

ENGAGEMENT PILOT

DEVELOPING CORNWALL'S FISHERIES

WEDNESDAY 16 - FRIDAY 18 OCTOBER 2024
ST IVES, CORNWALL



Developing Cornwall's Fisheries – Pilot Engagement Post Event Report

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Introduction

This report provides a summary of the Developing Cornwall's Fisheries Engagement Pilot event held in St Ives between 16-18 October 2024. The workshop was co-designed and delivered by Defra, the MMO, the Cornish Fish Producers Organisation (CFPO) the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations (NFFO) and the UK Association of Fish Producer Organisations (UKAFPO). The aim of the pilot was to test out how government, fisheries managers, scientists and the commercial fishing sector could work together to tackle and address a range of cross cutting policy issues in fisheries management in the waters around Cornwall. This report was prepared by Defra, with input from the other organisations and participants involved in designing and delivering the workshop.

This report covers the main discussion areas, key outputs, and actions identified during the workshop. By sharing this report, we aim to promote and provide attendees and wider readers with insights into the topics addressed. Moving forward, the sponsoring organisations intend to continue to build upon the actions and lessons learned from this pilot to further develop and improve how we work together to deliver sustainable fisheries and healthy coastal communities for generations to come.

As part of our write up, we have categorised actions identified into the following timeframes:

Immediate: Actions to be completed 1-2 months after the event.

Short Term: Actions to be completed 3-6 months after the event.

Medium Term: Actions to be completed 6-12 months after the event.

Long Term: Actions beyond 12 months.

A structured approach will guide the implementation process, with individual policy teams responsible for delivering their assigned actions.

To evaluate the effectiveness of the pilot, and to update on progress, we will collaborate further with a survey in 6 months' time, followed by a virtual meeting with attendees to discuss progress on actions and gather insight on any individual activities taken to further the commitments made between officials and industry. Following this, individual FMP working groups will continue to update stakeholders on progress.

16th October- Day 1

Welcome and Scene Setting

Key points discussed

Cornwall pilot event is a chance to try something new: to have a collaborative and candid discussion around FMPs, wider policy and fisheries management, and consider options to address issues identified.

Emphasis on collaborative approach: strengthening cooperation between fishermen and government and recognising fishermen as key stakeholders

- **A strong call to shift from consultation to co-creation:** Using a model of co-design, this could empower the sector to contribute solutions to a shared vision in policies.
- **Support of regular use of fishermen's data as a source of analysis in policy:** This would provide a more accurate and up to date understanding of the challenges and needs, creating a stronger basis for decision making.
Emphasis on a shared responsibility of sustainability so that resources are available for future generations.
- **Shifting** from reactive policies to strategies that develop and support local communities and the marine environment.
- **A desire for genuine progress and real outcomes**, seeking stronger alignment between officials and the fishing community, that continues across Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs) and policy discussions going forward.

Further comments and feedback from attendees can be found in the supporting document.

Actions/next steps

Short term:

- Defra will clarify roles and responsibilities in FMP governance, covering both the current and any planned changes, and share with stakeholders
- Maintain inclusivity and facilitate on going, constructive dialogue across FMPs and fisheries management

Longer term:

- Transition to co-creation between government and Industry
- Focus on long term sustainability and strategic policy development.

Breakout session – Bass FMP

Summary of activity

Each table discussed areas of concern and hot topics surrounding implementation of the Bass FMP.

Key points raised:

- **Complexity of the authorisation system:** Attendees want a simplified system to close gaps especially around possible dual permitting for nets, rod and line and propose setting catch limits at the fisher level.
- **Concerns that herring ring netting** could result in depleted bass stocks that should arrive for winter spawning.
- **Where science allows increasing authorisations / permits for those without 5% trawler bycatch rule:** The current rule is challenging for trawlers, recommendations to raise it to 15% (immediately or phased). Defra clarified this applies annually, not two monthly allocations. Better communication is needed on this and discard policies.
- **Compliance:** Strengthening VMS enforcement with no leniency for equipment issues, along with transparent communication from IFCA and MMO, would improve trust and deterrence in the sector.
- **Better data from commercial and recreational fishers:** Bring recreational fishers into a licensing regime to improve data collection on their activities, ensuring better alignment with sustainability goals.
- **Bycatch:** Suggested that bycatch of bass in beamers and gill nets is minimal, but there are concerns regarding intertidal bycatch. Improved management for red mullet nets from 68mm to 72mm could reduce juvenile bass bycatch.
- **Discards and conservation:** Review national and regional measures around minimum net sizes and introduce a code of conduct around soak times to support inexperienced fishers. Offering incentives for those adopting REM and VMS systems and consider local management of fisheries that do not directly target bass.
- **Reviewing the ‘close season’ was raised as a consideration** to protect spawning stocks, landings in November-January in Cornwall may target bass congregating for spawning.

