



Marine Management Organisation

Date: 21st May 2025

Location: Online

Subject: Celtic Sea and Western Channel Demersal (CSWCD) FMP – Policy Goal Walk-through

Chair: Mark Qureshi and Nicholas French

Minutes: Julia Riopelle

Attendees:

Name	Job title
Judith Farrell	Humberside Fish Producers' Organisation
Adam Ferguson	Anglo Scottish Fish Producers' Organisation
Nick West	Mevagissey Fishermen's Association
Matthew Sayer	Welsh Government
Chris Ranford	The Cornish Fish Producers Organisation
Paul Dolder	Cefas
David Stevens	Crystal Sea, Commercial Fisher
Robbie Fisher	Defra Domestic Fisheries and Reform
Michael Hustler	Defra FMP Policy
Isobel Johnston	Head of Sustainable Fisheries
MMO FMP Development Team	

Defra comment on the UK-EU Reset Deal

- Defra provided an overview of their thoughts on the EU-UK Reset Deal that was announced on Monday (19 May 2025), acknowledging that despite there being wins, there will be many who will also be upset about its outcomes.
 - Defra has retained regulatory autonomy of the FMPs, and through the TCA we will continue to work with the EU on the management of shared stocks.

- WG Member highlighted that it is good to hear that there will not be changes about the autonomy of the FMP.

WG comments on UK-Reset Deal

- WG Member felt this was a lost opportunity to secure the UK 6-12nm for UK vessels. Furthermore, there is strong discontent about the outcomes of the new deal and the 12-year timelines – committing future governments to it as well.
- WG member strongly expressed their desire to see the power limitation within the 12nm to 221kW (extending current beam trawl restrictions <6nm) to prevent large trawlers entering. This would protect the inshore fleet, as well as be beneficial to the environment.
- WG Member highlighted that a vessel power restriction in the 6–12nm in UK waters was proposed in the Channel demersal NQS FMP, yet this was not included.
- WG member expressed frustration that the request for the 221-kW restriction within 12nm has not been included in the CSWCD FMP policies, despite being proposed at multiple FMP workshops (particularly Newlyn).
- WG Member stated that either this is done through this FMP, or government risks further losing industry buy-in into the FMP programme.
- WG Member queried the hesitation regarding including the proposals from stakeholders (such as the 221 kW) in the FMP policy documents, even if it gets taken out for one reason or another at a later point, e.g due to legal reasons.
- WG Member highlighted that this is not reflective of co-management, and this process is not listening to UK industry.
- The WG calls on the FMP development team to amend the policies to better reflect the proposals from the WG call, as well as from stakeholders in previous workshops, prior to the WG reviewing it. Timelines for review will need to change accordingly.

Defra-MMO response

- Defra responded that regarding the 6-12nm access remark, the TCA has stringent rules that fisheries access needs to be fair and equitable to all vessels targeting the fish stocks, in a proportional manner¹.
- MMO acknowledged that the policies extending the 221kW restriction is not specifically in the plan. MMO confirmed this will be taken away and progressed with Defra.
- The draft policies will then be reviewed and updated as necessary. The draft policy document will then be recirculated for WG review.

¹ The TCA agreement relating to access to the UK 6-12nm was based on the track record between 2012 - 2016 and on the existing access in the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) for divisions 4c and 7d-g. Vessels with a track record can apply to access the 6-12nm in these areas. [United Kingdom Single Issuing Authority \(UKSIA\) - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-single-issuing-authority)

- Defra highlighted that they would like these suggestions to continue to be raised.

Policy Walk-Through

Policy goals were shared with the WG in advance. The MMO team provided an overview of each policy goal and the proposed actions to achieving them. The notes below outline the responses of the policy goal.

Cross-policy feedback

- WG Member asked whether MMO will review all policies to reduce the risk of the language used (ex. particularly around 'recovering' fish stocks). Given the sensitivity of this work, wording is associated with risks.
- WG Member asked if there is a way to amalgamate / highlight the policy actions that are already be undertaken through international, UK-EU workstreams or SCF workstreams.
 - Highlight that these are long-term historic processes that happen on an annual, or regular basis.
 - This can help streamline the text more, as it is not necessarily new work that the FMP are doing.
 - This way the FMP can focus on what is proposing domestically in addition.

