



Agenda Item No. B4

By: Chief IFCO  
To: Kent and Essex IFCA – 25 November 2025  
Subject: **Fisheries Management Plans**  
Classification: Unrestricted

**Summary:**

This paper provides Members with an overview of DEFRA’s Fisheries Management Plan – FMP ‘Programme’ and an update as to the progress made to progress the first five plans that were published in December 2024. It is expected that the next round of FMPs will be published by the end of 2025.

**Recommendations:**

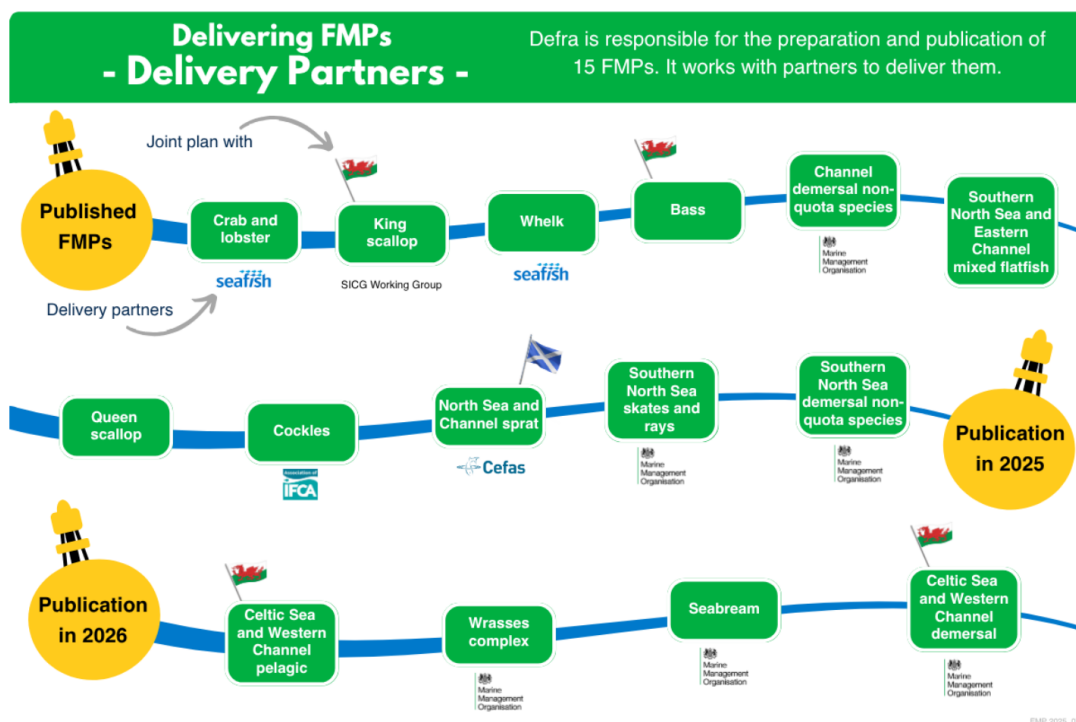
Members **NOTE** and **APPROVE** the report

**Background**

The Fisheries Act 2020 provides the framework to manage our fisheries as an independent coastal state outside of the EU Common Fisheries Policy. Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs) are a requirement of the Act, the UK Joint Fisheries Statement, and a commitment in the England Environmental Improvement Plan 2023.

Fisheries policy authorities (Defra, and the devolved administrations) have been tasked to develop and then publish forty-three FMPs of which fifteen are focused on English fisheries. On the 14 December 2023 the first five FMP were published, followed in October 2024 by the final FMP of the first tranche of ‘frontrunner’ FMPs. Of the remaining nine FMPs, five are due to be published by the end of 2025 with the remaining four published in 2026. As the last four FMPs are either located outside our district or are addressing more marginal fisheries, by the end of 2025 we will have a clear idea of the objectives and the key delivery FMP actions for all our key fish stocks in our district. With so many different FMPs and a large number of actions coming from each FMP the next

task will be to integrate our KEIFCA priorities and objectives within this framework.



## Working within the new FMP framework

Working within a much clearer national framework will help regional inshore management work in conjunction with offshore measures, however, this does mean that effort and resource need to be spent attending and inputting into national FMP working groups. Of the six published FMPs, four (Bass, Whelk, King Scallop and Crab and Lobster) have set up working groups to support the development of the FMP.

