



Department
for Environment,
Food & Rural Affairs



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Fisheries Management Plan for Celtic Sea and Western Channel pelagic species

Engagement Report

February 2026

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Summary

This document provides an overview of the stakeholder engagement undertaken as part of the development of the Celtic Sea and Western Channel pelagic Fisheries Management Plan (FMP). It outlines the overall approach to stakeholder engagement, summarises key engagement events, and describes additional communication methods used throughout the process.

The Celtic Sea and Western Channel pelagic FMP is part of the fourth tranche of FMPs commissioned by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). The plan covers herring, sardine (pilchard), horse mackerel (scad), anchovy, and greater silver smelt within English and Welsh waters of ICES areas 7e, 7f, 7g, and 7h. While Defra and the Welsh Government hold legal responsibility for developing the FMP, the plan was developed in partnership with a diverse group of stakeholders, which the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) set up, provided the secretariat for, and chaired.

The development of this FMP was funded through Defra's marine Natural Capital and Ecosystem Assessment (mNCEA) programme, which enabled the integration of broader evidence and collaborative working approaches.

Approach to stakeholder engagement

Stakeholder mapping and analysis

Prior to beginning engagement, the team conducted extensive stakeholder mapping and analysis to identify individuals and groups relevant to the development of this FMP. This process drew on evidence of activities and interests related to the fish stocks, their associated ecosystems, and wider uses of the marine space. For example, fishing activity data was used to identify vessels that had caught FMP stocks. In addition, a snowballing approach was employed, where initial contacts were asked to share information within their networks and recommend other potentially interested stakeholders.

To ensure engagement was appropriately tailored throughout the FMP's development, stakeholders were grouped into one of three categories: *collaborate*, *inform*, or *build capacity*. Categorisation was based on expert knowledge, both internal and external to the FMP development team, and involved scoring stakeholders according to their stated or anticipated level of interest, influence, potential to be impacted by changes in management, and relevant expertise. For each category, a tailored engagement and communication plan was designed to meet the specific needs of the stakeholders within it. Those identified to *collaborate*, were invited to join the FMP Partnership described in the next section, while those identified to *inform or build capacity* were contacted to ask if they would like to receive updates, and invited to join wider engagement events, as appropriate. This approach followed the guidance set out in the Engagement Toolkit (available on request) developed by the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) Evidence and Evaluation Team.

Working collaboratively

FMP Partnership

In March 2024, a dedicated partnership was established to guide the development of the Celtic Sea and Western Channel pelagic FMP. Led by the MMO, the Partnership brought together a diverse group of stakeholders representing organisations, sectors, and communities that could be impacted through changes in the management of the stocks included in this FMP, as well as those with an interest in, and/or responsibility for the management of, the stocks and the ecosystem they are part of. This included representatives from Defra, the Welsh Government, marine regulators, statutory nature conservation bodies (SNCBs), the commercial fishing industry, recreational fishers, environmental non-governmental organisations (eNGOs), scientists, and other key marine users operating in the FMP area.

Stakeholders were identified through the stakeholder mapping process outlined above and categorised under the 'collaborate' level of engagement, reflecting their central role in shaping the FMP. The Partnership's purpose was to co-design and co-develop the FMP, including defining its vision, agreeing on key priorities to guide its development, reviewing and adding to a wide range of evidence on the current and projected future status of the fish stocks and the people who depend on them, as well as the wider ecosystem, and developing the FMP policy goals and actions. The Partnership's membership evolved throughout the year in response to ongoing stakeholder mapping and engagement and to ensure the appropriate expertise was available at different stages of the FMP's development.

The Partnership approach was designed to represent a diverse range of interests, while minimising stakeholder fatigue. The use of representatives and their role within the Partnership aimed to minimise the engagement burden on members of groups or organisations that might otherwise all be required to feed into the development process individually. This was considered particularly important by the FMP development team given the increasing demands on stakeholder's time due to ongoing policy and marine management consultations.

Although the Partnership was structured around representative participation, several additional fishers from the Cornish Sardine Management Association (CSMA) attended the first meeting in addition to their designated representative. They were welcomed into the meeting and actively participated in the discussions. Their presence highlighted the significance of the sardine fishery to them and their strong commitment to the CSMA and the benefits it provides. Within the Partnership, the number of representatives was not intended to reflect the relative importance of any stakeholder group. Seeing the fisher's strong desire to be involved, the development team arranged a separate in-person meeting open to all CSMA members. This allowed for a more detailed discussion on the specific challenges and opportunities facing the Cornish sardine fishery, ensuring all voices felt heard, while also maintaining a manageable and fair structure to representation in the Partnership itself.

During the first Partnership meeting, some gaps in representation were identified. In most cases where this was raised, the individuals or organisations flagged as missing had already been contacted by the FMP development team but had declined to be involved, been unable

to participate due to other commitments, or had responded to confirm that their interests were broadly represented by existing members of the Partnership. In all these cases these organisations were added to the inform list instead, unless they asked to be left off emails. In a small number of cases, additional Partners were identified that had not originally been contacted; these were then contacted and added where interest was confirmed. Following these additions to the Partnership, feedback from Partners overall indicated that representation within the Partnership covered the key concerns and interests of the wider stakeholder community.

In addition to core Partnership members, observers also played a role in the development process. For example, ICF, who are leading a programme-level evaluation of FMPs for Defra, participated as an observer, to support learning and continuous improvement across the wider FMP programme.

A full list of organisations and groups represented in the Partnership can be found in Annex A.