Policy Goal 1a and 1b (presented in combination): Gadoids - multi-year recovery plans and strengthening evidence on stocks

- WG Member questioned whether gadoids are truly recoverable in ICES Area 7 and whether this is a wasted effort. Suggested to instead focus on *climatic transitional stock management*.
 - Science is showing that we are in a period of transitional change. Evidence indicates a 'flicker effect', where we might get a good recruitment cycle once every 10 years, and this will decrease over time.
 - From experience, WG Member noted that Cod and Haddock (amongst other gadoids) are even hard to catch at a 0 TAC level.
- WG Member emphasised that the existing Cod recovery box has not worked and just resulted in spatial squeeze. WG member noted that they are not even catching cod, but catching red mullet and seabream.
- WG agreed that the policy goal should not be called a "recovery plan" as it is believed that these gadoids are unrecoverable. Instead, the fishing industry needs to adapt and transition elsewhere.
 - The FMP wording should not give false hope. Even though the eNGOs might support recovery wording – it is not realistic.
 - The wording is important as sets the tone of what we are trying to achieve.

Policy Goal 2: Harvest flatfish (pleuronectiform) stocks sustainably, with biomasses maintained above the level capable of producing MSY stock sustainability

- WG Member explained that plaice and sole are very differently shaped fish - plaice can get stuck, whereas sole can slip through anything.
 - While both species are struggling, they believe that from a mesh-size point of view, there is not much what can do.
- WG Member suggested to collect sole data on what is being landed size-wise, to determine whether there is an element of high-grading.
 - Explained that from experience, WG member works with 100mm and does not catch anything under 30cm anyways.
 - MMO responded still the intent to explore the 80mm mesh size shift to 100mm in this policy. This would apply to both plaice and the other recovery species that the FMP is looking at.
- Plaice nursery areas should be protected as part of this policy.
 - While it is unknown exactly where they are located, WG member said they are well inside where beam trawls currently operate.
 - Suggestion to remove the Cod recovery box and replace it with plaice conservation boxes where the beam trawls operate to protect nursery areas. Test for 3-years to see the effectiveness of this.
 - MMO to check whether text around flatfish nursery areas has been included. Particularly around how can this impact the fish and benefit the fishery.
 - Defra asked whether we know about the locations of plaice nursery areas.
 - WG Member said that that coincidentally lots of these nursery areas seem to be covered by existing MPAs.
 - Some are known to be in Perran Bank and St Agnes, inside the 12nm in shallow waters and the inner edge of the existing Cod box.
 - Worth asking the fisheries still operating in those areas where the nursery areas are and see whether Cefas can back these locations up with data.

Policy Goal 3: Sustainable harvest of nephrops and management of nephrops bycatch

- No specific comments raised during meeting.

Policy Goal 4: Harvest anglerfish (lophiforms) stocks sustainably, with biomasses maintained above the level capable of producing MSY

- No specific comments raised during meeting.

Policy Goal 5: Elasmobranchs management

- No specific comments raised during meeting.

Policy Goal 6: Build an evidence base for red seabream

- No specific comments raised during meeting.

Policy Goal 7: Celtic Sea management reform

- Policy suggested an early-warning system to avoid a situation similar to pollack.
 - WG member highlighted that the government was warned about pollack far in advance.
 - WG Member acknowledged that while the necessary thinking around pollack was there, there was not enough funding to take the needed action. This then resulted in the worst-case scenario, which was a drastic overreaction.
 - Noted that if there were funds to find out whether there is a problem with a certain stock, then it would allow one to support more proactive, forecasting research – rather than drastic reactive measures.
 - Defra supported the need for funding to support forecasting research
 - WG was pleased to hear this acknowledgement from Defra and hopes for action to support this.
- WG Member acknowledged that REM will play a large role in monitoring and that it is already allocated a large part of government budget.
 - However, WG Member recently had a REM meeting with Cefas and Defra (along with some industry) and explained that it was disappointing.
 - Government policy on REM was lacking and does not reflect, nor keep pace, with what is on the ground.
 - For example, there will be a higher number of discards from non-commercially valuable species (above the *de minimus* level), and these are extremely difficult to minimise. However, when asking about this situation, government policy did not have answers on how to address this.
 - WG Members highlighted that Defra needs to ensure that policy is right, focused on delivery and accurately reflecting reality, in order for the REM programme to be effective. Otherwise, industry will fear ramifications of fisheries closing.
 - Defra and MMO to take away.

