



Department
for Environment,
Food & Rural Affairs



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Consultation on the proposed joint UK Fisheries Management Plans for Irish Sea Demersal and Pelagic fish stocks

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Consultation Overview

Introduction

Fish stocks are a public asset, they form a vital part of the marine ecosystem, and are capable of providing an important food source, as well contributing to recreational and commercial opportunities. However, the stocks in the Irish Sea are subject to a range of man-made and natural pressures, including fishing activity, climate change and the impacts of other marine developments.

Fishing activity brings clear socio-economic benefits but also presents risks to fish stocks and the wider marine environment. Such risks include impacts through unwanted bycatches and physical damage to the seabed from fishing gear. Effective fisheries management must balance these positive and negative effects. There are opportunities for growth if our fishing and seafood industries are managed sustainably, to maintain and restore the stocks in the Irish Sea and ensure fishing opportunities are safeguarded for future generations.

The [Joint Fisheries Statement \(JFS\)](#), as amended, sets out how the UK fisheries policy authorities (Defra¹, and the devolved governments in Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales²) 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](#).

The plans bring together evidence on the state of the relevant sea fish and shellfish stocks and identify policies and actions necessary to manage our fisheries in an effective and sustainable way. FMPs set out both the vision for the management of the relevant fisheries as well as relevant policies and actions intended to help realise that vision. The plans must also consider relevant wider legal obligations.

FMPs provide a means for the fishery policy authorities to work closely with all interested stakeholders to develop and deliver effective fisheries management.

¹ Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

² Welsh Government

Purpose of this consultation

The purpose of this consultation is to seek your comments on the policies and actions proposed to manage stocks of demersal and pelagic fish in the Irish Sea.

DAERA as the co-ordinating authority alongside the Welsh Government and Defra has developed the following joint UK FMPs;

- Irish Sea pelagic FMP covering the herring stock within Northern Irish, Welsh and English waters of the Irish Sea, and
- Irish Sea demersal FMP covering stocks of cod, haddock, whiting, sole, plaice and the Functional Units of *Nephrops* within Northern Irish, English and Welsh waters of the Irish Sea.

We are consulting on these two FMPs together. This is an opportunity to help shape and influence the future of demersal and pelagic fisheries management in the Irish Sea. This consultation builds on the previous stakeholder engagement in the development of these proposals.

The supporting impact assessments are also the subject of this consultation.

Consultation documents

This consultation consists of the following documents;

- Consultation document (this document).
- Draft Irish Sea pelagic FMP for Northern Irish, English and Welsh waters, as required by Schedule 1, Part 3 of the Fisheries Act 2020; prepared by DAERA.
- Draft Irish Sea demersal FMP for Northern Irish, English and Welsh waters, as required by Schedule 1, Part 3 of the Fisheries Act 2020; prepared by DAERA.
- A draft Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) has been developed to consider the anticipated economic impact of the FMPs on the fishing sector and associated businesses. We would welcome additional economic evidence too update this assessment.
- Draft Environmental Reports (ERs) for each FMP - these consider the likely environmental impacts of the policies and actions. Undertaken as required by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (SEA Regulations 2004) in England and Wales, and the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (NI) 2004 for Northern Ireland.

The questions are highlighted throughout this consultation document and are collated in **Annex A**.

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 and in particular, within the Irish Sea,
- 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.

Confidentiality

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 gives the public a right of access to any information held by a public authority – the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) in this case. This includes information provided in response to this consultation.

DAERA will publish a synopsis of responses to the consultation. This will include a list of names of organisations that responded but not personal names, addresses or other contact details.

DAERA cannot automatically consider information supplied to it in response to a consultation, to be confidential. However, it does have a responsibility to decide whether any information provided by you in response to a consultation, including information about your identity, should be made public or treated as confidential. If you do not wish information about your identity to be made public, please include an explanation in your response. Please be aware that confidentiality cannot be guaranteed, except in very particular circumstances. Please note, if your computer automatically includes a confidentiality disclaimer, it won't count as a confidentiality request.

