that, as an interim and ad hoc approach for 2026, the quota allocation for Division 6.a would be based on the proportion of the TAC allocated to this area in 2024 and 2025.

15.5 Noting the ICES advice, and the urgency of the situation, the Delegations agreed that a multi-year approach was required to reduce fishing pressure, increase biomass and recover the sub-stocks to MSY levels as soon as possible. They agreed that such an approach required actions in both the short and longer term. In the short term, the Delegations agreed this approach would include new and expanded seasonal closures, updates to Real Time Closure (RTC) regimes and new restrictions on targeting cod in the Southern North Sea. In the longer-term, this would include further work to be led by the Northern Shelf Cod Management Working Group, continuing to work collaboratively with their respective industry stakeholders, under the direction of heads of Delegation.

15.6 On seasonal closures to protect spawning grounds, the EU Delegation informed the UK and Norwegian Delegations of two new closures in EU waters of Division 4.b and two expanded closures in EU waters of Division 3.a. The UK Delegation informed the EU and Norwegian Delegations of the creation of a new seasonal closure in the Foula Deeps and an expansion in size of the existing closure East of Fair Isle. These closures are situated in UK waters of Division 4.a and are detailed at rows 5b & 7 of Annex III. The Norwegian

Delegation informed the UK and EU Delegations that Norway will expand the period of closures of three existing areas in Norwegian waters. These new and expanded closures are listed in Annex III and will come into force from 1st January 2026.

15.7 On RTCs, the Delegations acknowledged that RTC regimes for juvenile gadoid stocks in their respective waters have been in place since 2010 and that, due to changes in stock condition since then, it would be appropriate to update them. Accordingly, the Delegations agreed that a revision of the catch trigger levels of stocks other than cod covered by the RTCs should be part of the overall review of the existing RTC regimes, as defined in the Terms of Reference of the Cod Management Working Group included in Annex V.

15.8 The EU Delegation informed the UK and Norwegian Delegations that, for the Eastern Channel (ICES Division 7.d), Southern North Sea (ICES Division 4.c) and central North Sea (ICES Division 4.b), the required proportion of cod in a sample, relative to the total of the four stocks, resulting in a reduction the juvenile-catch trigger level, will be lowered from 75% to 25%. This update will come into force 1st January 2026 and will apply through quarter 1.

15.9 The EU also informed that the size of the closures will increase from 50 nm^2 up to 225nm^2, except in Skagerrak (ICES Division 3.a), Eastern Channel (ICES Division 7.d) and Southern North Sea (ICES Division 4.c) where the size of the closures will increase up to 100 nm^2 to account for geographic considerations. This update will come into force 1st January 2026.

15.10 The UK Delegation informed the EU and Norwegian Delegations that in UK waters, alongside RTCs for juvenile gadoids, it also has an RTC regime in place for high aggregations of cod, under its current National Cod Avoidance Plan (NCAP). In connection, the UK informed the Delegations of their intention to update the trigger levels for RTCs for high aggregations of cod in Divisions 4.b and 4.c, from 80 to 60 cod per hour, and that this change will be in operation from 1st January 2026. The UK also noted its intention to mirror EU changes in their juvenile RTC regime, subject to consultation and legislative processes during 2026.

15.11 The Norwegian Delegation noted that their RTC regime allow closures of up to 500 nm^2 in the North Sea and up to 250 nm^2 in the Skagerrak, and that closures are triggered by an intermixture of juvenile cod, haddock, saithe and whiting larger than 15 % in number. Furthermore, the Norwegian Delegation informed the EU and UK Delegations that they would conduct public consultations with the aim of expanding the duration of closures from 14 to 21 days and amend the requirements on sampling in the Norwegian RTC regime from a two-sample system to a one-sample system to trigger closures for cod by the first half of 2026.

15.12 On restrictions in the Southern North Sea on targeting cod, the UK informed the EU and Norwegian Delegations that it would restrict catches for UK vessels in Division 4.b and 4.c to 250 tonnes. The EU informed the UK and Norwegian delegation that it would restrict catches for EU vessels in Divisions 4.b and 4.c to 1,500 tonnes. The Norwegian Delegation noted that current Norwegian management measures will limit Norwegian catches in Divisions 4.b and 4.c. The UK and EU Delegations also informed the Norwegian Delegation that catches in Division 7.d would be restricted to bycatch only.

15.13 On the Cod Management Working Group, the Delegations welcomed the report provided by the Working Group during the intersessional meeting of the Parties in June 2025. The

Delegations agreed to update the group's Terms of Reference so that by the intersessional meeting of the Parties in 2026, the group will have developed a longer-term plan for the joint management of Northern Shelf cod that establishes a clear evidence base for management improvements, including measures to reduce discarding. This plan will recommend additional actions to improve and update the current management measures, over and above those set out in this Agreed Record, including an overall revision of the existing RTC regimes, seasonal closures and gear selectivity measures. The updated Terms of Reference are set out in Annex V.

15.14 The Delegations noted three initiatives currently underway within ICES and other scientific institutions, the purpose of which is to better understand the spatial structure and dynamics of the stock. First, the 'Tiger Team', established by ICES to address immediate concerns with the understanding of stock dynamics; second, the joint request on the genetics of Northern Shelf cod sub-stocks (Annex VII); third, the GenDC project which will inform that joint request. They agreed that they would invite ICES representatives to the intersessional in 2026 to review the latest findings from these initiatives.

15.15 The Delegations agreed that they would review the outputs of these initiatives as part of the process of developing a joint request to ICES for a proposal for a Long-Term Management Strategy for cod. They further agreed that they would prioritise, in 2026, the development of such a proposal as part of the approach to be agreed with ICES for developing Long-Term Management Strategies set out in paragraph 14.

15.16 The Delegations agreed with respect to their work on monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) on the importance of continuing to promote a culture of compliance within their respective fisheries, and that work on MCS includes a particular focus on cod-related fisheries, aligned with the work of the Cod Management Working Group.

15.17 The Norwegian Delegation informed the EU and UK Delegations that three areas had been closed in the southeastern part of the Norwegian Economic Zone (NEZ) from 1 July to 31 December 2025 to protect juveniles and small cod. The Norwegian Institute of Marine Research evaluated the effect of the closed nursery areas in 2025. The evaluation indicates that the areas have a high density of juvenile fish and is a potential important nursery area. The areas can be sees as suitable for protective measures for juvenile cod. The intention is to continue the closures in 2026. In addition to the closure of nursery areas, the Norwegian Delegation informed that Real Time Closures can be triggered in the demersal trawl and Danish seine fishery in the NEZ, if the intermixture of juvenile cod, saithe, haddock, and whiting exceeds a certain limit. Additionally, the Norwegian Coast Guard operates so-called Precautionary areas to reduce catches of undersized fish. They also explained that if the intermixture of juveniles (including cod) is above the legal limit, vessels are obliged to change fishing ground. These measures are supported by the presence of the Norwegian Coast Guard in the North Sea.

15.18 The UK informed the EU and Norwegian Delegations that they have implemented offshore Marine Protected Areas in UK waters of Subarea 4 and Division 6.a, and that fisheries management measures for offshore MPAs in Scottish waters came into force in October 2025. These measures are expected to afford additional protections to fish stocks, including Northern Shelf cod.