Note: While attendance at meetings varied among members, those listed in Annex A were included in the circulation of Partnership communications. This included invitations to meetings, meeting notes, supporting materials, and draft documentation, such as preliminary versions of FMP policies and the FMP document itself. Partners were able to nominate substitutes to attend meetings on their behalf when necessary. In some cases, more than one representative from the same organisation or group attended a meeting. This reflected the evolving nature of the FMP's development and the need for different types of expertise at different stages. The inclusion of multiple representatives allowed organisations and groups to draw on varied expertise, knowledge and lived experiences, ensuring that discussions were informed by a broad range of perspectives. A record of the Partnership meetings is provided in the 'Partnership working' section below.

FMP Technical Working Group

A Technical Working Group was established to provide expert advice, share technical knowledge, and support the development of both the evidence base and the FMP itself. Chaired by Natural England, the group included representatives from Defra, the Welsh Government, Cefas, Natural England, the Environment Agency, the MMO, Natural Resources Wales, and the Association of Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities (AIFCA).

The Technical Working Group played a key advisory role, particularly during the early stages of FMP development when the focus was on gathering and analysing evidence. It provided technical oversight and helped ensure that the FMP, throughout its development and from an early stage, aligned with legal requirements, ministerial direction, and the application of the natural capital approach. To strengthen coordination and ensure continuity between technical and strategic decision-making, several members of the Technical Working Group also sat on the Partnership.

The group met regularly during the initial stages of FMP development to build and review the evidence base. As the plan development progressed, and as agreed by group members, meetings shifted to a more ad hoc basis, with subsets of members contributing expertise and

reviewing evidence as needed. For example, the Defra policy teams and the Welsh Government reviewed and approved the policies early in their development to ensure they were practical and achievable, reducing the need for last-minute changes before the final FMP submission. Cefas provided a technical review of key Policies in a separate meeting. It was agreed that the Partnership itself could provide the oversight needed as a collective in the latter stages of development and that the Technical Working Group would not need to meet as a group to finalise development. An overview of the Technical Working Group meetings and what they covered can be found in Annex B.

Wider stakeholder engagement

A variety of communications and engagement activities took place to engage stakeholders beyond the core Partnership and Technical Working Group. This included outreach to the commercial fishing industry, recreational anglers, and eNGOs. Where possible and appropriate, the FMP development team coordinated engagement activities with other Tranche 4 FMPs and made use of existing engagement platforms, such as the Regional Fisheries Groups, to avoid creating entirely new events and helping to avoid duplication and address ongoing concerns around stakeholder fatigue. A summary of these engagement activities is provided in the 'Wider stakeholder engagement' section. All feedback and evidence gathered through these channels was logged in an evidence inventory and considered in the development of the FMP. The details of how this information was gathered, and where it is stored, is outlined in the FMP Evidence Statement.

Note: Throughout the development of this FMP, there was comparatively limited interest from stakeholders outside of the Partnership, especially when compared to the Celtic Sea and Western Channel demersal FMP. This difference likely reflects the nature of the two different FMPs, including the number of stocks covered, the scale of the relevant fisheries, and the specific challenges they face. It may also be attributed to the nature of the pelagic FMP Partnership itself, which brought together a wide range of diverse stakeholders within a single collaborative group, reducing the need for separate engagement with each sector. An evaluation of the FMP is currently being conducted and is intended to offer an understanding of the benefits of Partnership working.

Election engagement pause: It is important to note that during the run-up to the general election in 2024, there was a pause on engagement that is a mandatory requirement in government. This meant it was not possible to engage with the Partnership or wider stakeholders during this time. However, the Partnership was informed of this pause at the start, and the FMP development team was able to meet with them soon after the cessation of this period. No impact on the co-development of the FMP was noted due to this engagement pause.

Partnership working

First Partnership meeting

Overview: An in-person event to establish a shared understanding of the Partnership's role and to identify key challenges and opportunities the FMP could address.

Date and time: 26th March 2024 from 16:00–19:30.

Location: In-person at Paul Community Church Hall in Mousehole, Cornwall.

Attendees: Members of the FMP Partnership.

Summary of event: The MMO chaired the meeting, as agreed upon by the Partners. The primary aim was to bring Partners together for the first time to:

- Build a shared understanding of the Partnership’s purpose and its role in developing the FMP.
- Identify and discuss key challenges and opportunities the FMP could address from the perspective of Partners and the organisations or groups they represent.

The Chair opened the meeting with an overview of the Partnership’s purpose, its alignment with the FMP development process, and how this is outlined in the group’s Terms of Reference.

Participants then introduced themselves, the organisations or communities they represent, and their motivations for joining the Partnership. Following introductions, attendees split into two groups to discuss their respective interests and activities related to FMP fish stocks and the ecosystems they are part of. After a short break, the full group reconvened to explore:

- Priority challenges and opportunities for the FMP.
- The types of evidence (e.g. data, knowledge, information) needed to understand these issues.

Before closing, the group discussed a draft vision for the FMP and identified potential gaps in representation, highlighting individuals or organisations that should be invited to join the Partnership.

A feedback survey was distributed during the meeting to gather Partner input on logistics (e.g. meeting times, hybrid participation options) and other areas for improvement.

