



Department  
for Environment,  
Food & Rural Affairs

# Seabream Fisheries Management Plan

## Engagement Report

February 2026

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## Summary

This report presents an overview of stakeholder engagement carried out by Marine Management Organisation's (MMO) Fisheries Management Plan (FMP) team and of the stakeholder feedback received that supported the development of the Seabream FMP.

The Seabream FMP forms part of the fourth tranche of Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) FMPs being developed for English waters.

Throughout 2024 and 2025, MMO used a series of engagement methods as part of both formal and informal engagement to:

- raise awareness about development of the Seabream FMP for English waters amongst stakeholders
- gather stakeholder concerns regarding seabream fisheries and record opportunities for the FMP.

## Stakeholder Identification

Prior to stakeholder engagement, interested FMP parties required identification. To do this, stakeholder analysis was carried out which involved first creating a list of all possible stakeholders relevant to the FMP and then assigning a category to each stakeholder (Collaborate, Consult, or Inform) based on various factors (see Annex 1). Those who were deemed to fall under the category of "collaborate" were approached to be part of the Working Group (WG) (see Annex 2). Detailed information on the criteria applied during stakeholder analysis can be found in Annex 1. The stakeholder list and associated assigned level of engagement was fluid and therefore changed as the FMP developed.

## Working group

To assist in the development of the Seabream FMP, MMO set up a WG. The purpose of the WG was to advise the FMP alongside MMO as the lead delivery partner. In addition, the WG had the function of a forum for engagement on the FMP, and members were encouraged to seek opportunities to engage the wider fishing industry (commercial and recreational) and other key stakeholders where appropriate to feed their views into the FMP's development.

The WG membership comprised of different fishing sector representatives (see Annex 2). These individuals were invited to attend WG meetings held online due to the large geographic spread of potential members. Members who could not attend online meetings were encouraged to provide feedback via email and one-to-one telephone

conversations. Although efforts were made to ensure that there was appropriate attendance at every WG meeting, external factors such as weather, work commitments and technology meant that some WG members were unable to attend meetings.

Throughout the preparation phase of the development of the FMP, MMO sought feedback and input from the group on fishery concerns, drafted elements of the FMP and potential opportunities that could be proposed in the first iteration. Detailed information on the number of attendees and links to published meeting notes can be found below in Table 1.

**Table 1: Seabream FMP Working Group meeting dates, attendance and links to meeting notes. OGDs stands for Other Government Departments, including IFCA's. Other includes those attendees from non-governmental organisations and academia.**

		Attendees							
Date	Purpose of Meeting	MMO	Inshore	Offshore	Recreational	OGDs	Other*	Total	Link to Meeting Notes
22/10/2024	Introduction to FMP and current fishery concerns	2	2	0	1	6	5	16	<a href="#">WG1</a>
12/12/2024	WG meeting to discuss draft policies and engagement plans.	3	2	0	1	8	4	18	WG2
26/02/2024	WG meeting to provide feedback from engagement events and updates to the draft policies.	5	3	0	2	7	4	21	WG3
28/05/2025	WG meeting to provide a walk-through of key sections of the draft FMP, followed by a Q&A session.	5	0	0	1	9	4	19	WG4

The WG were given the opportunity to review the full draft FMP. During the fourth WG meeting MMO FMP team provided an on-screen walk through of the key sections of the draft FMP. The sections of the draft Seabream FMP were as following: the scope and purpose; description of the fishery and stocks; fisheries managements; marine protected areas; environmental considerations; climate change; FMP vision; FMP policies; and implementation monitoring and review.

The description of the fisheries and stocks provided evidence from commissioned biological and ecological data, as well as key MMO landings data by species, gear type, vessel competency and more. Furthermore, an economic overview of the fishery and survey-based recreational data were included. The environmental considerations section included commissioned risk assessments of certain gear types associated with the FMP fishery on MPA-designated features and the impacts of achieving Good Environmental Status of UK Marine Strategy Descriptors. Draft policy goals included an associated rationale, evidence dependencies and stakeholder views.

A Q&A session with the WG members followed the walk through and two weeks were given for the WG to review the draft FMP and provide feedback.

## **January 2025 in-person South Coast engagement summaries**

As a critical first step in developing the Seabream FMP, MMO hosted several in-person events with stakeholders across the south coast. Workshops were used to gather detailed evidence and feedback on the issues related to the fisheries and the opportunities the FMP could consider. Drop-in sessions and quayside visits were used to optimise levels of engagement with a variety of stakeholders.

Stakeholders from the commercial and recreational fishing sectors, as well as wider interested stakeholders were invited to attend engagement events through direct contact, industry groups, social media posts and website blogs. The information gathered during this engagement gave MMO a steer on what stakeholders wanted to see prioritised within the FMP.

Workshops were held at key locations on the south coast throughout January 2025, as identified by online survey participants and MMO landings data. The first sessions were held on the 13 January in Mudeford and Poole and Shoreham on 15 January (ICES area 7d). Following on from engagement in the south and southeast, workshops were also held in the southwest, in ICES area 7e. Workshops were held in Plymouth on 27 January, Falmouth on the 28 January, and Weymouth on the 30 January, respectively.

In addition to the above events, a drop-in session took place in Littlehampton on the 16 January (ICES area 7d). Following this, there were several drop-in sessions in ICES 7e, including Mevagissey on 28 January, Mylor, Newlyn and Padstow on 29 January, and Lyme Regis on 30 January. The FMP team spoke to individuals such as vessel owners, industry group representatives, recreational anglers, charter vessel skippers and academics.

Across all the in-person events held in January 2025, 56 stakeholders, from the commercial sector, the recreational sector, and academics, were engaged with and their

views obtained regarding this FMP. IFCA representatives of the district were also present in multiple workshops.