15.19 The UK Delegation also informed the EU and Norwegian Delegations that, on 20 November 2025, a public consultation was commenced on the development of a Fisheries Management Plan (FMP) for Northern Shelf cod, the intention of which is to supersede the current NCAP. The plan sets out actions intended to support the delivery of sustainable fisheries management within UK waters, including a review of existing technical measures, these are intended to be complimentary to the ongoing work of the three Parties

in this trilateral forum. The consultation process will run until 11 March 2026, and the UK encouraged the EU and Norway to participate in that process. The UK committed to updating the EU and Norwegian Delegations on progress with the FMP at the 2026 intersessional meeting.

15.20 The EU Delegation informed the UK and Norwegian Delegations that, it intends to continue in 2026 the cod avoidance measures introduced in 2020 and 2021, which may be revised in light of the outcomes of the Cod Management Working Group's work and any further agreement among the parties. These measures include specific selectivity measures, area closures for protection of spawning aggregations of cod as well as the possibility for member states to introduce National Cod Avoidance Plans. In addition, the EU explained that specific actions on control have been undertaken since 2020 including additional efforts on last haul evaluations and the triggering of real time closures and the procedures for the monitoring of these closures. The EU informed the delegations of the implementation of sampling procedures and the sampling results to establish real time closures, in particular with regards to cod.

15.21 Noting the measures set out above which aim to bring about sustainable management of the stock, and following considerations of the scenarios provided by ICES for each sub-stock, the Delegations agreed to set a TAC for the whole Northern Shelf cod stock of 14,034 tonnes. This figure reflects the headline advice for the Southern sub-stock, and the ICES FMSY scenarios for the Northwestern and Viking sub-stocks. This means that the TAC for Division 6.a should be 625 tonnes, the TAC for Subarea 4 11,164 tonnes, the TAC for Skagerrak (Subdivision 20) 1,596 tonnes, and the TAC for Division 7.d, 650 tonnes.

16 HADDOCK

16.1 The Delegations noted that according to the ICES MSY approach catches in 2026 should be no more than 108,301 tonnes. This represents a decrease of 3.7% in the advice compared to 2025. ICES estimates that discards, BMS landings and industrial bycatch are at 23.7% of total catch (by weight) in 2024. ICES projects a combined discards and industrial bycatch rate of 20.6% of total catch (by weight) in 2025.

16.2 The Delegations agreed to a set a TAC for 2026 of 108,301 tonnes. This is a decrease of 3.7% compared to 2025.

16.3 The Delegations agreed that the resulting TAC for Subarea 4 (85.26%) is 92,337 tonnes, the TAC for Subdivision 20 (5.24%) is 5,675 tonnes and the TAC for Division 6.a (9.50%) is 10,289 tonnes.

17 HERRING

17.1 The Delegations recalled that a joint Working Group had delivered in 2022 an extensive report on herring fisheries in the North Sea, Skagerrak, Kattegat, and eastern English Channel. The report presented a comprehensive overview of the development of herring distribution, fisheries, management approaches, and challenges.

17.2 The Delegations recalled their agreement that NSAS herring be managed under a single total allowable catch (TAC) limit, replacing the current multi-TAC management model. They recalled that Delegations have met multiple times since April 2023 to develop a new management regime aimed at simplifying the framework and addressing sustainability challenges for herring fisheries in ICES Subarea 4 and Divisions 3.a and 7.d.

17.3 Having regard to the above, the conclusions of the 2022 Working Group report and the objectives of the long-term management strategy, the Delegations agreed to manage NSAS herring in accordance with the arrangements set out below.

17.4 In addition to this revised management regime the Delegations noted that the Parties may, where appropriate, consider bilateral and unilateral arrangements to support the sustainable exploitation and management of herring in ICES Subarea 4 and Divisions 3.a and 7.d. Such arrangements may include access to waters, catch restrictions, technical measures, and other management measures.

17.5 The Delegations agreed to use a single TAC to manage NSAS herring in ICES Subarea 4 and Divisions 3.a and 7.d, replacing the former management approach based on A, B, C and D fleet TACs. They further agreed that the single TAC would be shared between them using a single allocation key per Party, as set out in Table 1, and that all herring catches would be counted against the quotas of the respective Parties.

17.6 The Delegations agreed to exchange more detailed yearly catch statistics on North Sea herring with the objective of distinguishing between catches of adult herring and juvenile herring, and that they would agree the format and the breakdown of those statistics by the 2026 intersessional meeting.

17.7 The Delegations noted the importance of minimising catches of juvenile herring in all fisheries as shown by the ICES MSE advice (ICES, 2025). They agreed that the sustainable management of juvenile bycatches would be the responsibility of each Party and transparent, and that each Party would decide how to manage bycatches within their internal allocation to keep juvenile fishing mortality low.

17.8 The Delegations underscored the importance of a robust, efficient and transparent system of Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS) to ensure accurate reporting of herring catches, including herring bycatches. They recognised the need to cooperate to further improve MCS of management measures to ensure compliance and a correct accounting of all catches and landings of North Sea herring.

17.9 The Delegations referred to the 'Stand-Alone Agreement' signed in November 2022 (Agreed Record of Conclusions of Fisheries Consultations between Norway, the EU, the Faroe Islands, Greenland, Iceland and the UK on Control Measures for Pelagic Stocks in the Northeast Atlantic) where the Parties agreed to apply the management and control measures in the Agreed Record (including Annexes I-V) at the latest from 1 January 2026.

17.10 The Delegations recalled that the Stand-Alone Agreement also established a Coastal State MCS Working Group 2023-2024 with 10 tasks as outlined in Annex VI of that agreement. The Delegations noted the report of the Coastal States MCS Working Group.

17.11 The Delegations noted the ongoing consultations to update the Stand-Alone Agreement with further control measures.

17.12 The Delegations stressed the importance of timely and effective implementation of the control measures concluded within the Stand-Alone Agreement and the importance of the timely conclusion of ongoing consultations to update those Agreed Records with further control measures for the pelagic stocks.

17.13 The Delegations agreed that the provisions of the Stand-Alone Agreement also applied to North Sea herring, as well as any revisions thereof.

17.14 The Delegations recognised the importance of effective controls of accurate weighing of bycatches of herring in the North Sea. The Delegations noted the ongoing work of the

Parties to update the Stand-Alone Agreement, including additional control and sampling measures for industrial fisheries.

17.15 The Delegations referred to the 2026-2027 workplan for the North Sea MCS Working Group set out in Annex IX of this Agreed Record. They agreed that, taking note of the measures to be implemented under the Stand-Alone Agreement, that Working Group would exchange experience and recommend best practice and MCS methodologies to control accurate weighing and catch registration of bycatches of the jointly managed stocks. They further agreed that the Working Group may also facilitate observer missions to support this task and that duplication of effort should be avoided between the work of the Coastal State MCS Working Group on pelagic control and of the North Sea MCS Working Group. They also noted that the measures established by the Stand-Alone Agreement should be the focus of the Coastal State MCS Working Group.

17.16 The Delegations agreed a long-term management strategy for NSAS herring, set out in Annex VI. They further agreed to submit a special request to ICES in early 2026 to request that ICES identifies, within the first year of the adoption of the LTMS, the exceptional circumstances under which managers should consider reviewing and/or suspending the LTMS. The Delegations further committed to request that ICES consult with managers if such circumstances are triggered, in which case the Parties would agree next steps.

17.17 The Delegations noted that ICES advised that, when the LTMS with TAC constraint is applied, catches of NSAS Herring in 2026 in the North Sea, Skagerrak and Kattegat, and eastern English Channel should be no more than 328,566 tonnes. This represents a decrease of 20% in the advice compared to 2025.