The key priorities identified by the Partnership during the meeting were as follows:

- Addressing both inshore and offshore management and activities.
- Incorporating existing effective management practices into the FMP.
- Considering the full supply chain and recognising the social, cultural, and economic value of fisheries to coastal communities.
- Preventing overfishing of non-quota species.
- Ensuring regulatory flexibility to enable adaptive management.
- Exploring sustainable new fisheries and responding to shifting stock distributions due to climate change.
- Aligning FMPs with broader policies and promoting cross-FMP collaboration (e.g. bycatch management).
- Engaging all levels of government (from local to international) to integrate wider marine activities and future forecasting (e.g. climate change, offshore wind).
- Enhancing the domestic market for high-value fish and encouraging local consumption.

- Recognising culturally significant fisheries and the role of healthy fish stocks, especially in the context of climate change.
- Embedding an ecosystem-based approach and ensuring compliance with legislative frameworks such as the Fisheries Act and the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act.

Next steps: The priorities identified by the Partners were subsequently reviewed by the FMP development team, cross-referenced and aligned with relevant national and international legislative requirements and priorities, and synthesised into a set of overarching high-level priorities to guide the next stages of the FMP’s development. These were shared with Partners as part of the 2nd Partnership meeting. The high-level priorities were as follows:

- Healthy fish stocks, sustainable exploitation: *“Fish stocks in this FMP are exploited sustainably and biomass levels are at levels capable of producing maximum sustainable yield (MSY), or other sensible proxies set for their exploitation. Their populations are healthy and viable meaning they can continue to be exploited sustainably going forward.”*
- Minimising fishing impacts: *“The wider ecosystem effects associated with fishing for these fish stocks are minimised. These include minimising any harm due to bycatch and discarding, entanglement and ghost fishing, climate change contributions, and changes in the food web associated with over-exploitation of these stocks.”*
- Viable livelihoods: *“Fisheries management for these stocks will support domestic livelihoods and long-term economic stability and viability by providing equitable access to fishing opportunities and minimising uncertainty and risk throughout the sector and associated value chains.”*
- Social benefits: *“The FMP supports the management of fish stocks and associated fishing activities in ways that reflect and maintain the wider social benefits they support, including their cultural significance, their contributions to the wellbeing of fishers, their families and communities in the UK.”*
- Healthy ecosystem: *“The ecosystem essential to supporting the viability and sustainability of these fish stocks is healthy and functioning as needed.”*
- Collaborative management: *“Fisheries management of these stocks is collaboratively developed ensuring high levels of stewardship and compliance through ongoing partnership with diverse stakeholders. This will support fairness, transparency, and integrated decision-making across all governance levels, from local to international. Driven by a robust evidence base, this approach incorporates diverse knowledge, continuous learning, and innovation.”*
- Adaptive management for resilient fisheries: *“The management of these stocks is adaptive and flexible and builds on best practice and up to date knowledge to support resilience in the fishery, for example in response to regulatory change and climate change. Where needed management implements a precautionary approach to avoid undesirable social, ecological and economic impacts.”*

These priorities were not the FMP policies, but a framework to help ensure consideration of social, cultural, economic, and environmental evidence relevant to the both the top-down regulatory requirements of the FMP, as well as the bottom-up issues of importance to those impacted by the FMP.

Second Partnership meeting

Overview: A hybrid event bringing Partners together to review and build on FMP priorities, develop a shared understanding of the supporting evidence, and identify where the FMP can address key issues and opportunities through its policies.

Date and time: 30th October 2024* from 11:30–16:30.

*This meeting was postponed from earlier in the summer, due to the engagement pause necessitated by the pre-election period.

Location: Online via Microsoft Teams and in-person at YMCA Cornwall, Penzance.

Attendees: Members of the FMP Partnership.

Summary of event: The MMO chaired the meeting, as agreed by the Partnership during the initial meeting in March. The Chair opened the meeting with a recap covering:

- The purpose and policy context of FMPs.
- The collaborative partnership approach to developing this FMP.
- The current stage of FMP development.
- Actions from the previous meeting and how they had been addressed.

The aims of the second Partnership meeting were to:

- Review the priorities identified for this FMP, building on discussions from the first meeting and additional information incorporated since.
- Explore and develop a shared understanding of the evidence relevant to understanding the high-level priorities for the FMP (including on the status of the FMP fish stocks, the fisheries that target them, and the broader impacts on ecosystems, fishers, and associated communities).
- Identify where the FMP can address any issues or opportunities identified within the FMP policies.

The Chair then started the main session by providing an overview of the high-level priorities developed collaboratively for this FMP, along with a summary of the evidence pack that had been circulated to Partners in advance of the meeting.

Participants were divided into groups based on shared interests and areas of expertise to discuss key issues and evidence needs related to the high-level priorities. Groups had the opportunity to rotate, respond to each other's points, and share feedback in two plenary sessions.

The meeting concluded with a discussion on next steps.

Next steps: Additional evidence sources recommended by the Partnership, as well as evidence supplied during the meeting, were recorded and followed up on to help further develop the evidence baseline being used in support of developing the evidence statement and FMP policies. The key issues and opportunities identified through the group discussions and plenary feedback sessions were then taken forward by the FMP development team and used to develop an initial draft set of policy goals and actions. The draft policies were designed to directly reflect the priorities identified by the Partnership, the issues and opportunities highlighted by the evidence, and the relevant legislative requirements. The

draft policies were supported by detailed rationales, enabling Partners to clearly see how the various inputs (Partnership priorities, evidence, and legal obligations) had come together to inform and shape the proposed direction of the FMP.