Should you respond in an individual capacity, DAERA will process your personal data in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. This means that your personal information will not be disclosed to third parties should you request confidentiality. For further information about confidentiality of responses please contact the Information Commissioners Office (see its website at www.ico.org.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 are intended to support the protection of fish stocks and, where necessary, the recovery of fish stocks, which in turn will 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

Fisheries management is a devolved competency, currently managed through a framework of regulation, byelaws, licence conditions and voluntary measures. FMPs may lead to changes to these management measures.

National Fisheries Authorities, which for the UK are Scottish Government, Defra, the Marine Management Organisation (MMO), DAERA and the Welsh Government, are legally required to act in accordance with the policies set out in the FMP and will work with a range of organisations and relevant stakeholders on implementation of the actions contained within the FMPs.

FMPs identify a range of policies and actions. FMPs are intended to be adaptive and develop over time as measures are implemented, and further evidence is gathered. Whilst each FMP focuses on specific stock(s), they should also be considered in a holistic manner, given connections between different fisheries and stock interactions.

The FMPs are long-term plans that must be reviewed and, if necessary, revised at least once every six years. Under Section 8(1) of the Act, in addition to the mandatory minimum six-year review of FMPs, an FMP can also be replaced or amended at any time following a consultation, allowing the FMP to be kept up to date.

FMP actions are intended to be implemented over the lifetime of the FMP. It may therefore take some time to fully demonstrate any benefits in terms of improving the sustainability of stocks and fisheries. Actions in the FMPs should link to one of the objectives of the Fisheries Act. The specific development and review process is set out within each individual FMP.

International Management of Irish Sea stocks

Fish stocks in the Irish Sea are not solely exploited or managed by the UK. While the UK has regulatory autonomy over its fisheries, it is committed to working with the European Union (EU) and relevant Coastal States, to ensure the sustainable management of shared resources and to maintain strong, positive international relationships.

International fisheries negotiations and the setting of agreed fishing opportunities play a key role in supporting the management, maintenance, and restoration of fish stocks. All the stocks in these two FMPs are jointly managed, and fishing opportunities are ultimately determined through international negotiation. In its approach to annual negotiations with the EU, the UK aims to achieve, or contribute to the achievement of, the objectives in the Act. The policies and actions within the FMPs must also reflect and respect these international management arrangements.

Regulatory measures, resulting from FMP management actions, will apply to all vessels fishing in the relevant UK waters. The UK will notify the EU of any changes affecting EU vessels.

Why a single demersal FMP for the Irish Sea

While pelagic fisheries tend to be specifically targeting a single species, due to the time and location of the fishery, demersal fisheries are often complex due to the mixed nature of the fisheries. For the Irish Sea demersal FMP the stocks included are the main demersal species, which are caught as a targeted species or an associated bycatch. This is particularly true for the *Nephrops* fishery as the largest fishery, in terms of vessel numbers and landings, which has the potential to catch all other species within the FMP.

Not all the stocks are subject to the same level of exploitation (fishing pressure), or have the same conservation and protection requirements, but many are linked by the mixed nature of the fisheries and impacted by the ongoing ecological changes within the Irish Sea. For this reason, a single FMP for stocks of cod, whiting, haddock, sole, plaice and *Nephrops* was directed by the JFS.

Status of the stocks covered by these FMPs

The health of fish stocks will change over time, and the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) routinely provides updated advice for the stocks under consideration here. The fisheries policy authorities utilise this advice and follow principles laid out in the UK Fisheries Framework³, including the principles within the JFS relating to international negotiations for determining fishing opportunities. *Nephrops* fishing opportunities must have due regard to the legal requirements of the Western Waters Multi Annual Plan (EUR 2019/472).⁴

It is important to note that these FMPs are being made based on the evidence currently available. For many Irish Sea stocks, the advice for 2026 was for a downturn in catches, giving some concern over the long-term development of the stocks. For this reason, FMPs need to be flexible, able to address short term fluctuations and developing situations while ensuring progress towards longer term goals.

FMP stocks have different levels of available data as categorised by ICES. ICES categorises fish stocks into six groups (Categories 1 to 6) based on the quantity and quality of available data, which determines the type and reliability of scientific assessment and advice. