



# Marine Management Organisation

**Date:** 19 March 2026

**Location:** Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (IFCA) offices, Hayle

**Subject:** Isles of Scilly (IoS) crawfish meeting

## Executive summary

The Marine Management Organisation (MMO) met with fishers, a supplier and IFCA representative in Hayle to discuss potential future management of the crawfish fishery in English waters of the South West. The purpose was to determine the duration of the forthcoming seasonal closure and explore longer term regulatory measures to ensure the ecological and economic sustainability of the stock. This meeting was arranged as IoS representation at the earlier Newlyn workshop was low due to bad weather not allowing them to travel.

Headline outcomes:

- **Seasonal Closure:** IoS fishers accept the seasonal closure but have strong concerns about having the closure in December due to its importance for sustaining income through the winter and spring. The impact on the fishery from the larger vessels, fairness for the under-10m fleet, and annual changes to closure options are key concerns. 2026 fishing conditions remain uncertain due to potential octopus abundance and the previous expansion of the crawfish fishery, both in terms of large annual landings, and increased number of vessels working in the fishery.
- **Data and Management Measures:** inaccuracies in gear coding and discard reporting highlight the need for improved Catch App functionality and clearer guidance. Fishers support more detailed gear codes and better data collection, while expressing concern about future catch limits and their disproportionate impact on smaller vessels.

## Attendees

Name	Job/Organisation
Mark Pender	Island fish/fisher
Neil Jenkins	Fisher
Shamus Pender Frazer	Fisher
Andrew Stephens	Fisher
Colin Trundle	Cornwall/IoS IFCA
Chris Collins	Marine Management Organisation (MMO)
Sarah Bedingham	MMO
Sarah Errington	MMO

## Agenda

Welcome	1100 - 1105
Session 1: Seasonal Closure <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• MMO Data</li><li>• Discussion</li></ul>	1105 - 1135
Session 2: Effort Management <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• MMO Data</li><li>• General Principles</li><li>• Discussion</li></ul>	1135 - 1235
Break	1235 - 1250
Section 3: Technical Measures <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• MMO Data</li><li>• Discussion</li></ul>	1250 - 1320
Wrap Up (Actions and Next steps)	1320 - 1330

## Key Discussion Points

### Session 1: Seasonal Closure

Landings data was shared. Slides had been added so that IoS data could be compared with the national data. Main discussion points are below:

- The IoS fleet has accepted that a seasonal closure will be implemented next year.
- There is interest from both Scillonian and Newlyn vessels to start the closure into December. The December catch is economically important as there will be very little fishing between December and the spring. Income from December is used in the spring months until fishing can resume in the spring.
- A question was raised if the closure could be staggered by area and/or vessel size.
- Vessel size impacts were raised and the MMO was asked to consider alternative closure options, including closing the fishery to the over 10m whilst allowing the under 10m fleet to fish into December
- 2025 was a poor weather year for the IoS fishers, many days were lost. The total landed quantity for IoS, 2025, may have been slightly higher if all Autumn neap tides had been fished, but at least two tides were lost due to weather.

- Autumn catches are generally larger than spring catch due to the fish behaviour- more are moving around and therefore encountering fishing gear. Autumn fishing effort has increased.
- The IoS fishers have a limited number of boats, crew and gear, by December there are only five or six boats working and they are size limited in terms of the amount of gear that can be shot and hauled.
- Unhappiness about the changing of dates for the closure each year and about options being chosen that are not included on the consultation.
- There is less opportunity to diversify in the IoS.
- Only 2 or 3% of the entire IoS district will be worked in November.
- Discussion that 2026 is an “unknown year”, the impact of octopus is unknown and a belief that crawfish effort will fall this year. There are different opportunities this year, some vessels may switch their activity to catching octopus, which could provide a stable income in 2026, and those vessels will not engage in the crawfish fishery.
- Can the closure decision be delayed until later in the year to see how the year develops in terms of fishing opportunities?

## **Pisces Report on Crawfish**

Copies of the report were printed and shared. This report is not a MMO report, it was partially funded by the Cornish Fish Producers Organisation (CFPO) and published through Seafish. In summary the Seafish report suggests that:

- Recent increases in landings are not sustainable.
- Crawfish success is driven by non-local recruitment events.
- Rising landings are due to gear efficiencies and more entrants to the fishery.
- Catch limits may be the best long-term management tool (to be explored later).

