



Marine  
Management  
Organisation

# Celtic Sea and Western Channel Demersal FMP :FMP Walkthrough

## Working Group 6 14 January 2026

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## 14th January: Working group 6 Agenda

Introductions

Recap

Walkthrough of changes to policy goals

Next steps

Q&A

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# Celtic Sea and Western Channel Demersal FMP: recap

## Recap

**May-July 2025** – Working Group review

**2 July 2025** – last Working Group

**July-August 2025** – Defra review

**12 September 2025** – Draft plan, Environmental report submitted to Defra

**November 2025** – Evidence Statement, Engagement report submitted to Defra

**September 2025 to date** – supporting Defra in amendments/clarifications

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## FMPs and UK-EU Negotiations

FMPs are the flagship policy driving the design of UK fisheries management under the Fisheries Act 2020.

Various measures or initiatives relevant to this FMP, e.g. pollack bag limit, Celtic Sea Protection Zone, are also of relevance to the EU.

Negotiations, therefore, work hand in hand with FMP process, to achieve our objectives - and are informed by one another.

Negotiations can also, in places, enable faster outcomes - particularly where there are more pressing sustainability issues concerning stocks.

We encourage the commercial and recreational sectors to continue inputting into the FMP process to help inform future management measures.

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# Celtic Sea and Western Channel Demersal FMP: draft changes

## Reasons for draft changes

- Defra/Welsh Government review
- New/updated information – e.g. Skates and Rays
- Wording amended to align more closely with the Fisheries Act
- Editorial – conforms to Defra style guide, Accessibility
- Clarity, e.g. numbered actions
- Removed duplication of text – e.g. content from Evidence Statement, Engagement and Environmental Reports.
- **However, the overall intent remains the same for policy goals and actions**

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# Celtic Sea and Western Channel Demersal FMP: FMP chapters

## FMP chapters

**Executive summary:** high-level overview of the FMP, including what an FMP is and why it is being done.

**Description of the fisheries and stocks:** biological and ecological overview of species. Presentation of the main commercial and recreational fisheries data.

**Fisheries Management:** current management in place within FMP spatial and stock scope.

**Environmental considerations:** overview of SNCB advice, climate considerations and any other environmental factors.

### FMP Vision:

“Celtic Sea and Western Channel demersal fisheries in English and Welsh waters will continue to be managed sustainably, ensuring that stocks are restored to and maintained above biomass levels capable of producing maximum sustainable yield (MSY).”

**FMP Policy goals:** walkthrough, focussing on key stocks and selected actions, **also including changes since previous Working Group review**.

**Implementation, monitoring and review:** high level overview of indicators the plan will need to monitor to ensure its effectiveness.

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# Celtic Sea and Western Channel Demersal FMP : draft policies

**Policy goal 1:** Development of multi-year recovery plans for FMP gadoid stocks.

**Rationale:** In line with section 6(3)(a) of the Act, this policy aims to contribute to restoring pollack (pol.27.67), cod (cod.27.e–k), haddock (had.27.7b–k) and whiting (whg.27.7b-ce-k) spawning stock biomass to sustainable levels.

**Underlying factors:** Important economic species; Below MSY or declining stocks status; Sensitivity to climate change.

**Selected short term actions: consider:**

- Developing a multi-year recovery plan for cod, whiting and haddock stocks (consider catch limits on other stocks, gear selectivity);
- Separate pollack recovery plan (consider seasonal closures, MCRS).

**Selected medium/long term actions:** Evaluate recovery plans' effectiveness.

**Stakeholder feedback:** Broad support across stakeholders, although concerns raised regarding gadoid recoverability.

**Changes since Working Group review:**

Policy heading amended from "*Gadoids - multi-year recovery plans and strengthening evidence on stocks*" to "*Development of multi-year recovery plans for FMP gadoid stocks*".

The gadoid policies (1a – cod, haddock, whiting and 1b - pollack) have been incorporated and presented as Policy 1 gadoids.

The policy rationale has been summarised and sets out policy aim in relation to FA 6 3a/b, ie restore/maintain.

The actions have been summarised, and more high level, although the overall aim remains the same.

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# Celtic Sea and Western Channel Demersal FMP : draft policies

**Policy goal 2:** Harvest flatfish stocks sustainably, with biomasses maintained above the level capable of producing MSY

## Rationale:

- In line with section 6(3)(a) of the Act, this policy aims to restore plaice (ple.7e and ple.7fg) spawning stock biomass to sustainable levels.
- In line with section 6(3)(a) of the Act, this policy aims to contribute to reducing fishing mortality for sole (sol.27.7e and sol.27.7fg) to below FMSY and maintain spawning stock biomass at sustainable levels.

**Underlying factors:** Declining plaice stocks; sole is highly important commercial species; sole/plaice TAC re-alignment in ICES stock areas.