Actions/next steps

Short term:

- Consider how to tighten the Registration of Fish Buyers and Seller’s regulations
- Explore the removal of dual gear authorisations (allowing one or the other)
- Consider how to improve compliance/enforcement communications
- MMO to improve clarity of online guidance (i.e. catch limits, annual allocations, authorisations) before 31 December 2024 and work with industry to finalise

Longer term:

- Consider options for improved commercial discard recording and reporting
- Explore options for improving rates of recreational removals recording
- Consider the impact of an increase on the current 5% per trip bycatch cap
Consider increasing red mullet net size from 68mm to 72mm to reduce juvenile bass bycatch

Breakout session - Crab & Lobster effort management

Summary of activity

Groups discussed the ongoing issues in crab management, and considered management options such as pot limits, catch limits, 3S approach, and days at sea.

Key points raised

- **Government intervention is needed:** Industry calls for decisive regulatory action, expressing frustration on repeated consultations and emphasising a mix of measures are needed for change.
- **Urgent need to remove pots from the water:** Although pot limits are favoured by industry, they are complicated/ expensive due to lack of data, enforcement challenges, and TCA restrictions. Alternative solutions such as a pot buy back scheme or vessel decommissioning were suggested.
- **Catch limits are not supported by industry:** This could lead to a race to fish and are more financially restrictive. However, they are easier to implement than pot limits. EU considerations and TCA would need to be considered.
- **High level of support for an increased MCRS for crab,** though it was noted that an increase could have disproportionate effects on certain areas where crabs are typically smaller.
- **RFID, IVMS, REM and AI** critical for enforcement and data collection.
- **Publishing enforcement records and increasing fines is supported.**
- **Spatial closures to >11 or >12m vessels in 6nm zone was supported.**
- **Harmonise national V-notching regulations:** Cornwall IFCA (Amend Crawfish order 2000 to include uropods 1 and 5) and prohibit the buying and selling of berried and v-notched lobsters, as even though they are illegal to catch and land, MMO can't enforce once a lobster is in a market.
- **Seasonal Crab closure is supported by inshore fishermen:** Larger vessels do not support this, as it could weaken the market for Cornish crab year-round in favour of producers in Scotland and Ireland who don't experience the closure. It could also displace effort onto lobster and cause people to lose crew.

Actions/next steps

Short term:

- Explore stricter penalties, particularly for berried lobster ban and size limit infractions
- Explore harmonising v-notching regulations and prohibiting buying/ selling berried and v-notched lobsters

Medium/longer term:

- Explore measures like crab MCRS increase, and spatial / seasonal closures

- Explore the implications of 'grandfather' rights for the pilots (trials)

17 October 2024- Day 2

FMP Design and Delivery- CSWC Demersal including skates & rays

Summary of activity

Session 1 gathered feedback on the most important species, based on biological, economic, and social factors. Session 2 identified concerns on individual species and potential solutions including *evidence requirements, management measures, goals and/or objectives*. Session 3 aimed to reassess the prioritisation from session 1.

Key points raised

Given below were some of the key points raised during the meeting.

1st session

- Economic importance was a dominant factor, with high priority ratings for lophius (monk/anglerfish), flatfish (sole, megrim, plaice) and gadoids (pollack, cod, haddock). As a mixed fishery, all species in this FMP are important. The impact of TACs on pollack, was also highlighted.

