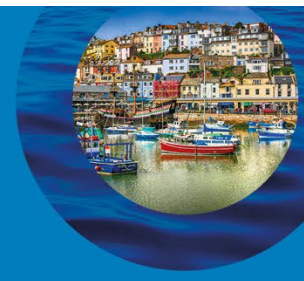




Marine
Management
Organisation

Channel Demersal Non-Quota Species Fisheries Management Plan:

Feedback from commercial fishing industry engagement June 2022



...ambitious for our seas and coasts

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Background

Now the UK has left the European Union, we have the opportunity to manage our fisheries in a way that best meets the needs of stocks, the marine environment, and the people whose livelihoods depend on them. Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs) are one of the key ways in which we can achieve our ambition for sustainable fisheries in England.

A FMP, and the process that creates it, is a means to enable the long-term sustainability of fish stocks and protection of our marine environment. Development of a FMP for demersal non-quota species (NQS) in the English Channel was highlighted by the fishing industry and other key marine stakeholders as a necessary move because of concern about potential over-exploitation of some stocks and a lack of data about non-quota stocks in general.

The Marine Management Organisation (MMO) is leading on stakeholder engagement and drafting of the Channel demersal NQS FMP. The Channel demersal NQS FMP will include ICES divisions 7d and 7e and will cover demersal species such as red, tub and grey gurnards, cuttlefish, squid, octopus, John dory, red mullet and lesser spotted dogfish which are listed within the Government's draft [Joint Fisheries Statement](#). Lemon sole, bib, turbot, brill and smoothhound are also being considered for inclusion in the Channel demersal NQS FMP based on findings from scoping research and this initial engagement. The FMP will be developed in stages and therefore some species will be prioritised to begin with, and others will be included within later versions of the plan.

In June, as a critical first step in developing the Channel demersal NQS FMP, we carried out a series of face-to-face events on England's south coast with stakeholders from the commercial fishing industry. We held a combination of drop-in sessions and quayside visits at several locations. We were able to speak with many stakeholders over a two-week period and gathered a wide range of views and feedback. The information gathered will give MMO a steer for what needs to be considered when developing the Channel demersal NQS FMP.

The summary in this document covers the views of a wide range of fishers in ports across the south coast. The views expressed in this document are not MMO's

opinion. These are fisher's opinions which we would like to share for transparency and to encourage further discussion.

Summary of 7e stakeholder engagement

Engagement in ICES area 7e ran for one week from 13 to 17 June.

Stakeholders from the commercial fishing industry were invited to attend a series of drop-in sessions and quayside events through direct contact, industry groups as well as social media posts, and website blogs. We held sessions in Plymouth, Brixham, Newlyn, Truro, Mevagissey, Exmouth, Axmouth, Lyme Regis, Looe, and Weymouth. We spoke to a wide range of individuals such as vessel owners and industry group representatives. We introduced the Channel demersal NQS FMP and asked them questions on the species that were most important to them and the potential management measures they would like to see within the FMP.

We summarised stakeholders views into the following themes below:

Species of interest

- The most important NQS species included lemon sole, turbot, brill, bib (pouting), John dory, red mullet, cuttlefish, squid, spurdog, lesser-spotted dogfish and smoothhound
- Octopus is not caught in significant numbers, but has the potential to become a major species in the area

Management Measures

- Strong appetite for the re-introduction of Minimum Landing Size (MLS) for lemon sole
- Increasing selectivity measures may be an effective management measure for lemon sole and cuttlefish
- Desire for re-introduction of strengthening bags that are currently banned in the 7e area of the Celtic Sea
- Desire for the FMP to be flexible in order to consider factors such as climate change and stock seasonality
- Support for the FMP to review measures that have been brought in recently in the area such as the Celtic Sea measures
- Conflicting views on the introduction of quota for non-quota stocks
- Catch Per Unit Effort data are essential in order to understand trends and introduce effective management measures

Issues

- Unaware of the Channel demersal NQS FMP and how it will work
- Concern that environmental non-governmental organisations (eNGOs) are advising consumers against the purchase of species that are data poor such as John dory
- Concern that the FMP will put measures/ restrictions in place that will not be amended or reviewed
- There are high levels of distrust between some fishers and regulators in the area

Engagement

- Information should be communicated clearly, with the use of videos and infographics
- Some fishers should be engaged with directly rather than through industry groups as there is a concern that the opinions of small vessel fishers do not get heard
- MMO should target engagement at the whole supply chain and not just fishers e.g. markets and wholesalers to make it more effective

Summary of 7d stakeholder engagement

Engagement in ICES area 7d ran for one week from 20 to 24 June.

