



# Marine Management Organisation

**Date: 17 February 2026**

**Location: The Centre, Newlyn 1pm to 3.30pm**

**Subject: Crawfish Management Workshop**

## Executive summary

The Marine Management Organisation (MMO) met with fishers, merchants, Cornish Fish Producers' Organisation (CFPO) and Cornwall & Isles of Scilly Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities (IFCA) representatives in Newlyn to discuss potential future management of the crawfish fishery. The purpose was to determine the forthcoming seasonal closure and explore longer-term regulatory measures to ensure the ecological and economic sustainability of the stock.

Overall, there was strong shared recognition that the fishery needs additional management to avoid "boom and bust" cycles. While opinions differed on some details, attendees broadly agreed that effort management, especially catch limits, is the preferred future direction.

Headline outcomes:

- Seasonal closures remain necessary until further management is worked out. Although consensus on exact dates was not reached.
- Effort management, especially catch limits, is the preferred long-term- approach.
- Permits and gear rules are not currently supported.
- Better evidence and further management measures will be vital to achieve a sustainable fishery.

## Attendees:

Name	Job/Organisation
Jeremy Hosking	Fisher
Andrew Stephens	Fisher
Andrew Pascoe	Fisher
Graham Nicholas	Fisher
Gail Kessell	Fisher
Ben Cheer	Fisher
Danny Phillips	Fisher

Ben Eglinton	Fisher
Shamus Pender Frazer	Fisher
Chessen Pender Frazer	Fisher
Jacob Burns	Fisher
Torran James Cook	Fisher
Andrew Corin	Fisher
Tom McClure	Fisher
Nathan De Rozarieux	Fisher
Aiden McClary	Fisher
Matthew Pascoe	Fisher
Rhys Fyffe	Fisher
Julian Harvey	Merchant
Emily Theobald	Cornish Fish Producers' Organisation (CFPO)
Chris Ranford	CFPO
Tim Dixon	Marine Management Organisation (MMO)
Sarah Bedingham	MMO
Sarah Errington	MMO
Anna MacLennan	MMO
Madalein Bradshaw	MMO
Ellie Green	MMO
Simon Cadman	Cornwall Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (IFCA)
Colin Trundle	Cornwall IFCA/Isles of Scilly IFCA

## Agenda

Welcome	1300 - 1305
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seafish Report</li> <li>• Background, Purpose and Vision</li> </ul>	1305 - 1320
Session 1: Seasonal Closure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MMO Data</li> <li>• Discussion</li> </ul>	1320 - 1335
Session 2: Effort Management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MMO Data</li> <li>• General Principles</li> <li>• Discussion</li> </ul>	1335 - 1435
Break	1435 - 1450

Section 3: Technical Measures <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• MMO Data</li><li>• Discussion</li></ul>	1450 - 1520
Wrap Up (Actions and Next steps)	1520 - 1530

## Meeting notes

### Welcome

- Tim Dixon (TD) introduced MMO attendees, ran through the agenda and explained the aims of the workshop.
- Explained process so far, the management already in place and how minimum conservation reference size (MCRS) /minimum landing size (MLS) increase was more straight forward to introduce than the seasonal closure, which required a consultation, because there was consensus from industry. The hope is to obtain a consensus on the next seasonal closures today to provide stability and reduce consultation burden.
- Explained Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) requirements and working with the EU on any measures introduced that could impact the EU fleet.
- Industry comment that previous proposals have favoured the EU position and that the UK has yet to assert its own interests. Concern that we will default to EU requirements.
- Assurances given that we have not been steered by the EU on Crawfish. TCA requires measures to be proportionate, non-discriminatory and based on the best available science.

### Seafish Report

- Sarah Errington (SE) presented on the Seafish Report and pointed out some of the report's particular points:
  - Without management there is a risk of going back into the cycle of boom and bust as seen historically
  - Open access is a risk to the fishery
  - Catch limits are an option if they are enforceable
  - There is a need for further research and evidence
  - More selective gears needed
- Comment from industry adding that skin divers contributed to the increase in netting, with fishermen being forced to move away from potting to netting as landings fell.