The seven draft policy goals developed were as follows:

1. Pursue the improvement of datasets for all stocks, and to allow for an assessment of MSY or a suitable proxy for stocks that cannot currently be assessed at this level.
2. Harvest FMP stocks sustainably, with the overall aim of maintaining or restoring biomass of FMP stocks above the level capable of producing MSY or a suitable proxy, in line with scientific evidence and advice, adopting a precautionary approach to (domestic) fisheries management if an MSY assessment is not available.
3. Identify and support the implementation of ecosystem-based fisheries management approaches for pelagic fisheries in the Celtic Sea and Western Channel where appropriate.
4. Understand and reduce the impacts of fisheries for FMP stocks on non-target species, marine habitats and climate change, including by reducing any risks from bycatch.
5. Improve our understanding of and help realise the economic, social and cultural benefits of pelagic fisheries.
6. Facilitate a collaborative and adaptive management approach to support fair, effective, and transparent decision-making for sustainable and resilient fisheries.
7. Better understand the risks to FMP stocks from other fisheries and non-fishing pressures, and work to reduce negative impacts where possible.

These draft policy goals were not final. The goals, along with their associated actions, were subject to further iteration and refinement through ongoing discussions at subsequent Partnership meetings and stakeholder engagement, including meetings with Defra policy and implementation teams.

Third Partnership meeting: part 3a

Overview: This was the first of two sessions making up the third Partnership meeting, focused on introducing the draft FMP policies.

Date and time: 5th March 2025 with two time slots at 09:00–12:00 and 14:00–16:00.

Location: Online via Microsoft Teams.

Attendees: Members of the FMP Partnership.

Summary of event: The MMO chaired the meeting, with support from the Defra lead for this FMP. The Chair began by introducing the aim of the meeting and an overview of the expected next steps in the FMP's development. This included an explanation of the rationale behind structuring the 3rd Partnership meeting in two parts:

- **Partnership meeting 3a:** introduction to the draft FMP policies.
- In-between meetings - a chance for Partners to provide meaningful feedback on the draft FMP policies [either in written responses or in separate meetings].
- **Partnership meeting 3b:** full Partnership meeting to show how feedback has been incorporated into the draft policies and finalise them together.

Partners were then guided through a series of slides outlining the approach and steps taken to develop the FMP. This included a process diagram illustrating the journey from the initial scoping stage through to the development of draft policies (full details of this will be published in the Evidence Statement). The presentation also explained how Partnership input had informed and guided each stage of the process so far, and how it would continue to shape the next stage of development.

The draft FMP policies were then introduced, with opportunities for feedback and discussion throughout. The feedback received on the policies was positive, with some suggestions regarding minor alterations to the wording.

The session concluded with a brief update on the ongoing evaluation exploring the feasibility of applying a natural capital approach to FMP development. This included an outline of the evaluation's aims, methodology, and expected outputs. The update was followed by a summary of the timeline for next steps, including how and when Partners could provide their feedback

Next steps: Following the meeting, a document containing the draft FMP policies was shared with Partners. This document included detailed action-level rationales and was presented in the form of a workbook, complete with guiding questions to support Partners in reviewing the policies and providing structured feedback. Between meetings 3a and 3b, the FMP development team actively sought and actioned feedback from the Partnership on the draft policies. At the request of a Partnership member, this process included an in-person meeting with representatives from the Cornish Sardine Management Association to discuss actions specifically related to sardine management (see 'Wider stakeholder engagement' section for further details). It also involved engaging with various Defra policy teams and MMO operational teams to test and refine the draft actions, ensuring they were legally compliant, feasible, and implementable within existing resource constraints. This early engagement aimed to reduce the likelihood of significant changes to the policies being required during Defra's internal and legal review of the FMP itself. An updated version of the draft policies was then shared with Partners ahead of meeting 3b.

Third Partnership meeting: part 3b

Overview: This was the second of two sessions making up the third Partnership meeting, focused on showing Partners how the policies had evolved with their input.

Date and time: 30th April 2025 at 10:00–15:00.

Location: Online via Microsoft Teams, with an option to join in person at the YMCA Cornwall, Penzance.

Attendees: Members of the FMP Partnership.

Summary of event: The MMO Chair opened the session by recapping the meeting aims:

- To collectively review updates to the FMP policies.
- To reflect on the Partnership approach to developing the FMP so far and how collaboration could continue.

The Chair provided an overview of FMP implementation, placing it within the broader context of the FMP programme and its phased delivery across different tranches. This included a

discussion around the language used in FMP policies and the legal considerations behind this. This was intended to ensure transparency around why certain wording can or cannot be used within FMP policies, particularly from legal and feasibility perspectives. Following this, the group reviewed the latest changes to the draft FMP policies. Each change was explained in detail, including the rationale behind it. Where feedback had not resulted in changes, such as when suggestions were deemed unfeasible, this was also clearly communicated to maintain transparency in the decision-making process. Questions and clarifications were taken and discussed during the presentation.

The session then moved onto an outline of the next steps, including the timeline for the next round of policy amendments, key dates for Defra's internal review, final submission, public consultation, and finally publication. The group participated in a reflective session on the collaborative approach taken to develop the FMP so far. Partners were invited to share their views on what had worked well, what could be improved, and how this approach could or should evolve as the FMP progresses through review, submission, consultation, and eventual implementation. All Partners who provided feedback agreed that the collaborative approach had been valuable and should continue. There was discussion around the resources required to maintain the Partnership and whether it should remain in its current format or evolve into smaller, more focused groups to align with specific policy areas. The general consensus was to maintain the larger Partnership group to avoid siloed working and ensure shared oversight, while allowing individuals to engage more flexibly in focused discussions around specific implementation issues, based on their expertise and interests.