Workshop Location	Number of Attendees
Mudford	10
Poole	12
Shoreham	9
Plymouth	2
Falmouth	2
Weymouth	10

Drop-in Location	Number of Attendees
Littlehampton	2
Mevagissey	5
Mylor	0
Newlyn	2
Padstow	2
Lyme Regis	6

Stakeholders were introduced to the Seabream FMP and encouraged to share any issues and concerns they have regarding the fishery, before being asked what solutions and opportunities they think the FMP could look to take forward. Summarised feedback from this engagement can be found below.

### Stakeholder workshops: results

**Mudford workshop:** A total of nine stakeholders attended this workshop, with two from the recreational sector and seven from the commercial sector. Furthermore, one representative from Southern IFCA was also in attendance.

#### Seabream species abundance:

- Attendees agreed that black seabream (*Spondyllosoma cantharus*) are abundant, with some commercial fishers considering targeting them more in the future. A charter vessel skipper noted that, due to their abundance, black seabream constitutes a considerable proportion of their income as they can be fished from April to October.
- There were reports of very few gilthead bream (*Sparus aurata*) being caught locally.

#### FMP-specific concerns and suggested solutions:

- Of the issues discussed, habitat loss was one of the greatest concerns. There was a consensus that sand and debris from dredging and local beach replenishment activities may be smothering reef areas, an important nesting habitat for black seabream.
- A charter vessel skipper reported concerns that the retention rate for black seabream by the recreational sector can be very high.
  - There was general support for a bag limit for black seabream to be implemented, with up to six fish being recommended by two stakeholders from the recreational sector. A charter boat skipper recommended that any bag limits are legislated as a voluntary measure may be taken advantage of.
- There was agreement that the current minimum conservation reference size (MCRS) for black seabream is too low. Commercially, retailers reportedly have no interest in the small fish caught at the MCRS.
  - All attendees agreed that the MCRS should be raised, with some suggesting that an increase to around 28cm-30cm would be acceptable due to commercial viability. There were also recommendations to set maximum conservation reference size (MaxCRS) limits or introduce slot sizes.
- Stakeholders supported the need for a stock assessment and attendees from the recreational sector encouraged developing a method for charter vessel skippers and customers to voluntarily record their catches.

#### Additional FMP-related comments:

- Stakeholders reported that black seabream survivability is good.
- Commercial stakeholders were broadly supportive of management for black seabream as fishers may rely on this species more in the future.

**Poole workshop:** A total of 11 stakeholders attended this workshop, with three from the recreational sector, five from the commercial sector, two from academia and one

representative from Dorset Wildlife Trust. Furthermore, there was one representative from Southern IFCA in attendance.

#### Seabream species abundance:

- There was general agreement that the abundance of black seabream has increased over recent years, and that they are now seen throughout the year.
- Large gilthead bream were reportedly caught locally, with one stakeholder targeting this species throughout the year.

#### FMP-specific concerns and suggested solutions:

- One angler mentioned that there may be identification issues between black seabream and gilthead bream.
  - Identification guides were recommended to ensure there is accurate recording of seabream species.
- There was a consensus that the current MCRS for black seabream is too low as commercially, black seabream cannot be sold at this length.
  - Suggested opportunities for the FMP included a recommendation from a commercial fisher to increase the black seabream MCRS to at least 26cm to 27cm.
  - Similarly, a commercial fisher who targets gilthead bream, estimated an appropriate MCRS for this species may be 26cm to 28cm.
- Concerns were also raised amongst recreational stakeholders regarding high retention rates of black seabream by anglers.
  - All stakeholders present were supportive of a bag limit, recommending that one is legislated. Furthermore, it was strongly believed by those within the recreational sector that a bag limit would not impact the charter fleet economically but help protect it by ensuring stocks remain stable.
- The issue of habitat degradation was also raised in this workshop, with all attendees agreeing that the beach replenishment processes will have an impact on reef ecosystems.
  - Attendees widely supported further investigation into the impacts that beach replenishment activities have on the wider marine ecosystem.
- The lack of life history data for black seabream in English waters was highlighted by a marine ecologist as a concern, particularly regarding the lack of data on nesting seabream.
- Stakeholders generally agreed that a stock assessment is required to assess changes in the seabream populations, which may highlight the need for further management.
- Voluntary handling guidelines for the recreational sector were suggested.

**Shoreham workshop:** A total of seven stakeholders attended this workshop, with three from the recreational sector and four from the commercial sector. Furthermore, two representatives from Sussex IFCA were in attendance.

Seabream species abundance:

- There were reports that black seabream are abundant locally, with the growth in population generally attributed to the closure of the pair trawl fishery.
- Several stakeholders agreed that fewer sizable fish were caught inshore.
- Attendees generally agreed that black seabream can now be found throughout the year
- Good numbers of small gilthead bream were reportedly seen in the local harbour.

FMP-specific concerns and suggested solutions:

- Attendees agreed that the current IFCA legislated black seabream MCRS are too small as fish cannot reasonably be sold at this size.
  - Stakeholders agreed that amending the MCRS for black seabream should be a priority of the FMP. Recreational and commercial fishers supported the introduction of a slot size that is appropriate for both sexes, with an MCRS of around 25cm to 30cm and a MaxCRS of around 45cm being suggested.
  - One recreational fisher noted that shore anglers may not get the same opportunity to catch black seabream at 30cm as fish tend to be smaller near the shoreline
  - Black seabream between 500 to 800g were said to receive a good value commercially. It was recommended that MMO establishes a method to calculate a length for an MCRS that corresponds with this preferred weight.
- One charter vessel skipper articulated that during the height of the season their guests sustainably retain around 200 black seabream each per day. As a result, it was also suggested that the recreational landings of black seabream are far higher than represented in the Sea Angling Diary data. Despite this, there was general concern amongst attendees that the retention rate of black seabream by anglers is too high.
  - There was a difference in opinion on the suggestion of bag limits. A charter vessel skipper highlighted that their business would be at risk if bag limits were implemented, emphasising the socioeconomic importance of the charter boat industry to coastal communities.
  - A range of other attendees showed support for a bag limit, but no number was agreed upon.
- The lack of data collected on seabream species was raised as a concern.

