



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs

# Consultation on the proposed Southern North Sea Demersal Non- Quota Species Fisheries Management Plan

October 2024

Version: public consultation

We are the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. We're responsible for improving and protecting the environment, growing the green economy, sustaining thriving rural communities and supporting our world-class food, farming and fishing industries.

We work closely with our 33 agencies and arm's length bodies on our ambition to make our air purer, our water cleaner, our land greener and our food more sustainable. Our mission is to restore and enhance the environment for the next generation, and to leave the environment in a better state than we found it.



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# Introduction

The United Kingdom has some of the best wild seafood resources in the world. Our fish stocks are a public asset which generate food, create jobs and provide recreational opportunities in a sector with a strong sense of identity and pride for their communities. These fish stocks also form a vital part of our marine ecosystems.

Many of our fish stocks are under a range of pressures such as fishing and climate change. Fishing can also have impacts on our marine environment, for example through accidental bycatch or the effect of fishing gears on the seabed. It is therefore important to consider both the positive and negative effects of fishing as part of overall management of our fisheries and the marine environment.

The [Environmental Improvement Plan \(EIP\) 2023](#) sets out how we will improve our environment in the UK and around the world and plans for a decade of delivery with targeted actions towards leaving our environment in a better condition than when we inherited it.

The [Joint Fisheries Statement \(JFS\)](#), as required by the Fisheries Act 2020, sets out how the UK fisheries policy authorities (Defra, Scottish Government, Welsh Government and the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs in Northern Ireland) will prepare and publish 43 Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs) by 2028. The plans will bring together the evidence on the state of the stocks and identify measures and actions necessary to improve the evidence base and manage our fisheries in a sustainable way. Policies in an FMP will set out both the short-term actions and longer-term vision for the management of the fishery. The plans must also consider relevant wider legal obligations including the environmental principles under the [Environment Act 2021](#) and the need for strategic environmental assessment under the [Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004](#).

There are opportunities for growth through a profitable and more sustainable fishing and seafood industry. We are keen to continue to work closely with commercial and recreational fishing interests and other stakeholders as we develop our plans for managing fisheries in the UK.

The complete list of FMPs that are being prepared by each of the fisheries authorities is set out in the JFS.

## The southern North Sea demersal NQS FMP

The proposed southern North Sea demersal NQS FMP covers only English waters.

This consultation is seeking your views on:

- The draft southern North Sea demersal NQS FMP as required by Schedule 1, Part 3 of the Fisheries Act 2020 prepared by Defra.

- The draft southern North Sea demersal NQS Environmental Report which describes the likely environmental impacts of the FMP, as required under the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. This has been drafted by Defra.

A de minimis regulatory impact assessment has also been developed, which describes the anticipated economic impact of the plan on the fishing sector and associated businesses. We would welcome additional economic evidence to update our assessment.

This consultation is particularly relevant to:

- Individuals, groups, or businesses who are engaged in the fishing, seafood, or aquaculture sectors, including individuals, groups or businesses from the UK or from outside the UK who fish in UK waters;
- Other individuals, groups or businesses who are sea users, for example, marine industries such as offshore renewables and sailing bodies; and
- National and local interest groups such as environmental and recreational non-governmental organisations, and industry federations.

Consultations on the four other draft FMPs (see above) and their Environmental Reports are taking place at the same time.

## Using and sharing your information

How we use your personal data is set out in the FMP consultation privacy notice which can be found in the related documents section on the consultation page.

This consultation is being conducted in line with the Cabinet Office 'Consultation Principles' and can be found at: [Consultation principles: guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultation-principles)

If you have any comments or complaints about the consultation process, please send them to [consultation.coordinator@defra.gov.uk](mailto:consultation.coordinator@defra.gov.uk)

## Background: Fisheries Management Plans

### Why are we publishing FMPs?

The Fisheries Act 2020 (the Act) sets out the legal framework to manage fisheries in the UK, including the provision to prepare and publish FMPs. FMPs will protect and recover stocks, support a sustainable fishing industry, and safeguard the environment. The JFS lists 43 proposed FMPs tailored to specific stocks and locations, aiming to reform and redefine domestic fisheries management.

## What are FMPs?

FMPs are evidence-based action plans designed to achieve sustainable fisheries. Each FMP outlines short-term actions and long-term visions, aiming to restore or maintain fish stocks at sustainable levels. These plans apply to both commercial and recreational fishing, addressing broader environmental, economic and social concerns. Where appropriate, FMPs may identify actions to address wider issues identified during their development such as environmental or social and economic considerations.