Stakeholders from the commercial fishing industry were invited to attend a series of drop-in sessions and quayside events through direct contact, social media posts, industry groups and website blogs. We held sessions in Brighton, Rye, Hastings, Eastbourne, Newhaven, Shoreham, Selsey and Gosport and spoke to a wide range of individuals such as vessel owners and industry group representatives. We introduced the Channel demersal NQS FMP and asked them questions on the species that were most important to them and the potential management measures they would like to see within the FMP.

We summarised stakeholders views into the following themes below:

Species of interest

- Important species were turbot, lemon sole and cuttlefish
- Cuttlefish is a vitally important fishery for many and needs to be viewed as a priority species for consideration within the Channel demersal NQS FMP

Management Measures

- FMP should include management measures such as mesh sizes and restricting certain activities and gear
- Significant support for the re-introduction of MLSs on lemon sole, brill and turbot in the area. However, selectivity measures would be more effective for species with low survivability rates

Issues

- Unaware of the Channel demersal NQS FMP and how it will work

Engagement

- Preference for MMO to use simple visual aids rather than technical presentations
- Fishers suggested communicating with fishers' families would assist with reaching more fishers
- Personalised, one to one engagement would help fishers feel more comfortable when engaging with MMO on the FMP, rather than in large meetings
- MMO should be clear about who we are targeting with our engagement in order to avoid wasting our own and their time
- MMO should engage with the whole supply chain such as wholesalers and markets
- MMO could assist fishers to their understand the new rules through the inclusion of worked examples where appropriate

- The best times for meeting individuals or groups vary between ports
- MMO needs to be careful with the language we use in our communications to fishers. For example, most fishers refer to non-quota species as 'non-pressure stocks'
- MMO communications need to reflect the benefits of the FMP to the industry rather than the benefits to government
- Existing positive relationships with MMO Marine Officers should be utilised in future engagement

Other issues raised

There were many other issues raised during our visit to the south coast that are currently outside the scope of the FMP. However, they have been passed on to the relevant MMO and Defra teams and are summarised below:

Other issues raised included:

- Fly seining
- Conflict with non-UK vessels
- Displacement
- Spider crabs
- Age profile of fishers
- Increasing costs
- Dredging
- Issues with funding e.g. grants

Many of the topics above are discussed at the Regional Fishery Group meetings. This is the forum to discuss these points with government and scientists and fishers are welcome to attend these meetings in their regions.

Next steps

It is clear from this first round of engagement with the commercial fishing industry that there are crucial differences between areas 7e and 7d in terms of what stocks are important and how they are caught. We will consider this as we develop the Channel demersal NQS FMP.

Now we gathered the first round of feedback from the commercial fishing industry, we aim to hold similar events with other stakeholders such as recreational fishers and eNGOs. There will also be further opportunities for the commercial fishing industry to provide additional feedback on the development of the Channel demersal NQS FMP during future engagement in the coming autumn.

Furthermore, we have taken on board the feedback that many fishers are still unaware of what an FMP is and how one FMP links with another as well as with other government strategies. We will, therefore, create a series of videos and infographics to clarify what an FMP is and what we are trying to achieve through it and send out this information in a clear and accessible way.

In the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any further feedback.

Useful Information

- Contact details
- Fisheries Management Plan Team: FMP@marinemanagement.org.uk
- Regional Fisheries Group Team: regionalfisheriesgroups@marinemanagement.org.uk
- [Non-Quota Species FMP MMO Blog](#)
- [Fishing into the Future](#)