- It was recommended that more research is conducted to better understand black seabream and gilthead bream abundance, ecology and life history traits.
- Several commercial fishers were receptive to recording estimates for the number of black seabream they catch.
- Predation from other overpopulated species was also raised by several fishers as an issue.
  - There were calls for FMP to assist with creating markets in the UK for some of the less desirable species that predate on commercially important species. This could help with population control and generate another income for fishers.
- Finally, habitat degradation issues related to kelp loss and water pollutants were raised by several stakeholders, with concerns raised around wider ecosystem impacts.

**Plymouth workshop:** A total of two academic stakeholders attended this workshop.

Seabream species abundance:

- The tagging studies that one attendee works on have indicated that black seabream are resident year-round. The black seabream in these studies also seem to display high site fidelity.
- There was a general understanding that gilthead bream can be found in more estuarine environments.

FMP-specific concerns and suggested solutions:

- One stakeholder highlighted that a future challenge could be managing any predictable behaviour that gilthead bream display when moving offshore to spawn, noting this could be taken advantage of.
- From their experience, recreational fishers appeared receptive to the suggestion of a bag limit for black seabream, with many having a self-enforced limit already in place.
- There were reports of stakeholders looking at voluntary recreational measures to increase post-release survivability of seabream, such as increasing the use of circle hooks.
- There was a recommendation that counting the number of nests in an area may be a method to better understand black seabream populations and reproductive output. Furthermore, increasing our knowledge of nesting sites outside of the Marine Conservation Zones may also help us to better understand the impacts of habitat degradation.

- It was suggested that raising the MCRS for black seabream may allow them to reproduce better as fish caught and retained at the current MCRS are more likely to be newly sexually mature males.

**Falmouth workshop:** A total of two stakeholders from the commercial sector attended this workshop.

Seabream species abundance:

- Stakeholders noted that the abundance of black seabream has increased considerably, however, they are not seen year-round. September is reportedly the best time to catch black seabream.
- One stakeholder highlighted there is a good stock of Couch's bream, red porgy (*Pagrus pagrus*), hereafter referred to as Couch's bream, which they have been targeting over the last five years. There is roughly one black seabream for every 15 to 20 Couch's bream caught. While seabream fisheries are not common in the area, stakeholders recognised that there is potential for the fisheries to grow as water temperatures rise.
- One attendee had never caught a gilthead bream locally while the other catches them on occasion near estuaries in shallow water.

FMP-specific concerns and suggested solutions:

- Couch's bream had been added to the Catch App, however, fishers reported that Pandora's bream, common pandora (*Pagellus erythrinus*), was not available.
  - One of the top priorities for attendees was to improve species-specific data. It was suggested that additional seabream species are added to the Catch App.
- With regards to the management of commercial fishing for black seabream, there was a discussion around the development of a black seabream quota for commercial fishers. It was suggested that a stock assessment would likely be required before a quota could be implemented.
  - Attendees did not believe that restrictions to mesh size would be effective as black seabream sizes vary considerably, and their rounded shape means they can get caught in nets very easily.
  - It was noted that some countries have black seabream pot trap fisheries, and that this method may reduce bycatch.
- The current MCRS for black seabream was thought to be too small to be commercially viable, attendees highlighted that they often cannot sell specimens under 300g.

- Stakeholders recommended that the MCRS is increased, suggesting that a new size limit corresponds to a weight of black seabream that can be sold for a reasonable price at market.
- Concerns were raised regarding high retention rates of black seabream by recreational fishers.
  - The stakeholders were supportive of a bag limit for black seabream, suggesting that if implemented, it should be legislated.
- There were reports that some EU vessels target large quantities of sizable gilthead bream off Gurnsey and Jersey.
- Reportedly, it is difficult for fishers to compete with farmed seabream that is abundant year-round.
  - It was suggested that the FMP could help to create a larger market for wild-caught seabream in the UK.

**Weymouth workshop:** A total of eight stakeholders attended this workshop, with two from the recreational fishing sector, four from the commercial sector and two recreational divers. Furthermore, two representatives from Southern IFCA were in attendance.

Seabream species abundance:

- Black seabream abundance was said to have increased over recent years, believed to be due to warming sea temperatures.
- Attendees confirmed that black seabream can be found year-round and are thought to have longer or multiple breeding seasons throughout the year.
  - A charter vessel skipper noted that their guests can sometimes struggle to catch anything that is not a black seabream.
  - A commercial fisher emphasised that they believe there will be an increasing reliance on seabream in the future.
- Commercial fishers reported that there is an increased abundance of gilthead bream. However, a charter vessel skipper mentioned that they rarely have any gilthead bream landed by their guests. An angler suggested that this may be due to gilthead bream moving around in groups, making them difficult to catch.
- Couch's bream are said to be increasing in abundance, however, the population is still thought to be relatively small.

FMP-specific concerns and suggested solutions:

- The greatest concern amongst attendees was that the current MCRS for black seabream is too small and that fish caught at the MCRS cannot be sold.

- There was a consensus between the attendees from the recreational and commercial sector that the MCRS should be increased to around 28cm to 30cm. Further, there was a recommendation that the size limit should be aligned with the size of a 4-inch mesh to limit the risk of increasing discards
- Stakeholders were receptive to the suggestion of an MCRS for gilthead bream, with several attendees suggesting lengths of around 30cm to 32cm.
- Concerns were raised regarding the retention of black seabream by some members of the angling community.
  - There was general support to implement a bag limit for black seabream. A charter vessel skipper suggested a limit of six to eight fish to which the group was neutral. There was also a consensus that if introduced, a national bag limit should be made mandatory to ensure the rules are the same for all.
  - Issues around the enforcement of bag limits were raised, with some questioning whether they could be policed effectively.
  - It was suggested that more can be done to educate anglers on the importance of catch and release and reasonable retention. Leaflets in tackle shops and angling clubs were recommended to help advertise recreational management to increase accessibility.
- With regards to having a quota for black seabream, a commercial fisher queried whether each boat could receive an independent quota annually, which would enable them to manage their own fishery. Furthermore, stakeholders highlighted that vessel size, and the seasonality of the fishery would need to be considered if developing a quota.
- Commercial fishers agreed that enforcement is typically focussed on the commercial fleet, with small pleasure boats often being overlooked.
- Stakeholders expressed that they feel there is a lack of accountability and transparency from Defra in their decision making.