## How FMPs work

The management of fisheries is a devolved competency currently managed through regulation, byelaws, licence conditions and voluntary measures. FMPs may lead to changes to these legal instruments and voluntary agreements.

National Fisheries Authorities (in this case Defra and the MMO) are legally required to act in accordance with the policies set out in the plans and will work with the Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities (IFCAs), the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (Cefas), Natural England and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) on implementation.

FMPs identify a range of short and longer-term actions. Plans will be adaptive and develop over time as further evidence is gathered and measures are implemented. Whilst each FMP will focus on specific stock(s), it will also be important to ensure they work together and recognise the needs of fishermen, or stakeholders who are affected by more than one FMP.

Each FMP must be reviewed within six years of its publication or sooner if required. An FMP can also be replaced or amended at any time following a consultation, allowing the plan to be kept up to date.

FMP actions will need to be implemented iteratively over their lifetime to have an impact on how fisheries are managed. It may therefore take some time to show benefits in terms of improving the sustainability of stocks and fisheries.

## FMPs and other coastal States

The UK, whilst having regulatory autonomy over its fisheries, is committed to working with other coastal states to ensure sustainable management of shared fisheries resources – and to continuing to build our strong and positive working relationships. Through annual consultations with the EU and other coastal States, as well as negotiations in multilateral and bilateral forums, the UK aims to achieve, or contribute to the achievement of the objectives in the Act.

FMPs provide a long-term framework for managing fishing activity, ensuring stock sustainability and a healthy marine environment. These plans will inform multi-year

strategies for conservation and management of stocks proposed by the UK and EU under the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA).

Regulatory measures to implement FMPs will apply to all vessels fishing in UK waters. The UK will notify the EU of any changes affecting EU vessels.

## Approach to the development of FMPs

Developed in a collaborative and transparent way, our aim is to ensure that FMPs are relevant to the fishery or fisheries and support a more practical and flexible approach to fisheries management tailored to species, locations and fishing activities.

The FMPs are being developed in different ways, allowing us to try new approaches and test how best to develop the plans and engage with stakeholders. Delivery partners worked closely with industry groups and other stakeholders, and we will continue to build on this participatory approach and apply it to FMP development and through to implementation stages.

We have learned valuable lessons from the consultation process on the first set of FMPs in 2023. In response to stakeholder feedback Defra has adopted a slightly different approach for the next set of plans, aiming to strike a better balance between the volume of consultation documentation (while also recognising the guidelines for public consultations and our statutory requirements) and ensuring stakeholders have sufficient information to engage meaningfully with the consultation process.

We have reduced the overall volume of material, and incorporated evidence directly supporting the proposed goals or measures into each plan. Based on feedback we have also reduced the number of consultation questions. Further background will be published alongside the final FMPs as supporting documentation.

## Summary of southern North Sea demersal NQS FMP

13 demersal NQS were prioritised for an FMP due to their vulnerability to over-exploitation, the economic value of the fisheries and a lack of evidence to properly assess and monitor the state of the stocks. The English southern North Sea demersal NQS FMP covers the following 13 species within International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) areas 4b and 4c:

- bony fish (john dory, red mullet, grey gurnard, red gurnard and tub gurnard);
- elasmobranchs (lesser spotted dogfish and starry smoothhound);
- cephalopods (common cuttlefish, common octopus, curled octopus, veined squid/long-finned squid, European common squid and common squid).

Demersal NQS are data limited with many lacking comprehensive data collection programmes or formal stock assessments. Only five (red mullet north stock, grey gurnard, red gurnard, lesser spotted dogfish and smoothhound) are assessed by ICES within the southern North Sea. The remaining species have not been assessed by ICES.

In 2021, landings of southern North Sea demersal NQS by UK and European Union (EU) vessels fishing in UK waters in ICES areas 4b and 4c totalled 2,094 tonnes (t) valued at £5.6m.

Additionally, some species are important to recreational fishers and support social and economically valuable recreational activity along the English south coast. There are few management measures in place to control NQS fishing effort which has implications for the long-term health of demersal NQS fisheries. Improved management action is therefore needed to protect demersal NQS and secure their future and the future of the industry that depend on them.