## **Session 2: Effort management**

Crawfish landings data was shared. Slides had been added so that IoS data could be compared with the national data. If effort management is used there are ‘principles’ (outlined below) that will be used when designing possible management. These are:

- 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 attendees in the room were invited to propose any other principles but no other suggestions were provided.

Main catch limit discussion points are below:

- The loS crawfish fishery is mainly exploited by resident vessels. Crawfish is one of the main species of the loS fishery. There has been a significant decline in crab landings in recent years. Octopus are also present on the islands and being caught and sold.
- In 2026, many boats will divert to the octopus fishery and concerns if all those vessels come back into the crawfish fishery when the octopus have left these waters.
- At what level would we set an overall effort limit?
- Concern that crab and lobster in loS have fallen and now reliant on crawfish as a main income and catch limits wouldn't allow that to be realised
- Having a monthly catch limit maybe too restrictive to manage especially when hiring crew.
- The catch limit will be disproportionately difficult for the under 10m fleet, especially as the fleet are so weather restricted.
- If there is a poor weather month and catch can't be realised it may put pressure to increase effort when fishing opportunities can be realised and this may lead to unsafe fishing.
- Management of the fishery should be simple.
- Previous effort has been designed to stop the larger vessels but end up having a large impact on the smaller vessels.
- A flat rate for everyone is not fair, as many vessels won't reach a monthly limit and some will fulfil the limit in a couple of trips.
- The loS are still seeing plenty of juveniles on the ground.

### **Session 3: Technical Measures**

Landings data was shared. Slides had been added so that loS data could be compared with the national data. Overall, there was no support for introduction of technical measures. Main discussion points are below:

- The loS fishery is approximately 15 vessels, nearly all are under 10m, some are still potting for crawfish but most are netting. loS data shows over 90% being landed using pots and fisher observations that this is inaccurate. MMO to try and identify which records may need amending.
- Issues were identified with gear recording in the Catch App. Trammel nets (GTR) are being used as a proxy code for tangle nets, leading to inaccurate data. Gear efficiencies are being misrepresented due to incorrect coding. Fishers sometimes select the wrong gear code unintentionally or due to limitations in options to select.
- Cefas may need to change gear codes and this process is slow.
- A need for additional gear detail fields (e.g., mesh size, net thickness, pot type) was strongly supported.
- Landing data alone is not a good metric of the fishery and the stock and CPUE (catch per unit effort) is needed.

- Current pot and net data from the Catch App appears consistent and reliable.
- There is confusion around recording discards, with fishermen fearing they may be penalised.
- MMO provided clarification regarding landing obligation (crawfish are not included). Crawfish discards (e.g., juveniles) can and should be recorded. Discard data is extremely valuable for: Identifying juvenile cohorts, assessing population health and supporting management decisions.
- Example shared: a haul where 216 keepers were landed but approximately five juveniles were discarded per keeper—highlighting strong recruitment.
- Fishermen noted difficulties completing Catch App entries due to fatigue or time pressures. Recognition that some bycatch and discards may go unrecorded.
- Emphasis on improving communication and ensuring the correct fields exist within the Catch App.
- Future updates, discussions, and information will continue to be posted on the [South West Regional Fisheries Group \(RFG\)](#) webpage for crawfish and octopus.

## **Actions**

### **For MMO:**

- MMO to consolidate meeting feedback into meeting note. Check accuracy with attendees (before publishing on South West RFG webpage).
- Seasonal closure - review and consider feedback from this meeting about: preferred seasonal closure timings and vessel size considerations for the closure.
- Catch App - improvements explored with relevant teams (adding new gear codes, especially for tangle nets and allowing more detailed gear fields). As discussed, this may be longer term action. Audit catch app data to correct mis-coded activity where possible.
- Regular updates shared via official channels and social media groups (including South West RFG webpage and newsletter).

### **For attendees:**

- Please record gear types as accurately as possible with current options.
- Please record crawfish discards (including juveniles).
- Follow updates on the [South West RFG webpage](#).