## Stakeholder drop-in sessions

**Littlehampton drop-in:** A total of two stakeholders from the commercial sector attended this drop-in session.

- Attendees believed that there is no longer a black seabream fishery in the area since the closure of the pair trawl fishery.
- One fisher noted that black seabream is a welcome bycatch when they fish for bass.
- Large gilthead bream were reportedly being caught in the area, with this species receiving a good value at market.
- A fisher recommended considering a change in mesh size and seasonal closures to reduce the number of dead fish being discarded.

- Attendees supported the use of recreational bag limits to help encourage reasonable rates of retention.

**Mevagissey drop-in:** A total of one stakeholder from the commercial sector attended this drop-in session. A further discussion was had with four commercial stakeholders on the quayside.

- Stakeholders reported that they catch black seabream, gilthead bream and some Couch's bream. It was generally thought that there are not particularly large numbers of any of the seabream species in the area.
- Black seabream over 500g can reportedly be sold for a good value at market. Couch's bream also receive a very good price.
- Several fishers agreed that it is likely that red seabream are misidentified as another seabream species.

**Mylor drop-in:** No stakeholders attended this drop-in session.

**Newlyn drop-in:** Two stakeholders from the commercial sector attended this drop-in session.

- Attendees emphasised that there is a large abundance of black seabream in the area and that their sizes have remained consistent over recent years. Furthermore, black seabream are also being found throughout autumn and into winter.
- Some gilthead bream have been caught locally.
- Couch's bream are reportedly becoming more common.
  - One stakeholder mentioned that this species can sometimes be misidentified as gilthead bream.
  - There was a concern that there are currently no restrictions on Couch's bream, which are a commercially viable species.
- Pandora's bream were said to be relatively common around Newquay. There were concerns raised that this species may also be misidentified as Couch's bream.
- Both stakeholders confirmed that black seabream under 500g are not commercially viable and are often discarded.
  - An increase in the MCRS for black seabream was supported.

**Padstow drop-in:** Two stakeholders from the commercial sector attended this drop-in session.

- The attendees were not aware of any commercial targeting of seabream in the area and highlighted that it may be a popular fishery in the future.

- Both fishers have caught Couch's bream in crab and lobster pots.
- Stakeholders recommended that to improve sustainability, over 10-meter vessels should not be allowed within the 6nm boundary.

**Lyme Regis drop-in:** Six stakeholders attended this drop-in session, with five from the recreational sector and one commercial fisher, who also works with the charter fleet.

Seabream species abundance:

- There was a consensus that stocks of black seabream are good, with this species now being found throughout winter.
- It was generally agreed that the average size of black seabream has decreased.
- Anglers reported that the abundance of gilthead bream has increased over recent years.
- There was a report that several Couch's bream have been caught in the last year.

FMP-specific concerns and suggested solutions:

- Concerns were raised around the lack of enforcement of regulations.
- There was a consensus that the top priority for the FMP should be to implement an MCRS for seabream species that do not currently have one in place and increase the MCRS for black seabream. There was a recommendation to calculate the MCRS at whatever the breeding size for the species is plus two years of growth.
  - Most stakeholders supported increasing the MCRS to around 30cm.
  - There was general support toward the consideration of a slot size for black seabream.
- Stakeholders agreed that the fact that farmed fish are sold below MCRS in a shop may skew angler's perception of what an acceptable retention size may be.
- The recreational fishers recommended improving the information flow with anglers to strengthen compliance. Advertising management in tackle shops and angling clubs was suggested.
- Attendees were mostly supportive of the introduction of a bag limit, with general agreement towards a bag limit of around five fish. A charter boat skipper did note that although local anglers may be content with a five fish bag limit, tourists who specifically take a trip to the coast to fish may find this value too restrictive.
  - There was unanimous support for a bag limit to be legislated to avoid ambiguity. A charter boat skipper explained that they would find it easier to enforce a statutory limit amongst guests.

- It was recommended that if a bag limit is imposed on recreational anglers, there should be a quota or catch limit placed on commercial fishers. Furthermore, it was suggested that quotas can take a considerable amount of time to be implemented but once in place, they can be adapted relatively quickly. As a result, there was a call to arrange for a quota to be established for the commercial fleet. Even if the quota is very large to begin with, if required, it could enable management of the fishery to be more efficient in the future.
- There were several proposals to implement gear restrictions because of reports indicating high levels of seabream bycatch when using nets.
- One stakeholder mentioned that in France, fish sold in supermarkets are often labelled as 'farmed' or 'wild-caught', the difference of which is also reflected in the price. There was a consensus that this labelling could help consumers make more of an educated decision when they purchase seafood. There was a consensus that the FMP could help to improve the marketing of the FMP species.

## Online engagement

### Stakeholder webinar

To supplement the in-person engagement in 2025, the FMP team hosted an online session open to all stakeholders with an interest in the FMP who could not attend the coastal sessions. A total of seven stakeholders attended the online workshop, with participants from the recreational sector and Environmental Non-Governmental Organisations (eNGOs). Furthermore, two representatives from Southern IFCA and one Defra colleague were in attendance. A summary of the feedback received can be found below:

- It was suggested that any MCRS implemented for seabream species aligns with the size that female seabream spawn.
- There was general support for a stock assessment to be developed for seabream species.
- An eNGO representative recommended that the FMP could use action oriented 'SMART' targets to ensure progress can be evaluated effectively.
- A stakeholder from the spearfishing sector emphasised that their members see significantly more seabream than are caught by fishers.