The overarching aim of the FMP is to deliver sustainable management of FMP species to a position driven by robust stock assessments, supported by consistent data collection and research programmes. The management measures and actions linked to delivering the goals detailed in this FMP describe the steps towards sustainable management.

The FMP was developed in collaboration with the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) and a working group made up of fisheries stakeholders, including commercial and recreational fishers, and wider engagement with coastal communities, supply chain businesses, scientists and environmental non-governmental organisations.

**1. Do you have any comments on the engagement process for developing this draft FMP? See FMP engagement report for details.**

## Evidence

Between 2016 and 2021 the southern North Sea FMP species average was valued at £1.1m to UK vessels per year and £5.8m a year for EU vessels. By weight of landings, UK vessels make up 24% and EU vessels make up 76% of the total per annum.

In 2021, landings of southern North Sea demersal NQS by UK and EU vessels fishing in UK waters in ICES areas 4b and 4c totalled 2,094 tonnes (t) valued at £5.6m.

Fisheries landings data show squid to be the most economically important demersal species in the scope of the FMP for both UK and EU vessels by both weight and value. The order of importance by weight and value differs for the remaining species.

Red mullet emerges as the second most economically important species group by value and third by weight, largely driven by EU vessels.

Tub gurnard has the second largest landings by weight and is the third most economically important of the FMP species, again largely driven by EU vessels.



Cuttlefish has the fourth most economically important of the FMP species and sixth by weight.

Lesser spotted dogfish has the fourth largest landings by weight and fifth by value. The remaining FMP species make up less than 3% of the total catch by weight and 1% by value.

The annual average landings by weight and value are substantially higher in ICES area 4c with 79% of the total landings weight and 85% of the total landings value. The majority of landings by weight of the focal FMP species are by EU vessels (76%) for which landing port of data are unavailable. In relation to port landings by UK vessels only, Boulogne receives the highest economic value from the fishery, with the largest weight of the total landing and highest value. Of the top 10 ports receiving catch of the FMP species from both UK and EU vessels by weight three are English: North Shields is fourth (3%), Hartlepool is sixth (1%) and Scarborough is eighth (1%).

By weight of landings, UK vessels primarily employed demersal seine, demersal trawl and beam trawls. Longlines, drift and fixed nets and pots and traps also made contributions. Other gears represented less than 1% of landings. The EU fleet has a similar contribution of landings by gear group primarily employing demersal seine, beam trawls and demersal trawls with drift and fixed nets and pelagic trawls each equating to 2% and other gears less than 1% of landings.

The vast majority of FMP species landed comprise less than 5% of most vessels' income, while the vessels most reliant on FMP species are predominately over 18m in length. The number of UK vessels involved in the fishery has decreased from 335 in 2016 to 241 in 2022.

Nationally, recreational sea fishing is a high participation activity, delivering economic and social benefits. Recreational catch data in respect of the FMP species is limited. It is estimated that around 772,000 UK adults participated in sea angling each year between 2016 and 2019 across the UK at a value of £1.6billion to 1.9 billion<sup>2</sup>. There are also both personal and societal benefits derived from sea angling. Further evidence gathering on the extent of the significance to the recreational sector of the species in the FMP is required through the implementation of the FMP.

Whilst lesser-spotted dogfish are generally not targeted, their abundance and ease to catch means they are the third most common species caught by UK sea anglers, although 95% of catch is returned to the sea. Anecdotal evidence highlights that smoothhound is an important species for sea anglers in the East of England, and feedback relating to cephalopods suggests that recreational fisheries for these species (except octopus) are emerging, although the extent is currently unknown.

Of the 13 species covered under the scope of this FMP, five were assessed by ICES in 2023. For two of these, grey gurnard and red mullet, there are concerns around sustainability. Red mullet is of particular concern given landings of, and market for,

juveniles. The remaining species have not been assessed by ICES and we do not have sufficient information to determine MSY.

**Q2. Do you have any comments on the evidence used in the draft FMP?**

## Goals for the management of Southern North Sea demersal NQS fisheries

The FMP goals are based around key themes of evidence, social and economics, and sustainable fisheries contributing towards delivering the Fisheries Act objectives. The goals are as follows:

- **Under the sustainable fisheries theme:** (1) deliver effective management of demersal NQS fishing in English waters of the southern North Sea; (2) deliver effective management to contribute to increasing or maintaining demersal NQS stocks; where possible identify and mitigate pressures on demersal NQS species; and (3) contribute to improving biological and environmental sustainability by understanding and reducing the wider impacts of demersal NQS fisheries.
- **Under social and economic theme:** (4) better understand and optimise economic and social benefits; and (5) build capacity for the industry to be able to input into matters affecting NQS fisheries management.
- **Under the evidence theme:** (6) better understand wider NQS evidence gaps; and (7) develop the NQS evidence base.