The groups bring together stakeholders to collaborate, share knowledge and ideas, and to help shape the goals and proposals with some FMPs also having separate implementation groups or scientific sub-groups. Membership varies, but can include commercial and recreational fishermen, scientists, and environmentalists. The bass and king scallop groups are chaired by Defra and the crab and lobster and whelk groups are chaired by Seafish. The number of meetings per working group does vary but most groups meet at least 2-3 times a year, However some sub-groups like the bass task and finfish group have had meeting every two weeks and meetings of the whelk management group including day long meetings in London and intensive series of meetings one per week for three weeks arranged to work through a detailed options paper. Keeping up to date with the progress made by each group is challenging and so different IFCA's, lead on different FMPs (generally an FMP of an important species

in their district: - KEIFCA lead on the Whelk FMP and our lead enforcement officer has sat on a bass authorisations task and finish group).

Whilst the management groups play a role in progressing FMP delivery the FMP 'programme' and its delivery is managed by DEFRA. Under the FMP 'programme' there is a management structure that reports on the progress, design and publication of new FMPs, the implementation of published FMPs and the actions being taken to communicate progress and engage stakeholders. All these groups report to the FMP Project Board and using this feedback the board then provides strategic oversight and assigns resource. The Association of IFCA's sits on all these groups and acts as a link to ensure that the needs and priorities of IFCA's and inshore stakeholder are represented and heard.

<b>FMP Programme Board</b>	At the head of our governance structure is the Board which provides direction, oversight, and accountability. It gives long-term strategic leadership and makes decisions around the prioritisation of work and resources to ensure that the programme delivers high-quality FMPs. It also makes sure that the work being done is aligned within the Defra group and helps us to manage any potential risks and issues.
<b>Programme Management Group</b>	This group reports on the progress of FMP development and supports the design and publication of plans through lessons learned and risk management. Members include Defra policy teams, delivery partners and experts from MMO, Cefas, AIFCA and Seafish, JNCC and Natural England as well as ICF who is evaluating the programme.
<b>Implementation Delivery Group</b>	This group, with members from Defra, MMO and AIFCA, tracks the delivery of the goals in the published FMPs and identifies and acts on any barriers to make sure things are moving on as planned.
<b>Engagement and Communications Group</b>	This group brings together people responsible for FMP engagement and communications from across Defra's policy teams and delivery partners. The group works to coordinate activities across the projects in the programme and takes a long-term approach to planning.

## **Delivering FMP actions**

Delivering so many tasks across a wide range of FMPs is challenging, however progress has been made and the graphics below, from August this year, outline some of the tasks that have been completed or are undergoing in each FMP. IFCA's will continue to work closely with DEFRA to deliver key FMP objectives and the actions, and it is hoped that upcoming FMP implementation meetings with DEFRA will help coordinate efforts and integrate delivery between DEFRA, the MMO and IFCA's.

# Whelk FMP in English Waters **Updates**



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# Crab and Lobster FMP for English Waters **Updates**



## 2 December 2024

Increased MCRS for crawfish to 110mm in all English waters.

## 4 May 2025

Seafish and Defra have considered the potential regional impacts of increased lobster MCRS.

5 Defra have worked on the prohibition of landing soft-shell crab for bait and are currently working on the Statutory Instrument/order that will carry the prohibition.

## 1 December 2023

Crab and Lobster Fisheries Management Plan published. Find it on GOV.UK

3 MMO, Defra and Seafish put together stakeholder groups to progress the FMP south-west crab and north-east lobster trials.

Outputs from the south-west crab trial work include a survey to gather stakeholder views on the harmonisation of brown crab MCRS in the south-west. Responses from that survey will be published in Autumn 2025.

6 MMO are gathering data for the north-east lobster trial.

7 MMO published a consultation on a crawfish closure for 2025 and 2026.

The consultation is now closed, and a decision will be published in Autumn 2025.

For more information email  
FMPs@defra.gov.uk or  
FMP@marinemanagement.org.uk

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# Channel Demersal Non-quota Species (NQS)

## FMP for English Waters **Updates**



**2 April 2024**

Held an industry round table and a roadshow in 2024 to develop a cuttlefish action plan.