## Selected short term actions:

Consider the following:

- Work with EU to develop plaice recovery plan, evaluation by ICES;
- Steps to reduce impacts on plaice stock in sole fishery;
- Explore technical measures (MCRS/mesh size increases) benefits to sole and unwanted bycatch;
- Assess Sole Recovery Zone effectiveness.

**Selected medium/long term:** Consider - Mixed and multi-species management approach; MSY or proxy ICES category stocks; Delivering on technical measures.

**Stakeholder feedback:** Broad support across stakeholders, although concerns raised regarding gadoid recoverability.

## Changes since Working Group review:

Policy heading has been amended from “Harvest flatfish (pleuronectiform) stocks sustainably, with biomasses maintained above the level capable of producing MSY stock sustainability”, to “harvest flatfish stocks sustainably, with biomasses maintained above the level capable of producing MSY”.

The policy rationale has been summarised and sets out policy aim in relation to FA 6 3a/b, ie restore/maintain.

The actions have been summarised, and more high level, although the overall aim remains the same.

# Celtic Sea and Western Channel Demersal FMP : draft policies

**Policy goal 3:** Harvest nephrops stocks sustainably and manage nephrops bycatch.

## Rationale:

-In line with section 6(3)(a) of the Act, this policy aims to restore the nep.fu.22 spawning stock biomass to sustainable levels. To achieve this the FMP aims to develop a comprehensive multi-year recovery plan will be developed to manage fishing pressures at a level suitable for enabling stock recovery.

-In line with section 6(3)(a) of the Act, this policy aims to contribute to maintaining stock levels which will result in fishing mortality for nep.fu.2021 below FMSY and maintain spawning stock biomass at sustainable levels (above MSY Btrigger). This will be achieved through exploring functional unit management and development of HCRs.

**Underlying factors:** High FMP species bycatch – small mesh size gear;

## Selected short term actions:

Consider the following:

- Work with EU to request from ICES a mixed fishery rebuilding plan for the recovery for nephrops fu.22;
- Undertake an in-depth options appraisal for FU management of nephrops;
- Gather evidence on FMP species bycatch within the nephrops fishery.

## Selected medium/long term:

Consider -

- Develop and implement HCRs for each functional unit;
- Consider supporting the introduction of REM to demersal trawlers (catch composition).

**Stakeholder feedback:** Few Southwest fishers target these stocks, which are primarily pursued by roaming Scottish and EU fleets.

Suggestions that setting TACs at a finer spatial scale (FU level), thus removing flexibility, may be contentious, risking significant socio-economic impacts.

## Changes since Working Group review:

Policy heading changed from Sustainable harvest of nephrops and management of nephrops bycatch  
to “harvest nephrops stocks sustainably and manage nephrops bycatch”

The policy rationale has been summarised and sets out policy aim in relation to FA 6 3a/b, ie restore/maintain.

# Celtic Sea and Western Channel Demersal FMP : draft policies

**Policy goal 4:** Harvest anglerfish stocks sustainably, with biomasses maintained above the level capable of producing MSY.

**Rationale:**

In line with section 6(3)(a) of the Act, this policy aims to contribute to maintaining stock levels and fishing mortality for anglerfishes (mon.27.78abd and ank.27.78abd) to below FMSY and maintaining spawning stock biomass at sustainable levels.

**Underlying factors:** Cat 1 stock assessments; Anglerfish are of high commercial importance in the UK; Angler/monkfish are managed as a combined species TAC, preventing effective management of each stock.

**Selected short term actions: Consider:**

- Improving on species-specific reporting of anglerfish, production and distribution of ID guides and fisher education;
- How to support and enable fishing opportunities for anglerfishes in a mixed fishery setting.

**Selected medium/long term: consider:**

- Actions to avoid over exploitation, including separating out monkfish and anglerfish Group TAC;
- Agreeing a long-term management approach for anglerfish.

**Stakeholder feedback: Stakeholder feedback:**

Limited interest in the proposed anglerfish actions, although eNGOs stated there should be robust ongoing management to maintain at sustainable levels.

**Changes since Working Group review:**

Policy heading remains the same.

The policy rationale has been summarised and sets out policy aim in relation to FA 6 3a/b, ie restore/maintain.

The actions are essentially the same.

# Celtic Sea and Western Channel Demersal FMP : draft policies

**Policy goal 5:** Manage elasmobranch fisheries sustainably and manage bycatch.

**Rationale:** To maintain elasmobranch stocks at sustainable levels, to implement management to increase stocks to sustainable levels, where needed, and to increase evidence to understand the current state of data-deficient stocks and species.

## **Underlying factors:**

Skates and rays are valued across both the recreational and commercial sectors in the UK.