The species within the FMP are data deficient and need to be better understood to fully evaluate each stock's status and implement sustainable management if required. Where there are indications of less sustainable fishing practices, we believe these could benefit from intervention whilst additional evidence is being collected. This supports the requirement of the Fisheries Act to take a precautionary approach to stock management while the evidence base improves. There are also several long-term aspirations that could improve sustainability or enhance social and economic benefits associated with the fishery.

The FMP proposes actions to help reach harvest at or below Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY). This is initially focused on stocks of particular concern such as red mullet and gurnards. Cephalopods species, such as cuttlefish, are relatively short lived and difficult to assess under typical ICES assessment processes. Therefore, management will consider suitable proxies which may be used for the assessment of the stock to ensure that harvest is sustainable. In the longer term, we will seek to close the data gaps on all southern North Sea demersal NQS including conducting an MSY assessment or suitable proxy so that we that we can ensure all species are fished at or beneath this.

**Q3. Do you have any comments on the goals in the FMP?**

## Proposed management of southern North Sea fishery

Mixed fishery and multi-species management approaches have been developed to address the linked nature of certain fish or shellfish stocks that occupy the same habitats/ecosystems and often caught together. This allows implementation of measures effective for a cohort of species rather than a single stock. As this FMP covers an inherently complex and poorly understood collection of species that are caught alongside quota and other NQS, the FMP has the long-term ambition of developing sufficient evidence so that mixed and multiple species management can be applied effectively. The steps needed to implement a mixed-fishery approach for these fisheries need to consider three separate but linked processes: 1) data collection; 2) method development; and 3) decision making.

The FMP recognises that southern North Sea fisheries are distinct, given that the physical characteristics support differing habitats and fish stocks. Therefore, management interventions will need to take spatial-temporal variability into consideration. The tables in the FMP set out the objectives for managing these fisheries and the proposed short- and longer-term management measures. The FMP sets out a goal for building capacity for the industry to input into FMP management.

To support this, the FMP proposes creating a NQS management group, comprising of industry, recreational fishers, processors and markets, the regulatory authority, fisheries scientists, policy makers and other interested stakeholders, which will act as a means for addressing management concerns and needs. This group may also choose to work collaboratively with the new Channel demersal NQS management group to ensure alignment of management for NQS.

### Recommended management measures

In addition, four proposed areas for priority management intervention have been identified. These have been developed through evidence gathering and engagement with stakeholders, who recognised that change is required to improve the sustainability of the stocks and fisheries. Further work and consultation will need to be undertaken to determine the applicability of each of these measures and refine where necessary. The priority areas are as follows:

#### **A. Restriction of future flyseining effort**

The increase in flyseine fishing or demersal seining capability, and the emergence of newer and larger vessels in the southern North Sea (ICES areas 4b and 4c), has the potential to cause significant harm to the stocks within the scope of the FMP.

Following on from [Defra's consultation on this issue in 2022](#), and the [Channel demersal NQS FMP](#) published on 14 December 2023, the FMP proposes to introduce in the short term (a) a standard net mesh size of 100mm for all flyseine vessels operating in English waters of the southern North Sea; and (b) limiting engine power to 221 kilowatts (kW) for flyseine vessels within southern North Sea

English territorial waters. Further potential measures in the medium to long term could also be considered.

## **B. Emerging cephalopod fisheries**

Stakeholders have reported increasing abundance of squid, cuttlefish, and octopus within the FMP area. Anecdotally, the increase in sightings of these species on the grounds have been highlighted as potentially emerging fisheries allowing the inshore fleet to diversify by providing additional fishing opportunities.

To assess the potential of future cephalopod fisheries, the FMP proposes to put in place additional monitoring and a research plan to gather evidence on these emergent fisheries, of the viability of different gears, and the impacts on other species from their population growth. The evidence gathered through this research will be used to introduce management where appropriate to ensure sustainable harvesting of cephalopod stocks.