Next steps: Following the meeting, the FMP development team continued refining the draft policies and progressed with drafting the FMP document itself. This work focused on clearly demonstrating the connections between the evidence presented in the document and the proposed policies. The goal was to produce a well-structured and transparent draft that showed how each policy was grounded in evidence and aligned with the Partnership's input. This was done in preparation for sharing a complete draft version of the FMP document with the Partnership for feedback in early June.

Partnership online briefing: pre internal review of FMP

Overview: An online briefing to walk Partners through the draft FMP document before submission to Defra for internal review.

Date and time: 4th June 2025 at 14:00–15:00.

Location: Online via Microsoft Teams.

Attendees: Members of the FMP Partnership.

Summary of event: The meeting began with the Chair outlining the aim of the session: to introduce Partners to the full draft FMP document, walk them through any changes that had been made to the policies, and explain the next steps for providing feedback. Partners were informed that the session would be recorded to allow those unable to attend, or those wanting to revisit the content, an opportunity to reflect on the content in their own time. The Chair also provided an update on the next steps in the development of the FMP.

This was followed by a detailed walk-through of the FMP draft document, including the rationale behind the inclusion and organisation of each section. For example, it was

explained that the species were presented individually in response to Partner feedback that this would be the best approach due to there being quite different interests and issues to consider between the stocks. Partners were guided through each section of the document, from the introduction and species summaries, through to the environmental considerations and the FMP policies. The walk-through included explanations of the content, the reasoning behind the inclusion of key things, and how each section linked to the FMP policies. Throughout the session, Partners were given opportunities to ask questions and provide feedback, ensuring the process remained open and collaborative.

Next steps: Following the meeting, Partners were provided with a link to a shared folder containing the draft FMP document and invited to review and provide feedback. Once the feedback had been received, the FMP development team carefully reviewed the responses and used them to further refine the document in preparation for submission to Defra's internal review process.

Partnership online briefing: post internal review of the FMP

Overview: An online briefing to walk Partners through the refinements made to the draft FMP policies post-QA and provide an overview of the Evidence Statement structure and approach.

Date and time: 18th September 2025 at 10:30–12:00.

Location: Online via Microsoft Teams.

Attendees: Members of the FMP Partnership.

Summary of event: The meeting began with the Chair outlining the aim of the session: to walk Partners through the updates that had been made to the draft FMP policies (where relevant) since the last online briefing in June, and to provide an overview of the structure and content of the Evidence Statement. Partners were informed that the session would be recorded to allow those unable to attend, or those wanting to revisit the content, an opportunity to reflect on the content in their own time.

This was followed by a walk-through of the refinements to the FMP goals post-QA and pre-consultation with an explanation for each change. A brief overview of changes made to the FMP document itself was also given e.g., to explain that the length of the document had been reduced while retaining the relevant information. Then, Partners were shown the draft Evidence Statement and given an update on the stage of development, a summary of how it had been put together (including with evidence from the Partnership), and a guided look at each of the sections. Finally, next steps for the FMP's development, consultation, and implementation were discussed. Throughout the session, Partners were given opportunities to ask questions and provide feedback, ensuring the process remained open and collaborative.

Next steps: Following the meeting, Partners were provided with a link to a shared folder containing the draft Evidence Statement document and invited to review and provide feedback. Once the feedback had been received, the FMP development team carefully reviewed the responses and used them to finalise the document in preparation for handover to Defra.

Note: It is important to note that in developing the FMP policy goals, many Partners called for more ambitious and prescriptive actions, such as implementation of targeted REM trials

and monitoring for static nets. While these requests were acknowledged and considered, the final wording necessarily reflects constraints around the of actions was scaled back due to concerns about feasibility, resourcing, and legal requirements associated with delivering policy goals and their supporting actions, including the need for alignment with wider Defra programmes. These challenges were openly discussed with the Partnership throughout development, including during Partnership Meeting 3b, which included a detailed discussion around the language used in FMP policy goals and the legal considerations behind this. This approach was intended to ensure transparency. Ongoing Partnership collaboration

The MMO have funding for the remainder of the financial year 2025/2026, to continue to chair and secretariat the Partnership. The aim of this continued collaboration will be to identify how to continue to work collaboratively into implementation, monitoring and review, and to begin work together to plan out how the actions in the FMP can be implemented and make progress in implementing them where possible.

In addition, there is an ongoing evaluation being undertaken by the MMO's Evidence and Evaluation Team to assess the extent to which the natural capital approach can be applied in developing this FMP, which includes investigating how the Partnership has supported the FMP's progress and outcomes.

Wider stakeholder engagement

A description of the wider stakeholder engagement events is given below. Next steps are not recorded as these were the same for all events, with all feedback and evidence shared recorded in our evidence inventory, and actions taken where noted. Information gained through these events was then used alongside the wider evidence collated through the review and co-development process the development team undertook with the Partnership.

Introductory stakeholder webinar

Date and time: 17th April 2024 at 13:00–14:30.

Location: Online via Microsoft Teams.

Attendees: Hosted by MMO. Representatives from the teams developing the Celtic Sea and Western Channel pelagic, Celtic Sea and Western Channel demersal, and Wrasse and Seabream FMPs presented.