17.18 The Delegations agreed to establish a TAC for 2026 in ICES Subarea 4 (North Sea), Divisions 3.a (Skagerrak and Kattegat) and Division 7.d (eastern English Channel) of 328,566 tonnes.

17.19 The Delegations noted that the fishery for NSAS herring includes individuals from the Western Baltic spring spawning (WBSS) herring stock, which ICES estimates to be below Blim and has since 2019 been subject to zero-catch advice. The Delegations further noted that ICES have advised since 2023 that catches of WBSS herring in the NSAS herring fishery in Division 3.a and the eastern part of Divisions 4.a and 4.b be avoided to support the effective recovery of the WBSS herring stock. The catches have been relatively stable the last 10 years. The Delegations recalled that the EU and Norway have, since 2022, applied catch restrictions in Division 3.a to limit catches of WBSS herring resulting in a very low estimated fishing mortality the last three years. They noted that further measures are required in the North Sea, where the majority of WBSS herring catches now occur.

17.20 The Norwegian Delegation informed the EU and the UK Delegations that Norway will conduct during the first half of 2026 a public consultation with a view to establishing in 2026 spatial temporal management measures to reduce catches of WBSS herring and juvenile NSAS herring in the relevant areas of Norwegian waters of Divisions 4.a and 4.b. Those measures will take into account the findings of the 2022 joint Working Group report and other relevant scientific evidence. The Norwegian Delegation will notify the EU and the UK of the measures they will implement once finalised.

17.21 The UK and EU Delegations informed Norway of their agreement to continue, until 31 December 2035, their bilateral arrangement allowing for 50% of the EU quotas allocated to HER/03A. to be fished in UK waters of Subarea 4, without prejudice to agreement between the Parties to extend this arrangement in future years. They informed the Norwegian Delegation that this arrangement would be assessed in the course of 2030 to ensure that the measure is not undermining the sustainability of the North Sea herring

stock. They also noted that they would closely monitor the utilisation of that flexibility to ensure compliance with catch limits, and agreed to engage in rapid consultations with one another in the event of potential non-compliance.

17.22 The UK and Norwegian Delegations informed the EU Delegation of the terms of their bilateral arrangement for 2026 between the UK and Norway. That arrangement sets out that, further to the allocations set out in Table 1, Norway will transfer 0.2% points of its North Sea herring share to the UK. In return, the UK will grant Norway annual access to the UK EEZ of ICES Subarea 4 for the duration of the arrangement set out in this Agreed Record on a single TAC management model for North Sea herring. That access tonnage would be set at 1.85% of the TAC for the year in which access is being granted. This access arrangement is in addition to an annual fixed access for Norway to fish 20,000 tonnes of North Sea herring in the UK EEZ of ICES Subarea 4 which will last for the same duration.

17.23 The Delegations noted the non-fisheries consideration included in the annual ICES advice sheet concerning the unknown impact of other anthropogenic activities on spawning habitats, an element present in ICES advice since 2020. The Delegations agreed to engage with ICES in 2026 to ascertain how to develop the necessary knowledge to assess these impacts and consider how it could inform future management.

18 PLAICE

18.1 The Delegations noted that according to the ICES MSY approach catches of plaice in Subarea 4 and Subdivision 20 in 2026 should be no more than 163,951 tonnes. This represents a decrease of 7.2% in the projected catches of plaice in Subarea 4 and Subdivision 20 compared to 2025. ICES estimates that discards and BMS landings are at 55.2% of total catch (by weight) in 2024, and ICES projects discard rates of 51.7% of total catch (by weight) in 2025.

18.2 The Delegations agreed to establish a TAC for 2026 in ICES Subarea 4 (North Sea) and Subdivision 20 (Skagerrak) of 163,951 tonnes. This is a decrease of 7.2%% compared to 2025.

18.3 The Delegations agreed that the resulting TAC for Subarea 4 is 144,605 tonnes (88.20%) and the TAC for Subdivision 20 is 19,346 tonnes (11.80%).

19 SAITHE

19.1 The Delegations noted that according to the ICES MSY approach, catches in 2026 should be no more than 60,167 tonnes. This represents a decrease of 24% compared to the advice for 2025. ICES estimates that discards and BMS landings are at 7.4% of total catch (by weight) in 2024. ICES projects discard rates of 5.5% of total catch (by weight) in 2025.

19.2 The Delegations agreed to establish a TAC for 2026 in ICES Subareas 4 (North Sea) and 6 (Rockall and West of Scotland), and Division 3.a (Skagerrak and Kattegat) of 59,661 tonnes. This is a decrease of 25% compared to the TAC for 2025.

19.3 The Delegations agreed that the resulting TAC for Subarea 4 and Division 3.a is 54,053 tonnes (90.60%), and the TAC for Subarea 6.a is 5,608 tonnes (9.40%).

20 WHITING

20.1 The Delegations noted that according to the ICES MSY approach catches in 2026 should be no more than 198,609 tonnes. This represents an increase of 5.6% compared to the advice for 2025. ICES estimates that discards, BMS landings and industrial bycatch are

at 62.1% of total catch (by weight) in 2024. ICES projects a combined discards and industrial bycatch rate of 41.2% of total catch (by weight) in 2025.

20.2 The resulting TAC for Subarea 4 is 159,344 tonnes (80.23%), and the TAC for Division 7.d is 39,265 tonnes (19.77%).

21 OTHER SHARED STOCKS (NOT JOINTLY MANAGED)

21.1 The Delegations recalled that they had agreed during the fisheries consultations for 2021 that there are several stocks not covered in Table 1 that, based on their migration patterns, are shared stocks and consequently should be jointly managed in order to better ensure their long-term sustainable management.

21.2 The Delegations recalled that during the fisheries consultations for 2022 they had established 2 Working Groups of experts to collect and collate data on, firstly, the distribution of hake in the Greater North Sea, Celtic Seas, the Northern Bay of Biscay and adjacent waters, and, secondly, the distribution of anglerfish in Subareas 4 and 6 and in Division 3.a. The Delegations noted that both Working Groups had completed their work in the course of 2025, and both reports were now publicly available. They agreed to meet by the intersessional in 2026 to start discussions about all aspects of joint management of anglerfish and hake, including, but not limited to, sharing.

22 CATCH INFORMATION

22.1 Catch information was submitted by all Parties and is included in Table 2 and Table 3.

23 MONITORING, CONTROL AND SURVEILLANCE (MCS) MEASURES FOR JOINT STOCKS

23.1 The Delegations agreed that comprehensive management regimes require efficient and trustworthy MCS measures, and that strategic and operative MCS cooperation between the inspections services of the Parties is a prerequisite to continuously improving compliance and achieving a level playing field. Hence, the Delegations welcomed initiatives to improve dialogue and exchange experience between the inspection services to increase the general understanding of the Parties´ MCS regimes.

23.2 The Delegations referred to the decision in 2018 by the EU and Norway to establish a Working Group on MCS of fisheries on joint stocks in the North Sea. The Delegations noted that the Working Group delivered its final report in June 2024 and that the report was presented during the annual consultations on 5 November 2024 in Brussels. The Working Group was able to recommend best practice in several areas.

23.3 The Delegations referred to the commitment in the 2025 Agreed Record of Fisheries Consultations between Norway, EU and the UK to develop a new Terms of Reference for a Working Group on MCS of fisheries on joint stocks in the North Sea.