## Background, Purpose and Vision

- SE ran through the purpose of the workshop
  - Discuss seasonal closure for 2026/27 (reducing burden and giving more business certainty)
  - Discuss potential effort and/or technical measures for 2027 and beyond.
  - Identify potential evidence gaps and how these can be filled.
- Chris Ranford spoke about the vision of the crawfish fishery. He outlined the CFPO vision for the crawfish fishery, noting that work began in 2021 with a voluntary MCRS measure developed through consultation and broadly supported by those present. He emphasised the value of collective action to support MMO delivery, the need to be mindful of EU requirements, and the importance of strengthening the evidence base over emotion and opinion. Members were invited to contribute to data collection, with the workshop seen as a starting point for developing their science and evidence base over the coming year to present back to the MMO to better inform management decisions.

## Session 1: Seasonal Closure

- Sarah Bedingham (SB) presented MMO landing data and explained the increase in activity around the closures show they are having an effect on fishing behaviours.
- She explained that we want to focus on other management measures but will need a closure for at least another year. Three date options for the next closure were presented. An online survey will likely be needed to gather wider views, but attendees were given paper forms to record their preferred option so they will not need to complete the survey.
- Industry comment that there were compounding factors to the landings data such as bad weather and the MCRS increase.
- Question - if EU data is not included then the landing data is not representative of the true fishery. SB explained that we have limited access to EU data. EU data from 2024 (the latest available) shows only a small bycatch from EU trawling fleet.

## Discussion

- Discussion regarding the need between economics and sustainability of the stock.
- The existing closure date is financially damaging and should be extended to capture the last export date in December before Christmas, this income will support

fishermen through January and February when fishing opportunities are low.

Supported by eight people in the room.

- It was noted that prices fall once landings increase and the closure currently prevents access to the best market prices.
- A local shellfish merchant commented that the European demand for crawfish is inconsistent; there is access to crawfish from Europe and Africa and there have been cases that crawfish have not been sold due to lack of demand. A seasonal bycatch during the closed season would be helpful so that they could remain actively involved.
- Need to look at the worldwide picture - many countries with a crawfish fishery, use seasonal closures to preserve the fishery.
- It was noted that the traditional season ended in October, allowing stock recovery, but increased effort has extended fishing into more vulnerable months. Closures in November and December are necessary to prevent stock collapse. Comment disputed by another industry member who stated there was always a fishery in November and December.
- There were concerns raised about gear left out over spring tides leading to increased crawfish mortality, and about unmanaged fisheries collapsing under increased effort.
- Concerns also raised over how effort increases immediately before and after a closure, with all the crawfish being landed twice as quick. It was suggested that a bycatch allowance could help manage this, depending on the level set.
- Catch limits were suggested to avoid the race for fishing. Although, there was a feeling from the industry in the room that traditional quota systems have been destructive in the past and led to a small number having advantage and access to fishery whilst others have no access to the fishery.
- Comment that there needs to be other measures, such as spatial measures and catch limits alongside the closure. The length of the closure will depend on the other measures taken forward.
- A bycatch during a closed season was suggested for the following reasons:
  - Helps the supply chain with price certainty in the future
  - Concerns that the effort before and after the closure has increased.
  - Concerns that the Welsh have not closed their fishery and that provides them a greater opportunity.
  - The closure stops the access to the best prices, prices drop as the landings increase.
  - Merchants can remain actively involved all year and compete with markets from other countries.

- General agreement that removing the closure with no alternative measure, would make the situation worse and there is the need to alleviate the boom and bust in the fishery. No consensus on best dates was reached.

Action – SE to engage with Welsh Government to discuss their future management strategy.

## Session 2: Effort Management

### MMO Data

- SB presented MMO landing data including fleet dynamics and vessel numbers.
- Industry comment that landing data alone is a poor metric and IFCA have calculated that catch per unit effort (CPUE) has increased 3 fold.
- Comment that graphs showing catches grouped by vessel sizes collectively are not reflective of how much each vessel is catching.

Action – SB to create graph to show how much vessels in each size group land per vessel rather than collectively.

### General Principles

- TD explained the principles of effort management:
  - If we use catch limits - it is not a quota.
  - It should not be 'transferable' (no monetary value).
  - It should allow for new entrants.
  - It should be based on best available evidence.
  - It must be compatible with wider UK policy and legislation.
  - It should be enforceable.

The industry in the room were invited to propose any other principles but no other suggestions were provided.

## Discussion

### Gear Requirements

- There was a negative view on introducing new gear requirements due to the financial burden of investing in replacement gear.
- Concerns that with any restrictions, larger vessels will just use more gear to catch the same amount.
- Discussion regarding the net specifications, including whether it would be better to have a heavier net (thicker twine) as it tends to not catch the juveniles - initial support in the room to specify net configuration.