### Angling Trust Forum

On 14 November 2024 the Angling Trust held an online forum to engage specifically with recreational anglers. The focus of the forum was to discuss the issues and

concerns that recreational anglers have regarding the seabream fishery and make suggestions that the FMP may be able to take forward. A total of 19 anglers attended this online session. A summary of the feedback from recreational sea anglers can be found below:

Seabream abundance:

- An increased abundance of gilthead bream was reported in Swanage and Weymouth.
- A stakeholder noted that small gilthead bream can be caught in Sussex during September. They also indicated that the black seabream stock is increasing in this area.
- There were mixed reports regarding trends in the size of black seabream caught by anglers. One angler noted that the average size of black seabream caught has decreased. By contrast, another angler mentioned that the average size of black seabream caught in the Kingmere Marine Conservation Zone has increased.
- A bag limit of around six black seabream per angler per day was considered reasonable by several attendees.
- It was reported that a seasonal closure for seabream would be unpopular amongst stakeholders, with concerns around enforcement raised.

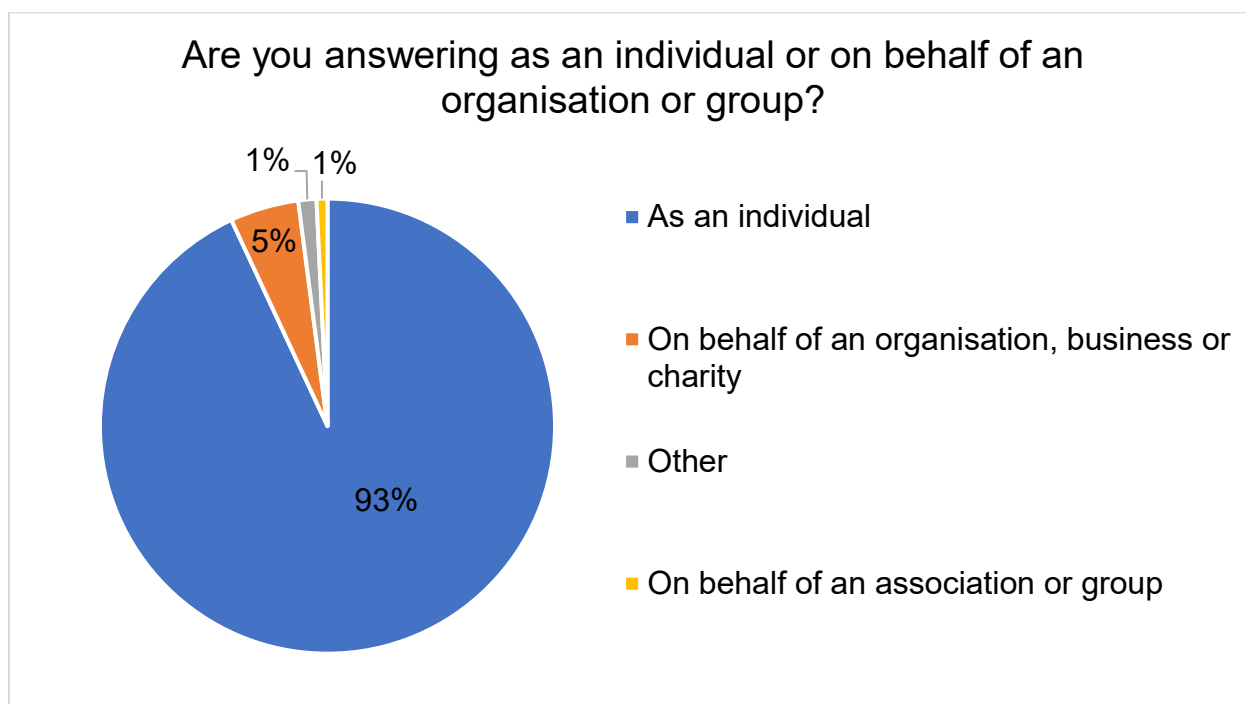
## Online survey

To obtain the views of as many interested stakeholders as possible, we launched an online survey to help us better understand the interest in the black seabream and gilthead bream fisheries and the effectiveness of current management. The survey collected views for both the Seabream FMP and the Wrasses Complex FMP.

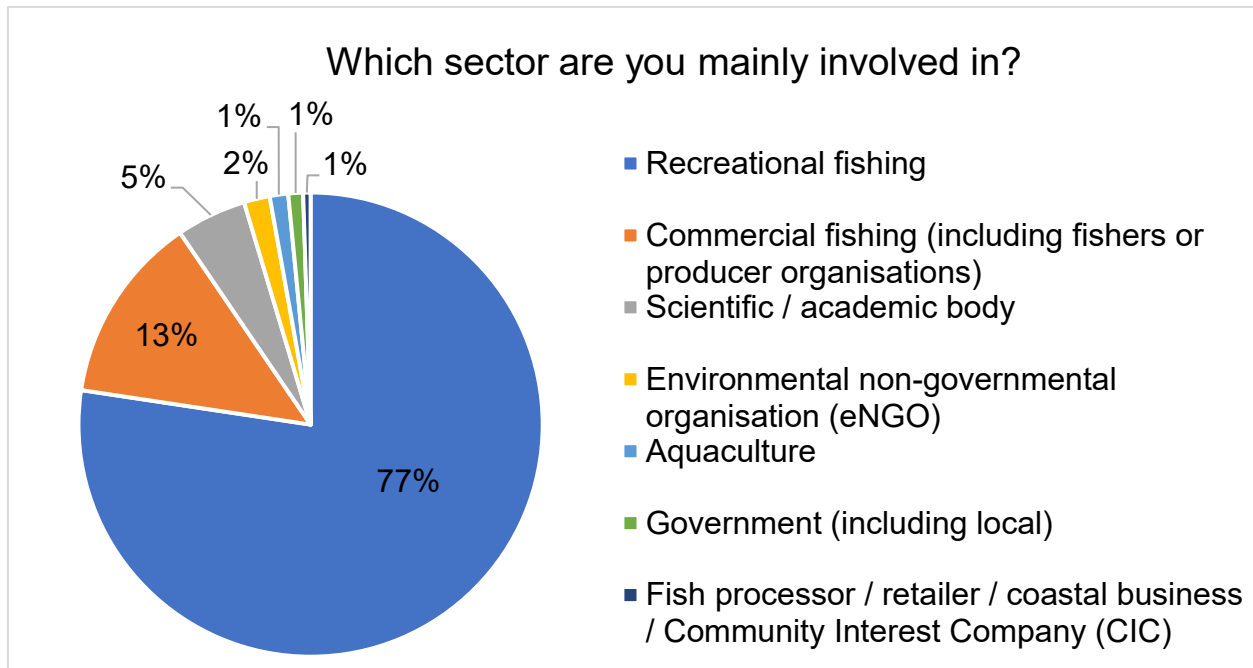
Stakeholders were also invited to share any issues, concerns and positive aspects they have about the fisheries as well as suggest potential solutions or improvements for the key issues or measures. The online survey was open from 6 September 2024 until 31 January 2025, during which time a total of 398 responses were received from both commercial and recreational fishers, as well as representatives from Fish Producer Organisations, eNGOs, academics and members of the public. The online survey questions can be found in the Annex of the supporting FMP Evidence Statement.