23.4 The Delegations agreed to apply the Terms of Reference for the North Sea MCS Working Group for 2026-2027 as set out in Annex VIII. The Delegations agreed to the work plan outlined in Annex IX. The Delegations agreed to have an online planning meeting prior to the first meeting of the Working Group by the end of quarter one in 2026. The Delegations agreed that the location of the first meeting would be in the UK.

23.5 The Delegations referred to paragraph 17.13 in which the Delegations agreed that the Stand-Alone Agreement for control measures for pelagic stocks applies also to North Sea herring, as well as any revisions thereof.

24 ELECTRONIC EXCHANGE OF DATA

24.1 The Delegations noted the decision by the North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC) to implement and set into production the new Electronic Reporting System (ERS) based on the United Nations Fisheries Language for Universal Exchange (UN/FLUX standard) on 15th January 2024. This date marked the start of the two-year transition period wherein the remaining Contracting Parties shall test and implement the new ERS data exchange system based on the UN/FLUX standard. Furthermore, the Delegations noted that the bilateral agreements on exchange of electronic vessel positions data between the EU and Norway and between Norway and the UK have been revised and completed to facilitate exchange of data based on UN/FLUX standard.

24.2 The Delegations agreed to continue to make revisions of the current agreements on bilateral electronic exchange of data between the Parties, including fishing activities (ERS) and notifications and authorisations data. The Delegations noted that the discussions and work had been intensified by the Parties in 2025 recognising the technical challenges that need to be overcome.

24.3 Furthermore, the Delegations noted the progress made at a technical level to develop a template (i.e. common principles) for an electronic notification and authorisation scheme based on the UN/FLUX standard with the intention to establish bilateral data exchanges, as appropriate. They also noted the ongoing technical work on fishing activities (ERS) data based on the UN/FLUX standard and agreed to continue the development in a trilateral setting to establish a template (i.e. common principles) with the intention to establish bilateral data exchanges, as appropriate.

24.4 The Delegations noted the important progress made in the Working Group on the electronic exchange of data following the Terms of Reference in Annex X of the Trilateral Agreed Record for 2025. The Delegations agreed to seek suitable arrangements within the scope of the Working Group on electronic exchange of data as outlined in Annex X. The work plan for the Working Group on electronic exchange of data can be found in Annex XI. The parties noted the implementation of Vessel Position data over FLUX bilaterally between the EU and Norway and the UK and Norway has been completed.

24.5 The UK hosted the first Working Group meeting of 2025 in Scotland in April, Norway hosted the second meeting in Bergen in June, and the EU hosted the third meeting in Brussels in October. The UK will host the next meeting in York in 2026.

5 December 2025

For the United Kingdom Delegation

Colin FAULKNER

For the European Union Delegation

Cristina RIBEIRO

For the Norwegian Delegation

Ann Kristin WESTBERG

TABLE 1

2026 QUOTAS FOR JOINTLY MANAGED SHARED STOCKS IN THE NORTH SEA

Species	ICES Area	TAC	Sharing[1]					
			Norway		EU		UK	
			%	Tonnes	%	Tonnes	%	Tonnes
Cod	4	11,164	17.00	1,898	35.69	3,984	47.31	5,282
Haddock	4	92,337	23.00	21,237	12.19	11,256	64.81	59,844
Saithe	4, 3.a	54,053	52.00	28,108	35.52	19,199	12.48	6,746
Whiting	4	159,344	10.00	15,934	23.82	37,956	66.18	105,454
Plaice	4	144,605	7.00	10,122	66.53	96,206	26.47	38,277
Herring	4, 7.d, 3.a	328,566	27.70	91,013	53.00	174,140	19.30	63,413

[1] Tonnages are calculated on the basis of the above shares to two decimal places.

TABLE 2

2024 CATCH STATISTICS FOR JOINTLY MANAGED SHARED STOCKS IN THE NORTH SEA[2]

Species	ICES area	EU catches[3]				Norway catches[4]				UK catches[5]			
		Fisheries jurisdiction			Total	Fisheries jurisdiction			Total	Fisheries jurisdiction			Total
		EU	Norway	UK		EU	Norway	UK		EU	Norway	UK	
Cod	4	790	4,235	811	5,836	7	2,082	1,467	3,556	15	1,611	11,341	12,967
Haddock	4	2,567	736	2,238	5,541	10	1,708	630	2,348	86	3,567	30,094	33,747
Saithe	4, 3.a	1,172	6,516	9,854	17,541	49	19,149	8,026	27,224	0	1,245	6,998	8,243
Whiting	4	1,514	191	1,130	2,835	6	273	35	314	268	579	8,862	9,709
Plaice	4	8,207	1,367	1,040	10,613	1	32	5	38	2,641	396	966	4,003
Herring	4, 7.d	29,736	493	212,444	242,673	277	117,898	19,982	138,157	392	-	101,833	102,225

[2] Some figures may not add up due to rounding.
[3] Aggregated catch data based on landed weight.
[4] Landing notes.
[5] Landing declarations.

TABLE 3

2025 PROVISIONAL CATCH STATISTICS FOR JOINTLY MANAGED SHARED STOCKS IN THE NORTH SEA[6]

Species	ICES area	EU catches[7]				Norway catches[8]				UK catches[9]			
		Fisheries jurisdiction			Total	Fisheries jurisdiction			Total	Fisheries jurisdiction			Total
		EU	Norway	UK		EU	Norway	UK		EU	Norway	UK	
Cod	4	405	2,434	796	3,634	17	1,310	638	1,983	6	1,088	7,248	8,343
Haddock	4	2,470	769	1,431	4,670	57	1,188	663	1,908	120	3,417	25,640	29,177
Saithe	4, 3.a	988	4,568	9,055	14,610	146	16,966	15,543	32,656	0	1,841	8,058	9,899
Whiting	4	1,272	150	813	2,235	259	133	34	425	141	497	7,656	8,294
Plaice	4	6,508	324	500	7,332	1	29	-	30	1,222	67	519	1,808
Herring	4, 7.d	2,646	493	159,678	162,817	376	100,150	16,074	116,600	4		75,216	75,220

[6] Some figures may not add up due to rounding.
[7] Aggregated catch data based on landed weight – January – 31 October.
[8] Landing notes – January – 31 October.
[9] Landing declarations – January – 31 October.

ANNEX I

CONDITIONS FOR FISHERIES BY THE PARTIES IN 2026

I. JOINT STOCKS

1. The Total Allowable Catches (TACs) for the stocks mentioned in Table 1 for 2026 shall be as indicated in that table. If ICES make new scientific recommendations, the Parties will review these TACs.

2. The TACs referred to in paragraph 1 shall be divided between the Parties as indicated in Table 1.

3. Each Party shall inform the other Parties of allocations granted to a third country for fishing of the stocks referred to in Table 1.

4. The Parties shall supply each other with monthly catch statistics for fishing on the stocks referred to in Table 1 by their own vessels. Communication of these statistics for the preceding month shall take place at the latest on the last day of each month.

II. FISHERY REGULATIONS

1. The Parties will inform each other of their respective fishery regulations applicable in the North Sea.

2. A Party intending to introduce or amend fishery regulations applicable to vessels of the other Parties shall duly inform the other Parties of such intentions.

ANNEX II

INTER-ANNUAL QUOTA FLEXIBILITY

The inter-annual quota flexibility scheme applicable to the jointly-managed stocks discussed during these consultations, except herring[10], shall be terminated if:

- the spawning stock biomass is estimated to be below the precautionary reference point B_{pa} in the TAC year and the fishing mortality is estimated to be above the precautionary reference point F_{pa} in the intermediate year; or

- the SSB is estimated to be below B_{pa} in both the TAC year and the year thereafter.

To note, the TAC year is the year for which the agreed TAC applies, and the intermediate year is the year prior to the TAC year.

OPERATION OF THE SCHEME FOR ALL JOINTLY MANAGED STOCKS

Each Party may transfer unutilised quota from the TAC year to be caught in the following year. Each Party may transfer up to 10% of its total quota allocation. This quantity cannot be transferred further in subsequent years.

Each Party may authorise fishing by its vessels beyond its total quota allocation for the TAC year by up to 10%. The quantity fished beyond the allocated quota shall be deducted from the Party's allocation for the year after the TAC year.

The Delegations agreed that in order to ensure transparency in the operation of inter-annual quota flexibility, more detailed information on catch utilisation shall be exchanged.

[10] For herring, see Annex VI

ANNEX III

SEASONAL AREA CLOSURES TO PROTECT SPAWNING COD

The following areas in the table below will be closed for all gears excluding pelagic gears (purse seine and trawl), for the identified time period:

Time Limited Closures				
No	**Area Name**	**Coordinates**	**Time period**	**Additional Comment**
1	Stanhope ground	60° 25N - 001° 45E 60° 25N - 002° 00E 60° 10N - 002° 00E 60° 10N - 001° 45E	01 January to 30 April	
2	Long Hole	59º 07.35N - 0º 31.04W 59º 03.60N - 0º 22.25W 58º 59.35N - 0º 17.85W 58º 56.00N - 0º 11.01W 58º 56.60N - 0º 08.85W 58º 59.86N - 0º 15.65W 59º 03.50N - 0º 20.00W 59º 08.15N - 0º 29.07W	01 January to 31 March	
3	Coral edge	58º 51.70N - 03º 26.70E 58º 40.66N - 03º 34.60E 58º 24 00N - 03º 12.40E 58º 24 00N - 02º 55.00E 58º 35 65N - 02º 56.30E	01 December to 28 February	
4	Papa Bank	59º 56N - 03º 08W 59º 56N - 02º 45W 59º 35N - 03º 15W 59º 35N - 03º 35W	01 January to 15 March	
5a	Foula Deeps	60º 17.5N - 01º 45W 60º 11.0N - 01º 45W 60º 11.0N - 02º 10W 60º 20.0N - 02º 00W 60º 20.0N - 01º 50W	01 November to 31 December	
5b	Foula Deeps	60 º 21 N 02 º 05W 60 º 22N 02 º 27W 60 º 06N 02 º 27W 60 º 06N 02 º 05W	01 January to 15 March	
6	Egersund Bank	58º 07.40N - 04º 33.0E 57º 53.00N - 05º 12.0E 57º 40.00N - 05º 10.9E 57º 57.90N - 04º 31.9E	01 December to 31 March	(10 x 25 nm)

Time Limited Closures				
No	**Area Name**	**Coordinates**	**Time period**	**Additional Comment**
7	East of Fair Isle	59º 40N - 01º 23W 59º 40N - 01º 13W 59º 30N - 01º 20W 59 º 00N 01 º 20W 59 º 00N 01 º 40W 59º 10N - 01º 40W 59º 10N - 01º 28W 59º 30N - 01º 28W 59 º 40N 01 º 23W	01 January to 15 March	
8	West Bank	57º 15N - 05º 01E 56º 56N - 05º 00E 56º 56N - 06º 20E 57º 15N - 06º 20E	01 January to 15 March	(18 x 4 nm)
9	Revet	57º 28.43N - 08º 05.66E 57º 27.44N - 08º 07.20E 57º 51.77N - 09º 26.33E 57º 52.88N - 09º 25.00E	01 January to 15 March	(1.5 x 49 nm)
10	Rabarberen	57º 47.00N - 11º 04.00E 57º 43.00N - 11º 04.00E 57º 43.00N - 11º 09.00E 57º 47.00N – 11º 09.00E	01 January to 15 March	East of Skagen (2.7x4 nm)
11	Krogbund	56 º56N - 006 º25E 56 º47N - 006 º25E 56 º47N - 006 º55E 56°56N - 006°55E	1 January to 31 March	
12	Lille Fiskerbanke	56 º50N - 006 º08E 56 º50N - 005 º52E 56 º38N - 005 º52E 56 º38N - 006 º08E	1 January to 31 March	

JOINT REQUEST TO ICES REGARDING A LONG-TERM MANAGEMENT FOR SAITHE

Request from	Joint EU/Norway/UK request
Committee making the request	
Contact within organisation	Colin Faulkner (Colin.Faulkner@defra.gov.uk)
Content contact person	
Request announced	
Request received	
Outcome of request required by client	An evaluation report describing the performance of a set of Harvest Control Rules described in the request below. The outcome of this request will be the basis for making an informed choice regarding an agreed Long Term Management Strategy for SAITHE IN SUBAREAS 4 AND 6, AND IN DIVISION 3.a (North Sea, Rockall and West of Scotland, Skagerrak and Kattegat).
Request code (client)	
Request code (ICES)	[completed by ICES]
Details of request	

Request from Norway, UK and EU regarding a long-term management strategy for saithe

The Parties will formally consult on implementation of a long-term management strategy for saithe in Subareas 4, 6 and Division 3a after ICES evaluates the strategy consisting of the following elements:

Objective

The Parties agree to manage fishing opportunities, based on a fishing pressure that maximises sustainable yield from the stock given additional elements regarding stability, the use of a biomass buffer and while being consistent with a precautionary approach.

The following describes a range of management measures that will impact the stock and the fishery to a varying degree.

1. The Harvest control rule (HCR)

$$F = F_{target} \cdot \frac{SSB}{B_{trigger}} \qquad SSB < B_{trigger}$$

$$F = \frac{F_{target}}{SF}\left(1 - \frac{SSB}{B_{trigger}}(1 - SF)\right) \qquad B_{trigger} \leq SSB \leq B_{high}$$

$$TAC\ held\ constant\ at\ that\ obtained\ at\ B_{high} \qquad SSB > B_{high}$$

The second equation introduces the Stability Factor (SF). When SSB ≥ $B_{trigger}$ SF=1 corresponds to a constant F=F_{target}, while SF<1 corresponds to a linear reduction in F with increasing SSB. The SF<1 creates a limitation on F which results in the F decreasing with increasing SSB in order to provide a more stable catch. The corresponding TAC would increase and reach a maximum before starting to decline. This maximum is defined as B_{high} and TAC should be kept constant for SSB above that level.

The Parties want to compare the performance of sets of HCRs defined by varying the parameters $B_{trigger}$, F_{target} and SF. For the HCRs with SF=1 the performance should also be explored with the traditional TAC stability clause added (limiting the TAC change to no more than 25% up or 20% down compared to the previous year's TAC advice (without the stability constraint) as long as the stock is above $B_{trigger}$). The difference between basing the stability constraint on the previous year's TAC advice with and without the stability constraint should be investigated.