- WG Member highlighted that Cefas does not like to use quotas as incentivisation. Instead, one should focus more on metier-based incentives to achieve data collection:
 - Example of metier-based incentives: Borrow 10% of the 7e stock, which would move the fleet by 1 degree, but therefore they need to have REM on board.
 - Example: maybe even require POs to have a certain amount of their fleet to have REM as well (maybe 5%).
 - If you get industry involved in REM through such incentives, without the fear of ramifications with the *de minimus* issue, it will mean that one is building reference fleets and creating a data framework.
 - Defra should also have a think about FiSP funding and how to best use it - such as on REM.
- WG Member supports the harmonisation of the Celtic Sea management rules.
 - Highlighted that there is currently an unfairness between fleets that harmonisation should address.
 - For example: Are we doing the right thing by having one fleet on 80mm and one on 100mm? One needs to look into the economic fairness of such measures and the economic losses that the 100mm fleet is having, the current situation works in favour of the 80mm fleet.
- WG Member asked what the technical measures are within French 12nm limits.
 - Suggested that alignment with other countries relevant to the FMP area should be part of the approach to achieving holistic management.
 - MMO acknowledged that how the management occurring outside of the FMP area will impact the FMP area, and vice versa.
 - WG can have a look at this link: <https://hal.science/hal-04200174/document>
- Defra posed to the WG to think about how implementation will work best after the plans are published.
 - Looking to industry for suggestions on this, considering resource limitations and how government, the EU, industry and other stakeholders can share the load.
- MMO spoke on how catch accounting is a domestic policy area Defra are working on, last discussed during the Working Group workshop in March. Conversations on what this means and how it will be factored into the FMP are ongoing. Catch accounting, alongside a bycatch monitoring and mitigation trial

may be explored through a discard reduction scheme integrated into the FMP. The FMP will seek to link this with other policy initiatives such as REM.

Policy Goal 8: Building toward holistic environmental management

- Defra spoke on clear framing on what the ecological needs of the fishery are (ex. nursery grounds), as this would be useful from a policy or management perspective to secure the outcomes needed.
- WG Member expressed their confusion on how this policy links in with the work of other teams across MMO and Defra.
 - There are different areas of Defra working on similar policies and overlapping areas.
 - Is there a duplication of work?
 - Is there a prioritisation of policies?
 - WG Member raised that it would be helpful to understand how all these fit together with existing workstreams and fishing activities.
- MMO explained that FMP is mandated to conduct a Strategic Environmental Assessment, which evaluates how the FMP fits into other wider environmental policies.
 - For example, the Environmental Report specifically assesses how the FMP policies impact GES of UK Marine Strategy Descriptors or MPA-designated features.
 - The actions highlighted under this goal are not meant to duplicate or replace other areas of existing environmental work in the MMO and Defra.
 - FMPs are an iterative document that is meant to include all the actions to manage these fisheries and their environmental impact, which means it can include ongoing work as well.
 - Rather, it is flagging what is already being done, as well as adding any actions with where there are gaps specific to the Celtic Sea area.
 - For example: to support GES or MPA work, the FMP flags the work of the Marine Bycatch Initiative through the BMP or Clean Catch UK.
- By including existing workstreams in the complicated matrix of government adds weight to the legal commitment to delivering on these, as well as streamlining different work programmes to ensure that all these teams come together to work holistically.

Policy Goal 9: Supporting sector adaptation and resilience

- No specific comments raised during meeting.

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

- No specific comments raised during meeting.

Meeting ended.

Appendix 1: Outstanding Actions

Reference	Action description	Assigned to
1	MMO team to re-evaluate the inclusion of the 221-kW proposal in the FMP policies with Defra. MMO to then review and recirculate draft policy document to WG for their feedback.	Defra and MMO