The following demographic information represents all survey respondents, with interest in both the Seabream FMP and the Wrasses Complex FMP. Figure 1 shows that 398 people answered the question on their representation for the survey response. 362 of those that answered (93%) were responding as an individual, 19 (5%) on behalf of an organisation, business or charity, 5 (1%) other and 3 (1%) on behalf of an association or group. Figure 2 shows that the majority of survey respondents (301 out of 398) selected

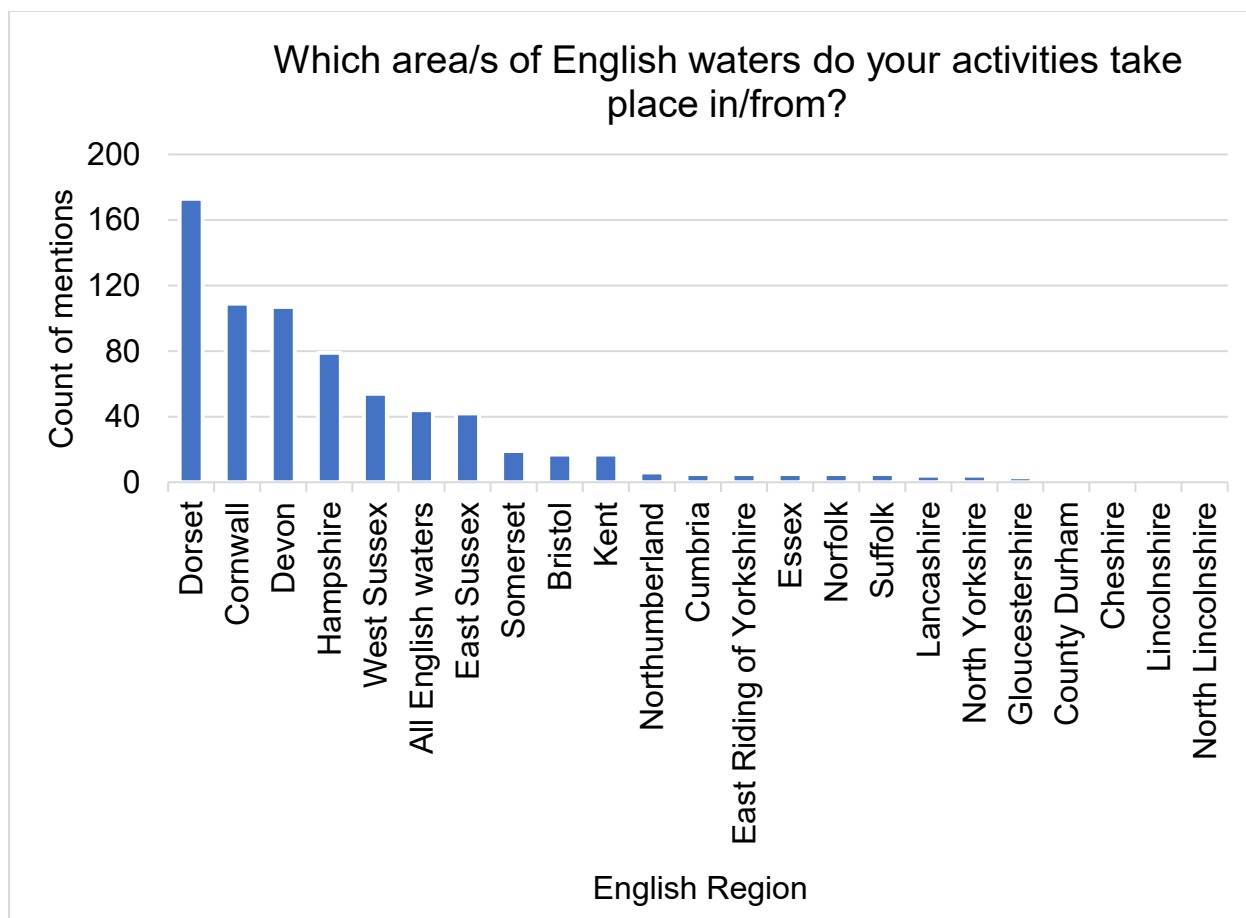
“Recreational fishing” as the main sector they are involved in. Commercial fishing was the selected by 13% of respondents (51 out of 398). The remaining five options combined were selected by 37 respondents. Figure 3 shows that the regions selected by participants were most frequently in the South of England.