2. Varying the parameters in the HCR

a) Setting $B_{trigger}$ to 1.0, 1.2, 1.4 and 1.6 times the ICES MSY $B_{trigger}$

b) For each of these, estimate an F_{target} (conditional on the choice of $B_{trigger}$) that maximises long-term yield and an F_{target} that produces 95% of the conditional maximum long-term yield

c) For each of the $B_{trigger}$ and F_{target} pairs above set SF=1, 0.9, 0.8 and 0.7.

Parameters		Sets
$B_{trigger}$	1.0, 1.2, 1.4 and 1.6 times the ICES MSY $B_{trigger}$	4
F_{target}	"Maximum" F_{target} and F_{target} producing 95 % of maximum yield	2
SF	1, 0.9, 0.8, 0.7	4

3. Banking and borrowing

The Parties recognises that banking and borrowing is difficult to simulate. The Parties will ask ICES to check if a worst-case scenario of banking and borrowing when the stock is above $B_{trigger}$ still can be considered precautionary following the approach in WKNSMSE 2019.

Evaluation

ICES is requested to evaluate the performance of the described management measures and to what degree they contribute to meeting the stated objectives.

ICES is asked to tabulate the long-term yield, long term SSB, inter annual TAC variability, the fraction of years with SSB below $B_{trigger}$ and the risk of SSB falling below B_{lim}, for the range of combinations described above.

ICES is in addition requested to evaluate the risks and potential loss in yield by applying the 25%/20% stability clause.

Additional information For background information, the impact of changing the exploitation pattern towards older fish in steps of 0.5, 1.0 and 1.5 years should be explored for a few HCR sets to answer the question: “How much may a change in exploitation pattern result in increased yield?”. This task is not part of the regular evaluation of the HCR and is instead an analysis that can be used as basis for a potential future decision to improve on the exploitation pattern.	
Intended use of the request output	The evaluation report will facilitate the comparison of different choices regarding HCR’s and additional elements.
Planning ICES	
Request (budget) accepted	[completed by ICES]
ICES contact person	
WG(s) involved	
Preparation timing	[completed by ICES]
Review group	[completed by ICES]
Advice drafting group	[completed by ICES]
ACOM Web-conference	[completed by ICES]
Release date	

ANNEX V

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR A WORKING GROUP ON THE TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT OF NORTHERN SHELF COD (GADUS MORHUA) IN SUBAREA 4, DIVISIONS 6.A AND 7.D, AND SUBDIVISION 20 (NORTH SEA, WEST OF SCOTLAND, EASTERN ENGLISH CHANNEL, AND SKAGERRAK)

The objective of the working group is to provide an overview of the current spatial, seasonal, and technical measures that promotes the sustainable management of the Northern Shelf cod stock and to identify the potential effects of such measures. This will include a focus on possible improvements or modifications to such measures that could provide additional protection to the sub-stocks identified by ICES and that will reduce discarding. These measures should be developed with due regard to the level of mixing between the sub-stocks.

The Northern Shelf Cod Management Working Group should:

1. Exchange experiences and work collaboratively to build a shared understanding of existing management across the area.

2. Produce a shared report which details existing management measures with a focus on operational and technical measures, in a format which is clear and transparent to all parties. This report shall also include a shared understanding of where and when Northern Shelf cod are caught, including historic catches, and by which fisheries and country. The report should be presented to the three parties by February 2025.

3. Identify evidence gaps which, if filled, could provide necessary evidence to support the development of management measures.

4. Use the above report to identify the potential effects of existing measures such as:

    a. Spatial measures, including real-time closures
    b. Seasonal closures
    c. Gear selectivity measures
    d. Reporting requirements.

5. During 2026, the Working Group should complete:

    a. outstanding analytical tasks, specifically effort assessments for fleet segments
    b. a review of the existing RTC regimes
    c. a review of other spatial measures, including seasonal closures
    d. a review of gear selectivity measures.

    Actions a, b and c shall be delivered at the intersessional meeting. By the end of 2026, the group shall aim to complete all above actions and present suggested improvements to the existing measures for Parties to consider implementing.

6. Develop a longer-term plan for the joint management of Northern Shelf cod that incorporates the Working Group's findings above and establishes a clear, evidence-based pathway for management improvements, such as reduced discarding. The plan shall incorporate the following:

    a. actions Parties agreed to undertake in 2026;

b. identification of joint aims and milestones;
c. expected scientific outputs and/or timelines for further scientific requests;
d. each Party's timeline for implementation of improvements to existing measures, as outlined above;
e. an overview of future measures individual Parties plan to implement which are expected to promote sustainable cod management, including measures to reduce discarding;
f. actions required to progress an LTMS for cod;
g. methods to monitor and evaluate whether the plan is working.

The Working Group shall present the plan to the three Parties for agreement at the trilateral intersessional meeting in 2026.

7. The group should involve members of the North Sea Monitoring Control and Surveillance Working Group, where required, to ensure join-up between the groups.

ANNEX VI

LONG-TERM MANAGEMENT STRATEGY FOR HERRING IN THE NORTH SEA, EASTERN ENGLISH CHANNEL, SKAGERRAK AND KATTEGAT

The parties agree to implement a management strategy for the North Sea, eastern English Channel, Skagerrak and Kattegat herring, which is consistent with a precautionary approach and designed to maximise yield, minimise risk of the stock falling below Blim and achieve stability of catches.

The strategy shall consist of the following elements:

1. SSB in this management strategy refer to the spawning stock biomass at spawning time in the year for which the TAC is to be set.
2. Where the SSB at spawning time in the year for which the TAC is to be set is estimated to be above 1,000,000 tonnes ($B_{trigger}$) the Parties agreed to restrict their fishing on the basis of a TAC consistent with a fishing mortality rate of no more than 0.23 (F_{target}) for appropriate age groups.
3. Where the SSB at spawning time in the year for which the TAC is to be set is estimated to be at or below 1,000,000 tonnes the TAC shall not exceed a level which will result in a fishing mortality rate equal to $0.23*SSB/B_{trigger}$.
4. If the rule in paragraph 2 would lead to a TAC that deviates more than 25% up or 20% down from the preceding year, the Parties shall fix a TAC limiting the change to 25% up or 20% down. The TAC constraint mechanism shall not apply when the SSB at spawning time in the year for which the TAC is to be set is estimated to be at or below $B_{trigger}$.
5. The TAC given by paragraphs 2 and 4 can be deviated from by up to 10% by transferring or borrowing from the following year's quota according to the inter-annual quota flexibility scheme. The operation of this scheme is described in Annex II. The inter-annual flexibility scheme shall not apply when the SSB at spawning time in the year for which the TAC is to be set is estimated to be at or below $B_{trigger}$.
6. The Parties committed to submit a special request to ICES in early 2026 to request that ICES identifies, within the first year of the adoption of the LTMS, the exceptional circumstances under which managers should consider reviewing and/or suspending the LTMS. The Parties further committed to request that ICES consult with managers if such circumstances are triggered, in which case the Parties would agree next steps.
7. A review of this arrangement shall take place no later than 31 December 2035.

This arrangement shall enter into force on 1 January 2026.