Align with overlapping Southern North Sea English Channel Skates and Rays FMP.

Continue with existing management on deep water sharks (prohibited landing species).

## **Selected short/medium/long term actions:**

This FMP will consider:

- Explore alternatives to the current group TAC management (on-going through the SCF);
- Voluntary handling guidelines;
- Spatial/temporal/closures;
- MCRS/MaxCRS.

## **Stakeholder feedback:**

Defer to Southern North Sea Skates and Rays FMP stakeholder feedback.

## **Changes since Working Group review:**

Policy heading changed from “Elasmobranchs management” to “Manage elasmobranch fisheries sustainably and manage bycatch”.

The policy has been updated to align with published SNS SNR FMP policies where applicable.

The policy rationale is separated into the following sub-headings: Stocks covered by SNR FMP, and those not covered by SNR FMP.

The species/stock list has been updated following a steer from Cefas, and focuses on those with defined stocks, or sufficient presence, within the FMP area.

The prohibited species section remains the same.

Overall no change in policy aim, but now provides clarity on species/stock scope.

# Celtic Sea and Western Channel Demersal FMP : draft policies

## Policy goal 6: Build an evidence base for red seabream.

**Rationale:** In line with Section 6(3)(b) of the Act, this policy aims to restore stock levels through continued sustainable management for red seabream – as the stock has been identified as depleted by ICES.

The FMP does not propose steps to obtain the evidence to enable an MSY assessment for these stocks as such assessments are not appropriate during this iteration of the FMP.

**Underlying factors:** Landings and stock size of red seabream showed a severe decline in the 1970s and 1980s and the stock is currently considered seriously depleted.

### Selected short term actions:

#### Consider:

- Continue to follow the precautionary ICES advice for red seabream management, which is currently a bycatch-only TAC;
- Utilise existing ID guides produced by Cefas and the MMO to improve species specific reporting.

### Selected medium/long term actions:

#### Consider:

- Working within the SCF framework on collaborative EU-UK towards recovering the red seabream stock.

### Stakeholder feedback:

Limited interest in the exploitation of these stocks was raised by fishers during engagement owing to the stock not being in a commercially viable state for many decades.

### Changes since Working Group review:

Policy heading remains the same.

Aim, rationale, management strategy and principles are now summarised under Policy rationale heading.

Overall no change in policy aim.

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# Celtic Sea and Western Channel Demersal FMP : draft policies

**Policy goal 7:** Explore the potential to reform existing management and approaches to join up and better align management of FMP stocks.

**Rationale:** This policy goal aims to reform the current management structure for FMP stocks by integrating future management strategies into a cohesive framework. Central to this approach is the enhancement of mixed fisheries management, improved data collection, and stronger evidence-based decision-making.

**Underlying factors:** Recent commitments to look beyond single stock catch advice and work via the SCF to define joint approaches to developing mixed fisheries science.

Within the Celtic Sea, choke is a key issue associated with the poor stock status and bycatch of certain gadoid species (i.e. cod).

**Selected short term actions: consider:**

- Evaluate the effectiveness of all existing management in the Celtic Sea and Western Channel applicable to FMP stocks;
- Explore the potential for developing bespoke management measures for inshore fisheries. Consider actions which support and encourage opportunities for inshore vessels. [was previously split into short term explorations, and long term implementation of measures/actions.]
- Alongside stakeholders, begin to develop a focused early warning system for the FMP area aimed at identifying issues with and generating options for declining TAC managed stocks.

**Selected medium/long term actions:** Consider: Utilising the REM programme in English waters to draw together several programmes for Celtic Sea evidence.

**Stakeholder feedback:**

Commercial support for inshore fishery measures. Support for simplifying measures and harmonising management, strong support from fishers for EWS, eNGO support for HCR for recovery stocks.

Limited comment on mixed fisheries management from commercials, but support from eNGOs. Mixed support for REM.

**Changes since Working Group review:**

Policy heading changed from Celtic Sea management reform. Policy rationale has been summarised, The actions are set out under three headings: Actions for implementing mixed and multi-species management; Actions for improving existing management; Actions to align with wider domestic and international management.

Inshore action wording has been amended. The policy and associated actions have the same intent.

# Celtic Sea and Western Channel Demersal FMP : draft policies

**Policy goal 8:** Build towards an ecosystem-based management of fisheries.

**Rationale:** This policy goal has three aims, which will address the SNCB advice. These are; reduce demersal fishing impact on the marine environment, including MPA features; improve the evidence base to strengthen confidence in future assessments; and progress toward ecosystem-based management of fisheries in the future.

**Underlying factors:** All forms of fishing have an impact on the marine environment and marine ecosystems to varying degrees, whether through the removal of target fish species, incidental bycatch of non-target species, the removal of prey that other species forage, interaction with the seabed, or lost fishing gears.