**Figure 1: Survey responses to the question “Are you answering as an individual or on behalf of an organisation or group?” In total 398 responses were counted.**



**Figure 2: Survey responses to the question “Which sector are you mainly involved in?” In total 398 responses were counted.**



**Figure 3: Survey responses to the question “Which area/s of English waters do your activities take place in/from?” In total 365 responses were counted. Respondents were able to select multiple options.**

Overview of survey responses:

- Although some localised concerns around black seabream were raised, many stakeholders emphasised that generally, black seabream are abundant, and populations appear to have increased over recent years.
- From the comments reporting a change in the availability of black seabream across the season, many stakeholders highlighted that black seabream can be found for more months of the year, displaying longer seasons.
- A number of comments described gilthead bream abundance increasing over recent years, populating new areas.
- There were mixed responses on the size of black seabream being caught, with some respondents suggesting that the average size of this species has decreased, while others reported that the size of fish being caught has increased.

- Black seabream were reported to be important to fishing stakeholders due to their culinary value. Furthermore, a number of fishers highlighted the importance of this species as they provide them with an income.
- References were made to Couch's bream becoming more abundant in certain areas.

## Wider stakeholder engagement

### FMP team presentations to wider stakeholders

**Regional Fisheries Groups (RFG):** To mitigate stakeholder fatigue and avoid the need for separate events, The FMP team joined up with RFG teams on two occasions. The team hosted a workshop in Shoreham on 16 January 2025, where the RFG team were also present to address any wider concerns. The FMP and RFG team also hosted a joint drop-in session in Newlyn on 29 January 2025.

**Finfish Industry Advisory Group:** The FMP team attended regular Finfish Industry Advisory Group (FIAG) meetings to update members on the progress of the FMP. FIAG provides a forum to discuss sustainability and management of UK finfish non-quota species fisheries. The FMP team attended a FIAG meeting on 19 September 2024 and delivered a presentation on FMP progress but received no feedback on the day.

### Recreational fishers

In addition to the event hosted by the Angling Trust outlined above, the FMP team set up a meeting with the Angling Trust representatives to gather views on the FMP and issues faced by recreational anglers.

### eNGO meeting

A meeting was held with eNGOs alongside Defra and other FMP delivery leads. The meeting took place on 19 November 2024 with several eNGOs in attendance to discuss the FMP programme progress to date.

### Business-as-usual engagement

The FMP Team had several business-as-usual meetings with various stakeholders relevant to the development of the FMP. These discussions helped to strengthen stakeholder relationships and to provide the FMP team with other channels of communication to wider stakeholders.

### FMP mailbox

During the development of the FMP, there was a dedicated mailbox set up for stakeholders to send in any queries around the FMP or give feedback on the content. This mailbox was monitored daily, and responses were aimed to be given within 10 working days. All comments regarding FMP content have been covered by other meetings and therefore no specific comments are highlighted here.

## Communications overview

MMO's FMP team and its supporting MMO communications officer developed and maintained core material relevant to this FMP. Materials evolved as the project progressed. Where appropriate, MMO also utilised core material created and managed by the Defra FMP team for the wider FMP programme. These core documents supported the production of communications material used for the following:

- Gov.uk Seabream FMP landing page
- Defra FMP blog
- Printed posters and flyers advertising the online survey, in-person workshops and drop-ins.
- Traditional media:
  - Fishing News article
  - Angling industry press
- Newsletters:
  - Mail Chimp sent out to interested stakeholders with updates on FMP progress and engagement events.
  - Fishers bulletin (fortnightly)
  - Defra stakeholders bulletin (monthly)
  - MMO stakeholder bulletin (monthly)
- Direct communications
  - Monthly marine officer FMP update.
  - Producer Organisations
  - Fisherman Associations
  - Blue Marine Foundation.
- Updates to pre-existing networks:
  - Regional Fisheries Groups
  - Finfish Industry Advisory Group
  - Future of Inshore Fisheries Angling Trust Forum
- Social Media advertising:
  - Focused on Facebook as the most heavily used platform by fishers. We harnessed the Facebook algorithm to directly target anglers with a track record of interest in our FMP species to ensure as far as practicable that people with the highest interest in the FMPs were aware of their opportunities to engage via online surveys and engagement events.
  - Other MMO social media channels
  - IFCA social media platforms were used where available.

MMO aimed to ensure that the information and updates were disseminated in a clear, accessible, and timely manner and that particular attention was paid to ensure that the language used was appropriate to the audience.

## Annex 1: Stakeholder analysis scoring criteria

The scores will be given by the Fisheries Management Plan team during a workshop and checked by Principle Marine Officers for local expertise. Each stakeholder is given a score for the following:

**Influence:** (Stakeholders ability to influence the projects' ability to successfully deliver its objectives)

- 5) Ability to directly stop the FMP process e.g. FMP securing approval. Mostly this score used for government department stakeholders from whom we need sign off e.g. Defra, Arm's Length Bodies and Devolved Administrations
- 4) Ability to significantly influence or steer the development of the FMP
- 3) Moderate ability to influence the FMP (positive or negative)
- 2) Minimal ability to influence the FMP
- 1) No influence

**Impact:** (Stakeholder may be impacted/ affected both negatively and positively by project outcomes)

- 5) Major impact as a consequence of FMP outcomes to stakeholder e.g. stopping incomes
- 4) Significantly impacted by the consequences of FMP outcomes
- 3) Moderately impacted by the consequences of FMP outcomes
- 2) Minimal impact from the consequences of FMP outcomes
- 1) No impact to stakeholder

**Expertise:** (May hold academic or practice-based expertise relevant to the project)

- 5) Up to date in depth knowledge relevant to the project
- 4) Good knowledge
- 3) Moderate knowledge
- 2) Minimal knowledge
- 1) No knowledge

**Interest:** (May have expressed an interest in the project/ potential outputs and whose interest we wish to encourage)

- 5) Significant interest in the FMP
- 4) Good interest in the FMP
- 3) Moderate interest in the FMP
- 2) Minimal interest for the FMP
- 1) No interest for the FMP

Note: MMO have assumed that a lack of overt interest does not necessarily equate disinterest within the commercial fishing sector as research states this is instead more likely to be linked to disempowerment, so interest has been assumed as universally high when it comes to the commercial sectors.