JOINT REQUEST TO ICES REGARDING GENETIC WORK ON NORTHERN SHELF COD SUB-STOCKS

Request from	Joint EU/Norway/UK request
Committee making the request	
Contact within organisation	Colin Faulkner (Colin.Faulkner@defra.gov.uk)
Content contact person	
Request announced	8 January 2024
Request received	8 January 2024
Outcome of request required by client	The outcome of this request is to provide data that supports ICES in providing the area-specific catch advice of the Northern Shelf complex. This should include a comprehensive experimental design including a sampling protocol and methodological specifications for the genetic analysis of the Northern Shelf cod stock complex. Subject to the findings of the research, the outcome of this request should aim to provide data that supports ICES in providing advice for the three sub-stocks separately.
Request code (client)	
Request code (ICES)	[completed by ICES]
Details of request	

Request from Norway, UK and EU regarding genetic work on Northern Shelf Cod sub-stocks

The Northern Shelf cod advice from ICES[11] establishes a new stock definition merging West of Scotland cod with North Sea cod making a single assessment unit with three sub-stocks: Northwestern, Viking and Southern. The advice stated that ICES is not in a position to provide area-specific catch advice without additional genetic data sampled routinely from both commercial fisheries and scientific surveys.

The Norwegian, UK and EU Delegations consequently agreed that the way forward in the management of these stocks would include additional sampling of genetic and other data sources and the exchange of information regarding ongoing relevant research on the topic. Moreover, the Delegations recommended that

[11] https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.21840765.v1

this workstream should be taken forward as a priority and agreed that they would approach ICES for guidance. Hence, ICES, as the coordinating body**, is requested** to provide guidance for the area-specific catch advice of the Northern Shelf complex. This should include a comprehensive experimental design aimed at enhancing understanding of sub-stock dynamics, especially stock-mixing throughout the year and including a sampling protocol and methodological specifications for the genetic analysis and related data for the Northern Shelf cod stock complex, which the Parties could implement as a priority.	
Intended use of the request output	Subject to the findings of the research, the outcome of this request should aim to provide data that supports ICES in providing advice for the three sub-stocks separately.
Planning ICES	This planning is towards an operational (area-based) advice for Northern shelf cod. A comprehensive genetic sampling methodology for Northern shelf cod cannot be delivered promptly. However, after consultation with the experts, ICES is in a position to propose the following process towards guiding the area-specific catch advice: ICES suggests a process consisting of two workshops: A **broader/scoping workshop** focusing on the understanding of sub-stock dynamics, especially stock-mixing throughout the year and how this can be integrated into potential stock assessment models, enabling provision of advice which can guide area-specific management. This first workshop will outline which genetic data and other data sources would be needed to inform stock-assessment and the tempo-spatial resolution needed for Northern Shelf cod. The workshop will as well evaluate existing sampling data on genetics for the Northern Shelf cod stock complex and work on standardization and harmonization procedures. The results from the workshop will be shared with several ICES working groups focused on the application of genetics in fisheries management (WGAGFA, SIMWG, others) as well as the EOSG and WGNSSK to further specify the ToRs for the second workshop, combining the data needs with survey methodology. ICES will draft and execute the database infrastructure needed based on these discussions, by creating the format, exerting quality assurance and checks, providing data download, as well as linking the data to existing ICES databases. This will then be fed into the second workshop subsequent to an ACOM review of the workshop outcome. The second workshop will further establish the specific sampling protocols as well as the methodology recommended for working with genetic data. The output will be a report including a survey manual, providing an experimental design, including a detailed sampling protocol and methodological specifications, for genetic analysis of the Northern Shelf cod stock complex providing data applicable to the stock assessment of this stock complex. There is a need for having established a genetic baseline for the Southern component that will inform whether Northern and Southern populations can be separated genetically and at what resolution prior to the workshop as this will have implications in sampling design due to uncertainty in the range of difference

	between the sub-stocks. This information will be available from the GenDC project by mid-2025 at the earliest. ICES is subcontracted for an EU- funded project (GenDC, EMFAF-2023-PIA-FisheriesScientificAdvice) to develop new standardized sampling protocols and procedures for integrating genetic data with stock assessment and existing databases to strengthen the implementation of the CFP. Timeline: WK1; Winter 2025 WK2; May 2025
Request (budget) accepted	[completed by ICES]
ICES contact person	Lara Salvany (lara.salvan@ices.dk) and Cecilia Kvaavik (cecilia.kvaavik@ices.dk)
WG(s) involved	WGNSSK, WGAGFA, SIMWG, EOSG groups
Preparation timing	[completed by ICES]
Review group	[completed by ICES]
Advice drafting group	[completed by ICES]
ACOM Web-conference	[completed by ICES]
Release date	End of June 2025

ANNEX VIII

TERMS OF REFERENCE (TOR) FOR THE 2026-2027 NORTH SEA MONITORING, CONTROL AND SURVEILLANCE WORKING GROUP

The objective of the NS MCS WG ('WG') is to enhance cooperation, develop best practices and measures related to the control of joint stocks in the North Sea and recommend, as appropriate, harmonised practices or joint measures for consideration of implementation by the Parties. This effort should be based on the WG's 2019-2024 report, delivered in June 2024. The group's objective should also include improving operational information exchange and cooperation on topics that lead to more effective MCS.

The scope of the WG covers fisheries with catches and bycatches of cod, haddock, saithe, whiting, plaice and herring in the North Sea. North Sea herring is covered by any relevant measures concluded for the 4 pelagic species covered by Coastal States MCS Stand-Alone agreement on these stocks. The WG may agree to cover other stocks.

The WG should:

1. Take note of the best practice and measures outlined in the 2019-2024 WG report, in particular for:

   i. risk assessment data sharing;

   ii. weighing and catch registration requirements;

   iii. at sea inspections;

   iv. port inspections;

   v. post-landing inspections.

   Consider and elaborate on how practices and measures could be actioned. As appropriate, recommend practices and measures from this WG report suited for joint implementation by the Parties and how they could be implemented.

2. Exchange experience and recommend best practice and MCS methodologies to control illegal discards and misreporting of discards.

3. Exchange experience and recommend best practice and MCS methodologies to control accurate weighing and catch registration of bycatches of jointly managed stocks.

4. Discuss the strategic and operational uses of enhanced Vessel Monitoring Systems (VMS) as relating to fisheries control.

5. Consider joint training events or workshops.

6. Conduct observer missions relating to the tasks above based on defined tasks, a specified operational need and equal commitment to host these exchanges by all Parties. Reports from observer missions should be written using agreed reporting templates and defined tasks.

7. The WG should also exchange expertise among members, discuss and map any additional best practice and measures or, if appropriate, discuss adapting existing ones in relation to cod-related fisheries. Taking note of the work of the cod management WG, the MCS WG should consider best practice and measures that may enhance or complement any possible future management measures.

8. Exchange contextual information regarding the legal and organisational framework that impacts MCS operational actions in the Parties. This information may include:

   i. relevant MCS legislation;

   ii. control assets (resources, tools, technologies);

   iii. contextual factors such as relevant MCS geography, fishing activities, or sales mechanisms.

   The information should be concise and complement existing mapping. A summary of the mapping will be presented to the group and added to the report.

   If there are any other relevant issues, which the WG agree would result in a more efficient MCS of fisheries in the scope of the WG, the WG may explore these, as appropriate.

ORGANISATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE WORKING GROUP

1. The WG should organise its work in an appropriate manner, such as providing appropriate expertise. Members in their role as MCS experts shall provide the best possible professional advice on relevant MCS measures to be discussed in the WG. The WG may also rely on the assistance of experts in the fields relating to the tasks described above.

2. The WG should hold a planning meeting as soon as possible and produce its report no later than 30 days before the annual consultations.