**Selected short term actions:** Improving understanding of bycatch risk, frequency and spatial patterns of sensitive species interactions within the FMP fisheries; Assessing the effectiveness of existing mitigation and avoidance measures trialled within the UK and abroad (such as acoustic deterrent devices, hook type, bycatch toolkits).

**Selected medium/long term actions: consider:**

- Support academia and industry in the research and innovation of alternative gear options or fishing methods that can help reduce benthic impacts and bycatch of sensitive marine species.
- In Wales, use Assessing Welsh Fishing Activities (AWFA) assessments to review the potential environmental impacts of current fisheries management practices, any FMP linked proposed changes and consider mitigation.

**Stakeholder feedback:**

Stakeholders generally supportive of the ecosystem-based approach policy.

ENGOs advocated for the FMP to clearly outline its compliance with international commitments and obligations, and to address benthic impacts of fisheries, bycatch of marine megafauna, and coherence across wider MPA work.

**Changes since Working Group review:**

Policy title has been changed from “Building toward holistic environmental management”, to “Build towards an ecosystem-based management of fisheries”.

The aims have been more clearly set out under three headings:

- Reducing demersal fishing impacts
- Strengthening the evidence base
- Progressing toward ecosystem-based approaches to fisheries management

The actions remain the same, but more clearly set out and focussed on addressing SNCB advice.

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# Celtic Sea and Western Channel Demersal FMP : draft policies

## Policy goal 9: Support sector adaptation, resilience and engagement.

**Rationale:** The aim of this policy goal is to support commercial and recreational fisheries to develop sustainably, allowing coastal communities to benefit from opportunities created by the Act. Furthermore, the policy goal seeks to facilitate partnership working in implementation of the FMP.

**Underlying factors:** Market concerns; Sector sustainability – need for resilience; Community benefits from fisheries.

**Selected short/medium/long term actions:** consider:

- Mechanism for stakeholder input into decision making across the implementation of measures within this FMP.
- Identify and assess the reliance and key vulnerabilities of different fleets involved in FMP fisheries.
- Explore impacts of MPAs, offshore wind, infrastructure and other marine activities on fishing opportunities and potential displacement.
- Encourage uptake of appropriate grant funding to support innovation, growth and sustainability of the stocks, fisheries and coastal communities.

## Stakeholder feedback:

Working Group expressed a desire for clear government direction regarding priorities and future planning for the fishing industry, in particular for inshore fleet and those most vulnerable with industry.

Commercial fishers were supportive of the policy goal and had advocated for more opportunities for schemes similar to the Fisheries and Aquaculture Support Scheme (FASS). Additionally, they emphasised the need to further support those who could not easily diversify their operations.

Recreational fishers stressed the importance of ensuring that the charter sector could access business support, highlighting that without long-term stability there would be significant social and economic impacts on the sector.

## Changes since Working Group review:

Policy heading changed from “Supporting sector adaptation and resilience”,  
to “Support sector adaptation, resilience and engagement”

Aim, rationale, management strategy and principles are now summarised under Policy rationale heading.

Overall aim and actions intent remains the same.

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# Celtic Sea and Western Channel Demersal FMP : draft policies

**Policy goal 10:** Reduce the contribution of fishing to climate change and supporting the fishing industry to adapt to the impacts of climate change.

**Rationale:** The aim of this policy goal is to build resilience within the ecosystem and fishery in response to climate driven pressures, as well as reduce the fisheries' overall contribution to climate change, supporting the climate change objective of the Act.

**Underlying factors:** To contribute to the UK's wider legal commitment towards ensuring that the net UK carbon account for the year 2050 is at least 100% lower than the 1990 baseline, as set out in the Climate Change Act 2008.

**Selected short/medium/long term actions:** consider:

- Gain further understanding of where the FMP fisheries can join up with climate change research and the wider strategy for CO2 emissions reductions.
- Gather further evidence on stock resilience to climate change and identify actions or management which will promote resilience.
- Identify opportunities to develop a more efficient fleet (including improvements to engine design, fishing gear and technological advancements).

**Stakeholder feedback:**

Strong support from ENGOs.

**Changes since Working Group review:**

Aim, rationale, management strategy and principles are now summarised under Policy rationale heading.

Overall aim and actions intent remains the same.

# Celtic Sea and Western Channel Demersal FMP: Next steps

## Next steps

- Defra Tranche Four consultation, aiming to commence by mid February.
- In person events may be at Newlyn, Brixham, Ilfracombe, Plymouth, Mevagissey.
- The above dates and locations are provisional and exact time, dates and locations will be announced shortly.
- Planned publication- end 2026.

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# Celtic Sea and Western Channel Demersal FMP: Questions?

## Questions?

**Thank you for your collaboration on this FMP**

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