



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Southern North Sea and Eastern Channel Mixed Flatfish Fisheries Management Plan

Strategic Environmental Assessment: Environmental Report – Non-technical Summary

Date: July 2023

Version: public consultation



Proposed Southern North Sea and Eastern Channel Mixed Flatfish FMP non-technical summary of environmental report



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Non-technical Summary

The draft Southern North Sea and Eastern Channel Mixed Flatfish Fisheries Management Plan (FMP) has been prepared to meet the requirements of [the Fisheries Act 2020](#). It sets out the policies and proposed measures Defra will use to manage flatfish fishing activity, so stocks are harvested within sustainable levels. Alongside these measures, the draft Southern North Sea and Eastern Channel Mixed Flatfish FMP also sets out management to help support wider social, economic and environmental aspects of the fishery.

This Environmental Report (ER) has been produced in accordance with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (SEA Regulations 2004). The following issues (from Schedule 2 paragraph 6 of the (SEA Regulations 2004) were scoped into the assessment: Biodiversity, Fauna, Flora, Geology and Sediments (soil), Water, Climatic factors, Cultural heritage, Landscape and seascape. This report assesses the likely significant effects of the draft Southern North Sea and Eastern Channel Mixed Flatfish FMP on these issues.

The assessment was conducted against a baseline that primarily used existing evidence on the state of the marine environment set out in [The updated UK Marine Strategy Part 1](#) published in 2019. Additional sources of evidence were used to establish the current status of environment in relation to issues, such as climatic factors, not covered by the UK Marine Strategy (UK MS). The historical impact of fishing activity on the marine environment has been considered part of the baseline.

This report sets out those plans, programmes and environmental protection objectives, both international and domestic that Defra consider relevant to the draft Southern North Sea and Eastern Channel Mixed Flatfish FMP.

This report considers and acknowledges the existing environmental effects of flatfish fishing using towed gear on those issues scoped into this assessment, in relation to Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), the UK MS descriptors and the wider environment. The potential positive and negative environmental effects of the draft Southern North Sea and Eastern Channel Mixed Flatfish FMP's policies and proposed measures alone and in-combination have also been assessed.

This Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) concluded that current evidence shows the Southern North Sea and Eastern Channel mixed flatfish fishery has an impact on the marine environment primarily through seabed disturbance. The impact of flatfish fishing in MPAs is managed in the 0-12nm zone in English waters. Management in MPAs beyond the 12nm limit is in development. Further work is required to reduce the impact of flatfish fishing on habitats beyond MPAs to ensure

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GES targets for seabed integrity (D6) are achieved. The contribution of flatfish fishing to climate change related issues and cultural heritage through structural damage for example, was also identified as a potential impact.

The draft Southern North Sea and Eastern Channel Mixed Flatfish FMP has considered these impacts and sets out proposals to monitor, and where required, introduce mitigation to address these impacts.

The environmental effects of implementing the Southern North Sea and Eastern Channel Mixed Flatfish FMP policies and measures will be monitored to identify unforeseen adverse effects at an early stage, ensuring appropriate remedial action can be undertaken.

This assessment recommends the draft Southern North Sea and Eastern Channel Mixed Flatfish FMP should consider the following additional points:

- Future iterations of the Southern North Sea and Eastern Channel Mixed Flatfish FMP should consider how they can develop the cultural heritage of each fishery and how fisheries management can contribute to reducing potential negative interactions with submerged prehistoric landscapes or seascapes.
- The draft Southern North Sea and Eastern Channel Mixed Flatfish FMP would benefit from providing more specific detail on how the FMP will interact with Marine Plans. Noting how the FMP could positively or negatively interact with this programme, would improve the in-combination assessment.