### **Target aspirations for the stakeholder groups**

**Collaborate:** Primary and key stakeholder who will be directly affected both positively and negatively by the FMP outputs. MMO will work collaboratively with the group, engaging with them regularly to update them on relevant policy, and providing guidance and support through regular meetings and digital contact. Regular and direct engagement will help build a partnership based on trust and collaboration. These stakeholders will be kept fully informed on the FMP programme and project specific details.

High level of influence and impact

- Target for expertise = 4 or over
- Target for influence = 4 or over
- Target for Impact = 4 or over
- Target for interest = 4 over

**Consult:** Secondary and some key stakeholders. This includes people or groups that are indirectly affected, either positively or negatively, by the FMP's output. This includes people who have a strong interest in the effort for academic, philosophical, or political reasons, even though they and their families, friends, and associates are not directly affected by it. MMO will pursue 'semi' pro-active arrangements with them. They will also reach out to seek informal input with them when appropriate. Concerns will be considered, and feedback obtained on issues that affect stakeholders, these concerns can be fed back to the working groups.

Medium to high level of influence and impact

- Target for knowledge = 3 or below
- Target for influence = 3 or below
- Target for impact = 3 or below
- Target for interest = 3

**Inform:** Secondary stakeholder. This group includes people or groups who have shown some interest but will only be indirectly affected and hold no influence or obvious expertise. These stakeholders are privy to the most passive level of engagement.

Low level of influence and impact

- Target for expertise = 2
- Target for influence = 2
- Target for impact = 2
- Target for interest = 2

## Annex 2: Seabream FMP and WG member lists









**Table 2: Seabream FMP working group member list. Note that multiple individuals may have represented an organisation.**











Organisation	Role on Group
Marine Management Organisation	Chair, Secretariat and FMP implementation support
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	Policy support
Association of IFCAs	Representation of all IFCAs
Kent and Essex IFCA	Representation of KEIFCA
Sussex IFCA	Representation of Sussex IFCA
Devon and Severn IFCA	Representation of D&S IFCA
Cornwall IFCA	Representation of Cornwall IFCA
Southern IFCA	Representation of Southern IFCA
Eastern IFCA	Representation of Eastern IFCA
Northumberland IFCA	Representation of Northumberland IFCA
Northwest IFCA	Representation of Northwest IFCA
Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science	Representation on behalf of Cefas
Seafish	Representation on behalf of Seafish
Natural England	Representation of Natural England
Angling Trust	Representation of the Angling Trust
South Coast Fisherman's Council	Representation of the South Coast Fisherman's Council
Professional Boatman's Association	Working Group Member
Commercial Fisher	Working Group Members
Recreational Fisher	Working Group Member
University of Southampton	Working Group Member
University of Plymouth	Working Group Members

## Annex 3: Overview of feedback from engagement

	Concern and suggested recommendation actively raised and <b>supported in all:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Workshops <b>(6/6)</b></li><li>- Drop ins <b>(6/6)</b></li></ul>
	Concern and suggested recommendation actively raised and <b>supported in most:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Workshops <b>(≥4/6)</b></li><li>- Drop ins <b>(≥4/6)</b></li></ul>
	Concern and suggested recommendation actively raised and <b>supported in some:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Workshops <b>(≤3/6)</b></li><li>- Drop ins <b>(≤3/6)</b></li></ul>
	Concern and suggested recommendation not mentioned or neutral responses received in all workshops and drop-ins

**Colour key for annex 3 table below.**

Concern	Recommended solution	Workshops		Drop-ins	
		Consensus	Summary of comments	Consensus	Summary of comments
High black seabream retention by anglers	Implement a bag limit		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Suggestions ranged from ~5-8 black seabream retained per person per day. Calls to legislate a bag limit.</li> <li>One concern was raised regarding a bag limit negatively impacting charter vessel bookings.</li> <li>Suggestions that a marketable, commercial MCRS could be ~25-30cm.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bag limit was generally supported and. Calls to legislate.</li> <li>Concern raised that local anglers may be content with a smaller bag limit, but tourists and holiday makers may not.</li> </ul>
Black seabream MCRS is too small, not marketable	Increase MCRS		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Suggestions that a 300-800g fish can be sold at market. Calls to calculate MCRS based on the average length of a fish at this weight.</li> <li>Recommendations to implement a MaxCRS/slot size.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recommendation to place the MCRS at the breeding size + 2 years of growth.</li> <li>Support received for a slot size.</li> </ul>
Habitat degradation/loss impacting nesting sites and wider ecosystem	Support assessments/surveys		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Concerns around the impact of beach replenishment activities and potential habitat degradation</li> <li>Concerns around kelp loss and presence of water pollutants.</li> </ul>		
Post-release mortality can be high	Develop handling guidelines		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Voluntary handling guidelines suggested.</li> </ul>		

Lack of understanding of population dynamics	Develop a stock assessment		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recreational and commercial fishers were generally receptive to recording estimates of the number of black seabream caught.</li> </ul>		
Species misidentification/ mis recording	Develop ID guides & improve species specific recording		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reports of occasional misidentification between black seabream and gilthead bream.</li> <li>New seabream coming into English Waters are not currently available on the Catch App.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reports of occasional misidentification between red seabream and other species.</li> <li>Report of misidentification of Couch's bream.</li> </ul>
Competition with farmed seabream	Improve the market for wild-caught seabream in UK		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Suggestion that it can be difficult to compete with farmed seabream that is abundant year-round.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Suggestions that wild/farmed fish labelling in supermarkets could be improved.</li> </ul>
Lack of understanding of species ecology and life history	Conduct further research and data collection		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recommended by several stakeholders that we need to better understand seabream biology and ecology.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Although specific data collection methods were not raised directly, there was general support from stakeholders to improve our understanding of seabream species.</li> </ul>
The black seabream fishery seems to be growing in popularity but no commercial catch limit is in place	Introduce a quota or catch limit		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some support for fishers to receive an independent annual quota to manage their own fishery.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recommendation to establish a high quota for commercial fishers so that it can be managed efficiently if stocks start to decline.</li> </ul>