## **C. Minimum conservation reference sizes**

The FMP proposes to consider the introduction of a Minimum Conservation Reference Size (MCRS) for flyseine species, such as red mullet and gurnards, in the medium to long term to complement the proposed mesh size restrictions. The FMP also proposes to consider the introduction of an MCRS for smoothhound in the medium to long term.

## **D. Education, adoption of voluntary guidelines and development of codes of conduct**

Through partnership working, the FMP will develop voluntary guidelines, education, and codes of conduct for recreational fishers, to improve the sustainability and benefits of the stocks for all sea users. Monitoring will be put in place to record the uptake and efficacy of voluntary measures and explore how additional evidence gathering on removals from the stock could be integrated into future stock assessments.

Education programmes and identification guides will also be developed for the commercial sector to improve accurate species identification, data collection and inform management.

**Q4. Do you have any comments on the measures and actions in the draft FMP?**

**Q5. Are there other measures or variations of the proposed management measures we could consider?**

**Q6. Do you have any additional comments on the draft FMP?**

## Implementation

Once formally published, the plan will need to be implemented. This will be an iterative process and Defra will be working closely with the commercial and recreational fishing sectors and wider stakeholders to develop implementation plans. Publishing the FMP is the start of a multi-year cycle, and we will ensure that the plans strike the balance between building momentum for short-term actions and setting direction for the longer term. This can be further iterated as the evidence base is improved. The plans must be reviewed at least every six years.

Cross regulator, government and industry groups have been central to the development of the draft FMPs. Stakeholder involvement and ongoing collaboration underpins successful delivery of the FMPs will continue beyond their publication.

## Conclusion

In summary, the southern North Sea demersal NQS FMP describes existing management measures and the available science and evidence to assess the status of 13 stocks (john dory, red mullet, grey gurnard, red gurnard, tub gurnard, lesser spotted dogfish, starry smoothhound, common cuttlefish, common octopus, curled octopus, veined squid/long-finned squid, European common squid and common squid) around the southern North Sea in 2024 to determine a sustainable level of exploitation.

The FMP uses the available evidence to assess the status of the stocks, identify existing management measures, and set out policies and actions to manage the fisheries in the southern North Sea.

The overarching aim of the FMP is to deliver sustainable management of FMP species to a position driven by robust stock assessments, supported by consistent data collection and research programmes. The management measures and actions linked to delivering the goals detailed in this FMP describe the key stages.

## Strategic Environmental Assessment

Defra is legally required to consider the environmental impact of policies, plans and programmes. The Environment Act 2021 sets out environmental principles to guide policy making. The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (SEA Regulations 2004) require any qualifying public plans, programmes, and strategies to undergo Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) during their preparation and prior to publication if they are likely to have a significant effect on a European marine site (either positively or negatively). FMPs are plans or programmes for the purposes of the SEA Regulations 2004. Defra has determined that the draft southern North Sea demersal NQS FMP may have a likely significant effect (either positive or negative) on a European site or a European offshore marine site and, therefore, has completed a SEA. Our initial results are documented in the draft southern North Sea NQS FMP Environmental Report (ER)

included within the current consultation. A final version will be published alongside the southern North Sea FMP, revised to account for comments and/or further information provided during the consultation and to reflect the final version of the FMP once published.

## **What is the Environmental Report and how was it developed?**

The SEA considers the likely significant environmental effects of implementing the policies and actions set out in the draft southern North Sea demersal NQS FMP. The ER sets out the findings of this process. The report describes the current state of the environment (the baseline) and the likely significant effects of proposals in the draft southern North Sea demersal NQS FMP to the baseline. The assessment identifies where the draft southern North Sea demersal NQS FMP could make a positive impact on the baseline and hence our marine environment. Where the FMP may have negative effects on the baseline, the report suggests actions to mitigate and/or monitor these effects.

Defra developed the ER for the draft southern North Sea demersal NQS FMP. The scope and level of detail was informed through an early consultation with our statutory Consultation Bodies: Natural England, Environment Agency, and Historic England together with further advice from the JNCC, as an advisor to the UK Government and devolved administrations on UK-wide nature conservation. We drew on published information on the state of the environment and the potential impact of fishing on environmental features.

## **Summary of Southern North Sea demersal NQS FMP Environmental Report**

The southern North Sea demersal NQS FMP ER has been produced in accordance with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes 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 demersal NQS 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. The assessment has been undertaken using the best available evidence to reach a suitable judgement on the environmental effects of the draft southern North Sea demersal NQS FMP.