**4 December 2024**

The following measures came into force:

- The introduction of new Minimum Conservation Reference Sizes (MCRS) for lemon sole, turbot and brill in ICES 7d and 7e
- The introduction of a restriction on the engine power of vessels (greater than 221 Kw) using flyseining gear in areas 7d and 7e.
- All vessels using flyseining gear will also have to use a larger mesh (100mm minimum) in areas 7d and 7e.

For more information email  
FMPs@defra.gov.uk or  
FMP@marinemanagement.org.uk

**1 December 2023**

Channel Demersal NQS Fisheries Management Plan published. Find it on GOV.UK

**3 October 2024**

Produced ID cards and updated the Catch App for cuttlefish (3 species) and octopus (2 species).

**5 April 2025**

Cuttlefish Action Plan published by MMO.

**6 April 2025**

Voluntary codes of practice on trap/pot handing in ICES 7d and 7e.

**7 July 2025**

Stakeholder engagement round table took place.



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# Bass FMP in English and Welsh Waters



2 2024

Defra have set up a **Bass Management Group (BMG)** to facilitate stakeholder participation in management decisions.

The establishment of the group was a main commitment of the Bass FMP. The group will meet quarterly and meeting notes can be found on .GOV.UK

4 2025

Defra are conducting a review into shore-based netting in England as a key part of goal seven in the Bass FMP.

Having engaged with a wide variety of stakeholders and subject matter experts, a report has now been drafted and will soon be brought to the BMG.

6 2025

As part of FMP goal four, the MMO and Defra have reviewed the bass guidance pages on the gov.uk website to improve communications with commercial fishermen and recreational anglers on the regulations around bass fishing.

For more information email  
[BassFMP@defra.gov.uk](mailto:BassFMP@defra.gov.uk) or  
[FMP@marinemanagement.org.uk](mailto:FMP@marinemanagement.org.uk)

1 December 2023

Bass Fisheries Management Plan published.  
Find it on GOV.UK

3 2025

The Marine Management Organisation (MMO) are leading on a review of the **Bass Authorisation System** via a stakeholder group.

The MMO have conducted engagement with stakeholders allowing for stakeholder comments to be considered in the review on topics such as track records, the transfer process, gear, discards and reporting.

Consolidating stakeholder feedback and authorisation group priorities into recommendations which are due to be delivered to Defra later this year.

5 2025

The Angling Trust are leading on the development of bass handling and best practice guidance for recreational anglers. They aim to provide member pack updates, tackle box stickers that signpost to regulations, and short form informational video guidance.

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# King Scallop FMP in English and Welsh Waters

## England Updates

### 2 April 2024 - March 2025

The King Scallop dredge fishery closed 15 May to 30 September 2024. Following public consultation, a temporary closure to fishing with dredges has been implemented in ICES areas 7d (for UK and EU vessels over 10m) and Lyme Bay 7e (for UK and EU vessel over 12m) from 1 July to 30 September 2025.

### 4 May 2025

- Seafish delivered a report that identifies the existing scallop management measures in UK waters and explored candidate options for harmonisation of measures to be considered.
- Seafish presented findings of how similar fisheries across the world approach the use of harvest control rules. This work will help to inform discussions on developing our own harvest control strategy.

6 MMO and Defra are supporting developments in the implementation of the FMP

### 1 December 2023

King Scallop Fisheries Management Plan published. Find it on GOV.UK

### 3 December 2024

A King Scallop FMP Implementation Group (KSIG) has been created to bring together industry, policy makers, scientists, regulators and environmental representatives.

A group meets quarterly and minutes will be published on GOV.UK. As of July 2025, two spaces remain for people to join to represent the under 15m scalloping fleet as well as a space for a hand diving representative. Should you wish to join, please contact [shellfish@defra.gov.uk](mailto:shellfish@defra.gov.uk).

5 A report that investigated possible input and output controls has been shared with the group by Cefas. A new task-and-finish group was set up to work on narrowing down the options to be put forward for a formal consultation. This group met on 30 June 2025 to have initial discussions. More work is to be completed over the next two months. Once complete, Defra will take these into consideration when drafting the consultation.

For more information email  
[shellfish@defra.gov.uk](mailto:shellfish@defra.gov.uk) or  
[FMP@marinemanagement.org.uk](mailto:FMP@marinemanagement.org.uk)

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Recommendations:

Members **NOTE** and **APPROVE** the report