2nd session

- **Concerns** included the perceived impact of recreational angling, “*slipper skippers*” (Quota traded as a commodity), and flyseining. Other issues raised included the lack of stock assessment (for pollack, cod), slow government decision-making, and the FMP’s omission of hake as a key Cornish species, and UK-EU quota negotiations. Need to learn the lessons from pollack and consider how we shift towards multi-year management/rebuilding plans including introducing multiannual quotas.
- **Management solutions** included increased mesh sizes in line with appropriate MCRS (for pollack, sole and megrim), closed seasons, and TAC realignment management (sole and plaice). Additionally real time closures to prevent choke, alignment of commercial and recreational angling regulations. Species shifts due to warmer waters were seen to bring new fishing opportunities, noting this also came with challenges to the FMP stocks and the fishery.
- **Solutions for evidence building** included trawl surveys (for cod and pollack), strengthening other data streams, utilising FISP funding (or other funding) to improve evidence gathering, industry participation in evidence building and the use of REM.
- **FMP goals:** refining/simplifying technical conversation, considering a fly seining ban, developing a more agile fisheries policy, promoting the domestic market, such as for megrim. Consider how we develop appropriate multi-year harvest strategies and quota allocations. Understanding what ecosystem-based approach could entail.

3rd session

- For the species re-prioritisation, initial ratings largely remained unchanged.

Actions/next steps

Immediate/short term

- Compile all responses from the workshop into a feedback document to be circulated to attendees of the event and publish on the MMO landing page¹

Medium/longer term

- Utilise information provided to feed into the development of the FMP, target prioritise and explore management options supporting these priorities for future engagement.

¹ [Celtic Sea and Western Channel demersal Fisheries Management Plan \(FMP\) development - GOV.UK](#)

Negotiations - Strategy, plans & ways of working

Summary of activity-

The Defra negotiations team held a session to focus on understanding stakeholder views on opportunities for FMPs to inform the TAC setting process.

Key Points

- **Data Timeliness and Monitoring:** ICES data is delayed by 2 years, causing reactive management instead of proactive. Attendees keen to see real-time data to enable responsive decisions. Attendees have observed stock collapses, such as pollack and crawfish, before the data reflects these changes.
- **Need for REM:** There is strong support improve both scientific data collection and fisheries enforcement, particularly against illegal EU activities. It should be introduced in phases across the fleet.
- **Funding and Capacity Improvements:** Views of Cefas as under-resourced for timely data production. Better funding or external support could enhance Cefas's role in supplying faster, high-quality data.
- **Gold Standard Scientific Input:** Cefas's scientific data is highly regarded globally, and there is an opportunity for the UK to provide "gold standard" data that would strengthen its negotiating position in ICES and EU negotiations.
- **Improving FMP-Negotiation Linkage:** The FMP process needs structural adjustments within DEFRA and MMO that could help align with EU work. A dedicated negotiations forum involving the industry is suggested to facilitate strategic planning.
- **Learning from International Models:** Establishing a UK equivalent of the EU's STEFC (Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries) could strengthen UK strategy. Other models, such as US fisheries councils advising NOAA, could also offer useful frameworks.
- **Longer-Term Approach: Beyond annual negotiations:** Attendees favour year-round collaboration with the EU and suggested more transparency in the ongoing SCF (Special Committee on Fisheries) and working groups.

Actions/next steps

Medium/Longer term

- Consider how we make better use of socio-economic data on the value of the fisheries to inform management approaches and annual consultations with other coastal states.
- Consider workshop to look at whether a multi-year harvest strategy within the Celtic Sea Demersal FMP for a species or group of species could be developed and implemented and how this would inform annual/multi annual negotiations with the EU. [workshop to include Government, fisheries managers, Scientists and fishing sector representatives]
- Short term project – to review Government and industry collaboration and process before, during and after negotiations, with the aim of improving outcomes and reducing lost time between stages.

Potential Future funding

Summary of activity-

Attendees gave views on the content of future schemes (what should we fund and why, and where funding should be limited) and on changes to future scheme design. While all ideas may not be viable, this was a chance to have an open discussion on all possible ideas.