Summary of event: The aim of the webinar was to introduce the tranche 4 FMPs and delivery partners, inform stakeholders about how they could get involved in the development of the plans, and answer any questions stakeholders might have. During the introduction to the Celtic Sea and Western Channel pelagic FMP, a short presentation covered the geographic scope and coverage of stocks and described the approach being taken to co-develop the FMP. Attendees were then asked to respond to three questions which aimed to understand the priorities of those in attendance. 13 people responded, and the questions and a summary of the responses can be found in the table below:

Questions	Summary of responses
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<p><i>Are there key changes to fisheries management needed for these stocks in this area?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better management and mitigation of bycatch of non-target species such as mammal, birds, sharks, and rays. • Changes to nature and size of species stocks. • Conservation and management of herring stocks and spawning grounds. • Incorporation of ecosystem-based approach to management.
<p><i>Are there other priority issues this FMP should tackle?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bycatch (sensitive species, harbour porpoise, mammals, seabirds, sharks). • View sardine and anchovy stocks not just as fisheries but as important prey resource for predators. • Changing distributions of species with climate change. • Impact of offshore renewable development.
<p><i>Are there particular organisations, sectors or communities who we should engage with?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental non-governmental organisations. • Marine planning teams in the Welsh Government and MMO. • Clean Catch programme. • General public.

South West Regional Fisheries Group

Date and time: 5th September 2024 11:00–12:30.

Location: Online via Microsoft Teams.

Attendees: Fishers part of the South West Regional Fisheries Group, MMO, relevant IFCAs and Defra.

Summary of event: The Celtic Sea and Western Channel pelagic FMP development team had a slot within a South West Regional Fisheries Group meeting to introduce fishers to the species and geographic areas covered by the FMP. The presentation also covered who holds legal responsibility for delivering the FMP, namely Defra and the Welsh Government, and emphasised that the plan was being developed in Partnership with a broad range of stakeholders.

The FMP development team’s contact details were shared, and fishers were encouraged to get in touch if they were interested in learning more or becoming involved in the development process. No particular issues were raised by those attending regarding this specific FMP.

Additionally, fishers were informed about a survey being developed by the team to explore the importance of the FMP stocks, the benefits of fishing, views on current management, and the challenges faced by commercial fishers. A link was shared to complete the survey during the event. Further details on the survey and its findings can be found in the Evidence Statement for this FMP.

Fisher Social Survey

Date: October-December 2024.

Location: The survey was distributed via email, social media, and hard copies were made available.

Attendees: In total, 18 complete surveys were submitted.

Summary: The Celtic Sea and Western Channel pelagic FMP Social Survey was developed by the MMO's Evidence and Evaluation team to start to address some of the social evidence gaps surrounding the Celtic Sea and Western Channel pelagic FMP. The target audience of the survey was commercial fishers (including those now retired) who had landed any of the stocks covered by the FMP in the last 5 years. The survey contained 5 sections that collected information about:

- 1) The respondent and their fishing practices.
- 2) Benefits of fishing.
- 3) Importance of FMP stocks.
- 4) Views on current fisheries management.
- 5) Challenges faced and responses.

A full copy of the survey is available in the Evidence Statement, where further information is given on the findings.

Angling Trust Forum

Date and time: 14th November 2024 18:30–20:15.

Location: Online via Microsoft Teams.

Attendees: Hosted by Angling Trust. Representatives from the teams developing the Celtic Sea and Western Channel pelagic, Celtic Sea and Western Channel demersal, and Wrasse and Seabream FMPs presented.

Summary of event: An introduction covered what an FMP is, why recreational fishers should be involved in the development of FMPs, the timeline tranche 4 FMPs are working to, and progress that had been made to date. For the pelagic FMP slot, the team introduced the area and species the FMP covers, how partnership working and wider evidence is being used to develop the FMP, and evidence relating to recreational activity and interest in the pelagic stocks and the ecosystem they are part of. The email address for the FMP's shared mailbox was provided to attendees, and they were encouraged to get in contact with the team if they were interested in the development of the FMP and/or had information they would like to share. There was an opportunity for those in attendance to ask questions, but no questions were raised.

In general, limited interest was raised from recreational anglers regarding this specific FMP, in any of the engagement undertaken.

eNGO Introductory meeting

Date and time: 19th November 2024 from 15:00 –16:00.

Location: Online via Microsoft Teams.

Attendees: 10 representatives from invited eNGOs. Hosted by MMO.

Summary of event: The aim of the event was to introduce eNGOs to the tranche 4 FMPs and delivery teams. eNGOs had been identified during stakeholder mapping for the respective FMPs, and they were emailed directly to invite them to attend the event. Representatives from the teams developing the Celtic Sea and Western Channel pelagic, Celtic Sea and Western Channel demersal, and Wrasse and Seabream FMPs presented to the eNGOs in attendance. An introduction covered what an FMP is, the timeline tranche 4 FMPs are working to, the progress that had been made to date, and an overview of the evidence FMPs receive from the SNCBs. For the pelagic FMP slot, the team introduced the area and species the FMP covers, how partnership working and wider evidence is being used to develop the FMP, and the three high-level environmental priorities developed in partnership for the FMP (healthy fish stocks, sustainable exploitation, healthy ecosystem, and minimising fishing impacts).

Attendees at the event had the opportunity to ask questions, which included queries about how the Fisheries Act objectives aligned with the identified priorities, and whether those priorities were shaped more by stakeholder input or by legislative requirements. In response, the FMP development team explained that the Partnership includes representatives from Defra, the MMO, Welsh Government, IFCAs, and a broad range of stakeholders. As such, the priorities reflect both stakeholder contributions and statutory obligations, with policy makers and regulators in the Partnership ensuring alignment with legislative frameworks.

The priorities were developed collaboratively, incorporating issues raised by Partners and linking them to the objectives of the Fisheries Act and other relevant legislation. To illustrate this, attendees were shown an example of a high-level priority, highlighting the legislative commitments and Partnership-driven considerations that informed its development.