- Explanation that lighter nets are more efficient at catching fish but need replacing yearly and take longer to sort them once hauled so are better for those with multiple crew. Heavier nets last longer, are more selective and take less time to sort so are better for those who fish single handedly or with fewer crew.

### **Catch Limits**

- General agreement that effort management is needed.
- Discussion exploring whether a yearly or monthly catch limit would be more effective.
- Monthly limits were seen as a way to prevent the race to fish and help stabilise prices. They could be adjusted seasonally and allow flexibility. For example, if poor weather prevents fishing one month, the following month's limit could be increased.
- Other options were suggested such as yearly limits, allowing fishers to spread effort as they choose, or seasonal limits with different winter and summer levels.
- It was noted that catch limits are easier to enforce than gear restrictions.
- General agreement that catch limits would help curtail effort.
- Suggestions for specific catch limit amounts were provided by the industry in the room, although no figures were agreed.
- A question was raised about whether vessel limits would change according to vessel sizes, with concerns that this could penalise smaller vessels.
- General agreement that the limit should be a flat rate for all vessels, regardless of size.
- Question from industry about what area the catch limits would cover. SB suggested it would be area 7 English water only. Engagement with the Welsh Government is needed to discuss future Welsh Government management strategies

### **Permits**

- Some felt that permits could prevent additional effort entering the fishery, however, it was also noted that shellfish licences already restrict who can fish for shellfish.
- It was noted that if crawfish had been permitted during the last 2 years, when pollack was at 0 TAC, many fishers would have been unable to catch anything at all.
- Concerns were raised that permits disadvantage inshore vessels, which are limited in how far they can travel and therefore need access to local opportunities.
- General agreement that the bass entitlement has further monetarised the licensing system and that permits can prevent people from fishing what is available.

### **Other Comments**

- Frustrations about previous workshops for other fisheries did not seem to lead to a positive outcome. For instance, crab management has taken too long, there has been little communication regarding the progress of crab management and there was a view that because of lack of progress the stock has collapsed. SE provided assurance and explained the context to the South west crab trials.
- Discussion as to whether there should be a ban on landing females, though concerns were raised that similar measures in the lobster fishery have skewed population structure.
- A point was made regarding catches from trawlers as they tend to fish all year round. Pregnant females are thrown back and logged as discards on his logbook. SB noted that the focus has been on nets because trawlers catch only a very small proportion of crawfish

Action – SB to check logbook discards.

### **Section 3: Technical Measures**

#### **MMO Data**

- SB presented MMO landing data showing the increase in the use of trammel nets and the Catch per unit effort (CPUE) is higher for trammel nets compared with gillnets.
- Industry concerns that the correct codes are not available in the Catch App and so fishers are having to list their gear as trammel nets, which is skewing the data. Need three main codes to select from – gillnet, tangle net and trammel net.

Action – SB to speak with Catch App team to see if net codes can be clarified and added.

#### **Discussion**

##### **Gear restrictions**

- Comment from a net supplier, that approximately 60% of nets sold, are 0.7mm gauges (lighter nets), partially due to these nets needing replacing more regularly than heavier nets.
- If heavier nets (1mm gauge) were used they would need to be left longer in the water, that could result in higher mortality and offers further predation opportunities from Octopus. One fisher commented that he uses lighter nets but uses quick soak times so there are very few mortalities.

- It was noted that gear costs have risen substantially and it doesn't make sense to have a different net for each species/fishery. Most fishers want to work responsibly and so they should have the choice to use the most appropriate net specification for their situation.
- There were concerns regarding how difficult it would be to enforce what species are being targeted and what would be considered as a bycatch.
- General agreement that if other measures are brought into the fishery to manage effort, particularly catch limits, that technical measures would not be needed.
- It was emphasised that we should keep any measures as simple as possible.

### **Wrap Up (Actions and Next steps)**

- TD thanked everyone for attending, emphasised that our shared aim is to conserve the crawfish fishery for the next generation and provided a summary of the main discussions:
  - Closures – necessary for now, but a balance is required between socio-economic impacts and sustainability.
  - Nets/gear requirements – not supported. Fishers feel that they know what works best for them.
  - Permits – not supported.
  - Catch Limits – preferred approach for managing effort.
- TD outlined the next steps, including the MMO reviewing the discussion points, engaging with relevant organisations to ensure any potential measures are aligned and circulating the meeting notes to attendees for comment or amendment.