Existing environmental effects of demersal NQS fishing on those issues scoped into this assessment, in relation to Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), the UK MS descriptors and the wider environment, have been acknowledged and considered in this report. The potential positive and negative environmental effects of the draft southern North Sea demersal NQS FMP's policies and proposed measures alone and in-combination have also been assessed.

The SEA concluded that current evidence shows that beyond the direct impact on targeted stocks, the southern North Sea demersal NQS fisheries have an impact on the marine environment primarily through seabed disturbance (from mobile demersal gears) and bycatch of unwanted/protected species (mainly from drift and fixed nets). Actions have been proposed to investigate these impacts and use this evidence to develop robust mitigation strategies.

The contribution of demersal non-quota fishing to climate change related issues and cultural heritage through structural damage for example, was also identified as a potential impact. The impact of demersal NQS fishing in MPAs is managed in the 0 to 12 nautical miles (nm) zone in English waters. Management in MPAs beyond the 12nm limit is being considered and implemented where necessary.

The draft southern North Sea demersal NQS FMP has considered these impacts and sets out proposals to monitor, and where required, introduce mitigation to address these impacts.

The assessment of likely negative effects identified a low risk of significant adverse effects on the environment from implementing individual policies, measures and actions. The policies, measures and actions will, where appropriate, be developed to avoid any potential negative effects identified by the assessment progress. The environmental effects of implementing the southern North Sea demersal NQS FMP policies and measures will also be monitored to identify unforeseen adverse effects at an early stage so appropriate remedial action can be undertaken.

**Q7. Do you have any comments on the assessment of the environmental effects of the FMP, as set out in the Environmental Report?**

## Regulatory Impact Assessments

Defra is completing regulatory impact assessments to assess the economic impacts of FMPs on businesses and the fishing sector.

For the purposes of the southern North Sea demersal NQS FMP consultation, we have drafted a de-minimis assessment (DMA) that outlines our rationale and approach to assessing the potential impact of the plan on business. This DMA is a supporting document.

Whilst the southern North Sea demersal NQS FMP identifies measures that could be introduced post-consultation, these proposed measures will be developed further and do not currently have sufficient detail for any economic analysis to be done. These proposed measures could be regulatory or deregulatory, and positive or negative to business, hence it is not possible to estimate impacts.

When individual measures are implemented, the statutory or non-statutory mechanism through which these will be implemented will have their own impacts assessed in the appropriate manner.

## How to respond to this consultation

The consultation will run primarily via the Citizen Space online portal. However, we will accept email and hard copy responses for those unable to access the online survey.

The consultation questions are in bold throughout this document and in the online survey.

Large print and braille versions of this document are available on request.

Defra has a statutory requirement to seek public views on the proposed FMP and its accompanying Environment Report.

The consultation survey has three parts:

1. Personal details and confidentiality (required).
2. Questions on the Southern North Sea demersal NQS FMP, Environmental Report and stakeholder engagement report.
3. Consultee feedback on the online survey (required).

You only need to respond to the questions that you wish to. However, all respondents must complete the required 'Consultee feedback on the online survey' and 'personal details and confidentiality' sections before you are able submit your response to the online survey.

## Duration of the consultation

This consultation will run for 14 weeks, closing at 23:59 on 19 January 2025. Responses must be received by 23:59 on 19 January 2025.

## Responses

Responses can be:

- Submitted via the [Citizen Space online portal](#).



- Sent via email to: [FMPconsultations@defra.gov.uk](mailto:FMPconsultations@defra.gov.uk). If responding via email, please structure your response around the questions in bold throughout this document.
- Sent via post to:

Consultation – Southern North Sea Demersal NQS FMP  
FMP team – Marine and Fisheries  
Seacole Building, 2 Marsham St  
London  
SW1P 4DF

At the end of the consultation period, we will summarise the responses and place the summary on the UK Government's website.

## Enquiries

If you want to submit a consultation response, please contact:

[FMPconsultations@defra.gov.uk](mailto:FMPconsultations@defra.gov.uk)

If you have any general enquiries, please contact: [FMPs@defra.gov.uk](mailto:FMPs@defra.gov.uk)

The JFS can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/joint-fisheries-statement-jfs>

The Act can be found here: [Fisheries Act 2020 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2020/12)