Key points raised on the content of future schemes:

- Targeted investment for community benefit (e.g. harbour cranes, refrigeration and storage etc), so there is more than one beneficiary. Harbour infrastructure will be key
- Science partnerships with commercial fishers to address FMP evidence gaps
- New entrant schemes and new entrant training will be key
- Consider decommissioning boats, rather than propping up failing businesses
- REM should be considered for future funding
- Stop supporting gear and vans through grants schemes
- Consider the age of a vessel when retrofitting it

Key areas to fund in the future were identified as:

- New boats
- Electric impact
- Infrastructure, new entrants and jobs
- Engines, vessel storage and improvements
- Training, health and safety
- Aquaculture

Key points raised on scheme design and future delivery:

- Fisheries and Seafood Scheme (FaSS) should be prioritised for those projects that benefit the most people and that are linked to FMPs
- Longer term budgets rather than annual process
- Fisher expertise required on panels and at events
- Support for limiting the amount of funding going to a particular part of the scheme and Majority support for limiting the amount of funding one organisation can receive.
- Mixed steers provided on match funding rates
- Clarity and transparency on the application process and assessment of applications is required
- Increased communications and lead-in times to make funding more accessible

Actions/next steps

- **Short term:** Engage with more stakeholders across the country in the coming months. Inputs will be collated with information gathered from this event and we will propose areas of improvement for funding in the short and long term.

- **Medium term:** Use the Cornish fishing strategy as a key focal point for development of funding policy.

Day 3- 18th October

Fishing priorities in Cornwall

Summary of activity -

Defra outlined current and future MPA management in the region and the legal and policy commitments to manage fishing activities that may be damaging to designated habitats and species. Fishing industry noted the challenge of current and future MPA measures contributing to spatial squeeze alongside the Crown Estate offshore renewable energy proposals in the Celtic Sea.

Key points raised

- Current and Future management measures will cause significant impacts on the fleet if they cover their key grounds, combined with windfarm allocation this could be significant.
- Questions were asked about whether management measures can take account of impacts on the ability of fishing fleet to catch and produce food.
- All fisheries byelaws for future MPA measures subject to consultation and Ministers will make final decisions on whether to introduce draft byelaws based on the evidence provided through consultation. Fishers were encouraged to submit evidence to consultations.
- MMO and IFCA's develop byelaws based on advice and evidence from Natural England and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee. Concern was raised about the evidence base and particularly the lack of site-specific information on habitats and their condition.
- Consideration of doubling up floating wind (no return to fish) and MPA's if proven to achieve some recovery within the site.
- Spoke about how engage fishers through this process (e.g. letting them engage with the data at an earlier stage) and mitigations for spatial squeeze.
- Suggestion from industry for TCE as part of their nature recovery plans to consider supporting the collection of evidence in existing MPA's to give up to date information for management.
- Review of the existing EIA process for offshore renewables, a focus on floating wind difference to fixed wind due to the fact fishing will not return to the site.

Actions/next steps

Immediate/short term

- CFPO (and national fishing organisations) to encourage fishers and fishing companies to feed into public consultations once live.
- Defra and MMO to ensure regular engagement with the fishing industry during consultations.
- CFPO to continue to feed information on fishing grounds into Crown Estates spatial planning tool.
- Ensure fisheries data collected for OSW discussions are fed into MPA

processes.

- Review of EIA process for offshore wind/renewables.

Conclusion

Feedback from the event evaluation forms highlighted positive outcomes and areas for improvements. Positive comments were about the inclusive approach, collaborative discussions, and diverse representation of stakeholders, as well as the interactive format and emphasis on practical issues like FMPs and sustainability. Having policy leads in the room worked well. Constructive suggestions included improving the clarity of complex topics, better time management for discussions, and expanding the geographic reach of future events. Attendees also requested clearer communication about how their input will influence decision-making, more regular follow-up engagements, and broader involvement from additional stakeholders, such as recreational fishers or environmental groups.

Over the three days we learned just how effective face-to-face engagement can be—not only in building trust but in gaining a deeper understanding of the perspectives and challenges that shape the lives of those in the fishing community. Being in the same room allowed everyone to connect on a different level, breaking down common misconceptions and fostering more empathy. Many attendees shared how valuable it was to meet directly with policy teams; the chance to communicate in person not only strengthened trust but also dispelled some of the persistent myths about government's role.

Looking ahead, Defra are committed to keeping everyone up to date with our progress and will follow up with a meeting in April with attendees to discuss progress against actions as set out in this report. While some actions may show more significant advancement than others, the April meeting will provide a valuable checkpoint to review progress, address challenges, and refine our approach if needed. This session will be an opportunity for attendees to review progress, share insights and if there are specific concerns about feasibility, we welcome further discussion to address them.