Note: several eNGOs are represented within the Partnership, identified through the stakeholder mapping and analysis process. The purpose of this event was to ensure broader visibility of the FMP's development among eNGOs and to provide an opportunity for wider input.

Port visits

Date: 26th–29th November 2024.

Location: A series of port drop-in events in Mevagissey, Newlyn, Padstow, Ilfracombe and Plymouth.

Attendees: The events were hosted by MMO's Regional Fisheries Group Team with representation from the teams developing the Celtic Sea and Western Channel pelagic and Celtic Sea and Western Channel demersal FMPs. 28 people attended in person, including 27 from the commercial fishing industry, with the highest attendance (16) in Plymouth.

Summary of event: Most feedback received during the port visits related to demersal species and shellfish. However, comments relevant to the pelagic FMP focused on the sardine and tuna fisheries, with some mention of herring.

Several fishers expressed a desire for equal access to tuna, especially for those unable to target it directly but that still interact with it through bycatch in pelagic fisheries. There was some concern about the impact of tuna predating on target pelagic species. One fisher raised concerns about tuna caught as bycatch (such as in the pelagic fisheries) lowering market value for those targeting tuna under licence. Positive feedback was shared by a family who had received a tuna licence, describing it as a 'financial lifeline'. However, it was noted that as a new fishery, more learning is needed to secure better market prices.

Fishers highlighted the cultural importance of the herring fishery, particularly in spring when herring are caught and sold locally. A concern was raised about ring-netting methods removing mackerel and affecting local charter boat catches. Further development of the nuclear power station at Hinkley Point C, was also mentioned as a concern for the herring fishery.

A comment was made about the seasonality of different species such as herring and how traditionally fishers would switch between species throughout the year. Fishery closures were seen as problematic, focusing effort on fewer species. This was seen as a serious problem for smaller boats, which are restricted spatially. Climate change was noted as a factor that is likely to exacerbate this problem, impacting the abundance and distribution of species.

Additional, broader feedback included:

- FMPs were generally seen as a good idea, but fishers stressed that no one was feeling any change yet.
- There was a strong feeling that the government should improve transparency and communication with the industry, especially around timelines, as industry have no certainty on whether to invest in new gear without knowledge of fisheries opening or closing.
- Fishers raised that the number of small-scale boats is declining rapidly, such as in Plymouth.
- There was some feedback that management should be regional and could have more of a separation between the recreational and commercial sectors. However, there was also feedback that management should be national as larger boats will simply relocate.
- General feeling that the commercial fishing industry is not against remote electronic monitoring (REM), but the cost is felt, and they are uncertain why they should pay for it.
- Fishers reported a perceived disconnect between owners of vessels and those working on board, indicating that operational decisions are made with different perspectives.

Meeting with the Cornish Sardine Management Association (CSMA)

Date and time: 25th March 2025 from 11:00 – 13:00.

Location: In-person at Penlee Lifeboat Station, Newlyn.

Attendees: Members of the FMP development team, the Cornish Sardines Management Association (CSMA) and a Cefas representative who works closely with the CSMA.

Summary of event: An in-person event to provide an opportunity for members of CSMA beyond those directly involved in the Partnership to discuss and input their views on the FMP with the development team. The meeting was held to give members of CSMA a chance to discuss actions in the FMP related to sardine with the development team, as they felt that given the large numbers of stakeholders and interests represented in the Partnership it was not always possible to have their voices heard. The meeting was attended by four members of the FMP development team, and seven members of CSMA, plus a Cefas staff member who works closely with the CSMA on their assessments. The meeting followed an informal and unstructured format, with discussion being led by the interests and concerns raised by attendees from the CSMA.

Topics covered in the meeting broadly included:

- The reasoning behind and issues with the current catch advice limits set by ICES according to the 1-over-2 rule.
- Existing data collection carried out by the CSMA and how this data is currently and could potentially be used to support assessments of sardine stocks for less precautionary catch limits.
- The need for the inter-benchmark assessment Cefas could prepare for ICES, to allow for a move to a constant harvest rate harvest control method and how this related to them continuing to hold their MSC certification.
- How the MSC certification helped them to access the market and to maintain a viable fishery in the area.
- Existing management of the sardine fishery already implemented by CSMA and how this might be incorporated into the FMP.
- The importance, challenges and concerns relating to MSC certification, including the threats to certification from lack of management of EU vessels targeting the fishery.
- The viability and opportunities in the fishery, including for new entrants, as well as limitations relating to low catch limits, geographic constraints on landing locations, and wider socio-economic factors.
- The importance of the fishery and associated industries for local economies.
- Issues of predation by tuna and concerns around conflicting conservation interests.

Through the meeting, several immediate actions for the FMP development team to implement were identified, including updating the FMP to include using data already collected in the sardine fishery, moving actions that would help improve catch limit advice for sardine into short term actions in the FMP, and capturing information on factors affecting fishing opportunities and wider management considerations in the context of MSC certification in the evidence. A range of other longer-term actions were also identified, such as how to get CSMA data utilised by central government and organising future in-person meetings between the FMP development team and CSMA to discuss changes.

FMP mailbox

During the development of the FMP, there was a dedicated mailbox set up for stakeholders to contact the FMP development team to receive and/or share information relating to the FMP's development. The mailbox was also used to manage invitations and availability for upcoming meetings, and to answer any queries regarding the FMP. The MMO managed this mailbox, and this will continue to be used as development is finalised.