3. The WG procedures will include that:

   i. The WG should set an agenda based on the topics referred to in this ToR, including a timeline, and assign hosts for the different meetings. The host participant should suggest the chair for the meeting they are hosting.

   ii. The WG will hold at least 2 meetings a year in addition to the planning meeting.

   iii. Before each meeting, the Parties shall inform each other, through the designated contact points, of the intended composition of the delegations.

   iv. A draft agenda is drawn up by the host Party and transmitted to the other Parties 2 weeks in advance for comments in advance of the meeting.

   v. A draft report should be prepared by the host Party following each meeting, with the host acting as rapporteur. At each meeting, the host is responsible for compiling and submitting a draft report based on the outcomes of the meeting within 3 weeks of the meeting. This draft will serve as the basis for an ongoing process of review and revision, incorporating reflections and decisions from the entire series of meetings.

   vi. The draft report will be open for comments for 3 weeks before being handed over to the next host.

vii. The WG report(s) will be considered final and adopted in the absence of objections, provided that no requests for additional amendments are received by the end of the comment period.

ANNEX IX

TENTATIVE WORK PLAN OF THE NORTH SEA MONITORING, CONTROL AND SURVEILLANCE WORKING GROUP 2026-2027

TASK	2026	2027
1. Consider and elaborate how best practices and measures in 2019-2024 report can be actioned. Recommend best practice and measures, as appropriate.	Review the report, identify which best practice and measures could be recommended. Consider and elaborate how best practice and measures can be actioned. Report recommendations in draft report.	Recommend best practice and measures, as appropriate. Report recommendations in final report.
2. Exchange experience and recommend best practice and MCS methodologies to control illegal discards and misreporting of discards	Exchange experience, map current measures and practice. Report mapping in the draft report.	Recommend best practice and MCS methodologies. Report recommendations in final report.
3. Exchange experience and recommend best practice and MCS methodologies to control accurate weighing and catch registration of bycatches of jointly managed stocks	Exchange experience, map current measures and practises. Report mapping in the draft report.	Recommend best practice and MCS methodologies. Report recommendations in final report.
4. Discuss the strategic and operational uses of enhanced Vessel Monitoring Systems (VMS) as relating to fisheries control.	Discuss the strategic and operational uses of enhanced Vessel Monitoring Systems (VMS) as relating to fisheries control. Record discussions in draft report.	
5. Consider joint training events or workshops;	TBD – Consider joint training event or workshop on tasks 2, 3 and 7. A report of the findings from training or workshops to be produced and shared within the Working Group and annexed in the draft report.	TBD - Consider joint training event or workshop on tasks 2, 3 and 7. A report of the findings from training or workshops to be produced and shared within the Working Group and annexed in the final report.

6. Observer missions	TBD – Consider observer missions on tasks 2, 3 and 7. Agreed templates to be completed by observers and fed back to the Working Group. Reports to be annexed in the draft report.	TBD – Consider observer missions on tasks 2, 3 and 7. Agreed templates to be completed by observers and fed back to the Working Group. Reports to be annexed in the draft report.
7. Exchange expertise among members, discuss and map any additional best practice and measures or, if appropriate, discuss adapting existing ones in relation to cod-related fisheries. Taking note of the work of the cod management WG, the MCS WG should consider best practices and measures that may enhance or complement any possible future management measures.	Exchange experience, map current measures and practise. Report mapping in the draft report.	Recommend best practice and MCS methodologies. Report recommendations in final report.
8. Exchange contextual information regarding the legal and organisational framework that impacts MCS operational actions in the Parties.	Exchange and report framework in draft report	

ANNEX X

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR A WORKING GROUP ON ELECTRONIC EXCHANGE OF DATA FOR 2025-2026

The Delegations agreed that the Working Group on Electronic Exchange of data should meet as appropriate in 2025 and 2026 under the Terms of Reference described below. The necessary technical scoping exercises can be conducted within the same Terms of Reference before the Working Group meets.

The Working Group shall seek to identify suitable technical arrangements for electronic exchange of data based on the United Nations Fisheries Language for Universal Exchange (UN/FLUX) standard.

The Working Group will:

1. Establish templates (i.e. common principles) for electronic exchange of notification and authorisation data with the intention to revise the current bilateral arrangements between the Parties.

2. Establish templates (i.e. common principles) for electronic exchange of fishing activities data (ERS) with the intention to revise the current bilateral arrangements between the Parties. Furthermore, identify additional reporting needs, any outstanding issues and elements that can improve performance of the current bilateral systems for electronic exchange of fishing activities data (ERS). Establish technical procedures and specifications which the parties could use to implement, the possibility to pull data covering fishing activities conducted before, during and after exiting the waters of the other Party, from port to port. Establish improved technical procedures to deliver RET messages directly to the fishing vessels to secure satisfactory exchange and increased quality of fishing activities data.

3. To ensure the timely, continuous, and accurate transmission of VMS data for effective monitoring and control, the Working Group will provide updates on any anticipated changes to the respective legal requirements of the Parties and consider the associated technical implementation.

ORGANISATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE WORKING GROUP

1 The WG procedures will include that:

i. The WG should set an agenda based on the topics referred to in this ToR, including a timeline, and assign hosts for the different meetings. The host participant should suggest the chair for the meeting they are hosting.
ii. The WG will hold at least 2 meetings a year in addition to the planning meeting.
iii. A draft agenda is drawn up by the host Party and transmitted to the other Parties 2 weeks in advance for comments in advance of the meeting.
iv. A draft report should be prepared by the host Party following each meeting, with the host acting as rapporteur. At each meeting, the host is responsible for compiling and submitting a draft report based on the outcomes of the meeting within 3 weeks of the meeting. This draft will serve as the basis for an ongoing process of review and revision, incorporating reflections and decisions from the entire series of meetings.
v. The draft report will be open for comments for 3 weeks before being handed over to the next host.

vi. The WG report(s) will be considered final and adopted in the absence of objections, provided that no requests for additional amendments are received by the end of the comment period.

The Working Group should submit its report to the Parties well in advance of the annual consultations for 2027. Reports from possible technical scoping exercises should also be submitted to the Parties well in advance of the annual consultations for 2027.

TENTATIVE WORK PLAN OF THE DATA EXCHANGE WORKING GROUP **ANNEX XI**

Task	Reason for doing this as per the Agreed Record	Progress anticipated in 02/2026 meeting	Progress anticipated in potential 2nd 2026 meeting	Milestone One i.e. Date for testing	Milestone Two i.e. Date of start of exchanging	Milestone Three i.e. Closure of previous exchange mechanism
Agreed Record of Conclusions of Fisheries Consultations between Norway and the European Union on Electronic Exchange of Fishing activity data	Formalising the agreement	Discuss last open points in the text	Agree on final text and sign AR			
Agreed Record on Vessel and Authorisation data exchange	Formalising the agreement	Agree on final text and sign AR				
Implementation document for Fishing Activities data exchange	Technical specifications are necessary for the implementation of the agreement.		Continue to work on the text.	01/06/2027	01/01/2028	

Annex 1	Technical specifications are necessary for the implementation of the agreement.	Agreement on final text				
Implementation Document for Vessel data exchange.	Technical specifications are necessary for the implementation of the agreement.		Agreement on final text	Different dates for testing and going live required bilaterally.	Dates unknown but the end of the transition period would be when EU-NOR, EU-UK and UK-NOR are all using FLUX.	
Implementation Document for Authorisation data exchange.	Technical specifications are necessary for the implementation of the agreement.		Start discussion on text	TBC	TBC	TBC