Annex 1- Table of Actions

Area	Action	Timeframe
FMP Programme	Defra will clarify roles and responsibilities in FMP governance, covering both the current and any planned changes, and share with stakeholders	Immediate
	Maintain inclusivity and facilitate on going, constructive dialogue across FMPs and fisheries management	Immediate
	Transition to co-design	Long term
	Focus on long term sustainability and strategic policy development	Long term
Bass	Consider how to tighten the Registration of Fish Buyers and Seller’s regulations	Short term
	Explore the removal of dual gear authorisations (allowing one or the other)	Short Term
	Consider how to improve compliance/enforcement communications	Short Term
	MMO to improve clarity of online guidance (i.e. catch limits, annual allocations, authorisations) before 31 December 2024 and work with industry to finalise	Short Term
	Consider options for improved commercial discard recording and reporting	Longer Term
	Explore options for improving rates of recreational removals recording	Longer Term

Area	Action	Timeframe
	<p>Consider the impact of an increase on the current 5% per trip bycatch cap</p> <p>Consider increasing red mullet net size from 68mm to 72mm to reduce juvenile bass bycatch</p>	<p>Longer Term</p> <p>Longer Term</p>
Crab & Lobster	<p>Explore stricter penalties, particularly for berried lobster ban and size limit infractions</p> <p>Explore harmonising v-notching regulations and prohibiting buying/ selling berried and v-notched lobsters</p> <p>Explore the implications of ‘grandfather’ rights for the pilots (trials)</p> <p>Explore measures like crab MCRS increase, and spatial / seasonal closures</p>	<p>Short Term</p> <p>Short Term</p> <p>Short Term</p> <p>Medium</p> <p>Medium/Longer term</p>
CSWC Demersal	<p>Compile all responses from the workshop into a feedback document to be circulated to attendees of the event and publish on the MMO landing page - Celtic Sea and Western Channel demersal</p>	<p>Short Term</p>

Area	Action	Timeframe
including skates & rays	<p data-bbox="427 244 1227 277">Fisheries Management Plan (FMP) development - GOV.UK</p> <p data-bbox="427 368 1760 448">Utilise information provided to feed into the development of the FMP, target prioritise and explore management options supporting these priorities for future engagement.</p>	Longer Term
Negotiations- Strategy, plans & ways of working	<p data-bbox="427 464 1738 539">Consider how we make better use of socio-economic data on the value of the fisheries to inform management approaches and annual consultations with other coastal states.</p> <p data-bbox="427 596 1783 762">Consider workshop to look at whether a multi-year harvest strategy within the Celtic Sea Demersal FMP for a species or group of species could be developed and implemented and how this would inform annual/multi annual negotiations with the EU. [workshop to include government, fisheries managers, scientists and fishing sector representatives]</p> <p data-bbox="427 820 1805 895">Short term project – to review government and industry collaboration and process before, during and after negotiations, with the aim of improving outcomes and reducing lost time between stages.</p>	<p data-bbox="1843 464 2018 496">Longer Term</p> <p data-bbox="1843 655 2018 687">Longer Term</p> <p data-bbox="1843 815 2000 847">Short Term</p>
Potential future Funding	<p data-bbox="427 1090 1805 1209">Engage with more stakeholders across the country in the coming months. Inputs will be collated with information gathered from this event and we will propose areas of improvement for funding in the short- and longer term</p> <p data-bbox="427 1267 1603 1299">Use the Cornish fishing strategy as a key focal point for development of funding policy</p>	<p data-bbox="1843 1090 2000 1121">Short Term</p> <p data-bbox="1843 1281 2036 1313">Medium Term</p>

Area	Action	Timeframe
Day 3- Fishing Priorities in Cornwall	CFPO (and national fishing organisations) to encourage fishers and fishing companies to feed into public consultations once live.	Short Term
	Defra and MMO to ensure regular engagement with the fishing industry during consultations.	Short Term
	CFPO to continue to feed information on fishing grounds into Crown Estates spatial planning tool.	Short Term
	Ensure fisheries data collected for OSW discussions are fed into MPA processes.	Short Term
	Review of EIA process for offshore wind/renewables	Short Term