Annex A

Partnership membership

Partner/observer	Organisation/team
Chair and secretariat	MMO – Evidence and Evaluation team
Partner	Defra - Policy EU Negotiations and Quota
Partner	Defra - Non-Quota Species
Partner	Defra - FMP Policy
Partner	Defra - Domestic Fisheries and Reform
Partner	Defra - Celtic Sea Policy
Partner	Welsh Government - Policy
Partner	Welsh Government – Fisheries Science
Partner	MMO - FMP Team leading Celtic Sea and Western Channel demersal FMP
Partner	MMO - FMP Implementation
Partner	MMO - Quota Management
Partner	MMO - Regulatory Assurance (South West and South)
Partner	MMO - Regional Fisheries Groups (South West)
Observer	MMO - Marine Conservation Team
Partner	Devon & Severn IFCA
Partner	Cornwall IFCA

Partner	Southern IFCA
Partner	Pelagic FMP Technical Working Group
Partner	Natural England
Partner	Cefas - Evidence lead for Celtic Sea and Western Channel pPelagic FMP
Partner	Cefas - Fisheries Science
Partner	Cornish Sardine Management Association
Partner	Interfish Ltd
Partner	Cornish Fish Producers' Organisation
Partner	Humberside Fish Producers' Organisation Ltd
Partner	Western Fish Producers' Organisation / Waterdance
Partner	Plymouth Fishing and Seafood Association (PFSA)
Partner	Welsh Fishermen's Association
Partner	North Devon Fishermen's Association
Partner	South West Handline Fishermen's Association
Partner	Under 10m PFSA fisher
Partner	Under 10m Clovelly herring fisher
Partner	W Stevenson & Sons and Ocean Fish
Partner	Pysk (a seafood shop in Falmouth)
Partner	Angling Trust

Partner	RSPB
Partner	Whale and Dolphin Conservation
Partner	Cornwall Wildlife Trust
Partner	Shark Trust
Partner	Marine Discovery Penzance
Partner	Crown Estate
Partner	Celtic Sea Developers Alliance / Marine Energy Wales
Partner	Pyramids of Life project, University of York
Observer	Fishing into the Future
Observer	ICF

Annex B

Summary of the Technical Working Group meetings held between August 2023 and January 2025. Following the meeting in September 2024 it was agreed that there was not a need to continue to bring the full TWG together and that sub-groups could be convened to cover any outstanding issues. This would complement input through the Partnership

Meeting date	Meeting Focus(es)	Meeting outcomes
August 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kick off meeting for the working group • Working Group terms of reference • project timelines • Core evidence requirements 	The group accepted the terms of reference, and project timelines and core evidence was agreed and understood
October 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholder mapping update for development of the FMP partnership. • Pyramids of Life presented work on ecosystem modelling, with support from Natural England and Cefas 	Natural England and Cefas discussed more in depth the use of ecosystem modelling within the FMP, and stakeholder mapping was completed
November 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided general project update • Presented steps to a natural capital approach best practice • Discussion on 'must have' evidence 	Natural Capital approach best practice was understood by fisheries experts, with concerns and opportunities fed in by the group
December 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work Package introductions • Communication guidance feedback 	<p>Partners discussed the interdependencies of work package to address more streamlined delivery of the FMP, and addressed gaps within the evidence work package to expand its scope</p> <p>Discussion on the language used within communications resulted in language changes in both Defra and Welsh Government.</p>
February 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership terms of reference • Developing best practice for an evidence baseline 	The terms of reference for the partnership were signed off by the working group, and discussion aided development of best practice for developing an evidence baseline
March 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural England's conservation advice package • Evidence mapping update • FMP minimum requirements 	<p>Group have clarity on what an FMP must consider legally, and how advice from Natural England feeds into that. The group highlighted areas for evidence collection outside of the scope of Natural England advice</p> <p>The group contributed evidence to lacking areas on the back of the evidence mapping update, strengthening the evidence base</p>

April 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updates from the first partnership meeting • Evidence commissioning prioritisation 	<p>The group understand priorities expressed by the partnership and were able to judge potential commissioned evidence projects against these.</p> <p>3 additional evidence projects were supported by the working group:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ecosystem modelling work 2. Understanding the state, threats, and management of relevant essential fish habitats 3. Mapping the benefits and beneficiaries relevant to the FMP
May 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of gear used to catch FMP species • What do we want from the fisheries from a government perspective? 	<p>The group was able to agree a process for the inclusion of different gears within conservation advice, considering misreporting.</p> <p>Experts from within government examined partnership priorities and highlighted alignment from a government perspective where appropriate and highlighted future direction in relation to these priorities that the development team needed to consider within policy goals and actions.</p>
June 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The impact of the general election on stakeholder engagement • Update on evidence plan • Approach to understanding management landscape, and the effectiveness of current management • Proposed structure of FMP document 	<p>Group understand the risks in not being able to hold a July partnership meeting and recommended appropriate work arounds.</p> <p>Group was able to provide feedback on FMP structure to best create a narrative document for stakeholders to understand.</p> <p>Agreement on the approach for understanding the effectiveness of management relevant to FMP.</p>
September 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update on FMP goal development 	<p>Group provided good steer on how the development team was planning on developing goals to reduce the possibility of legal challenge, and helped expand the process to address wider fisheries issues, in accordance with partnership priorities.</p>
January 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sub-group meeting on best direction of travel for stock assessments and management strategies 	<p>Advice provided that helped to update the relevant FMP policies being drafted.</p>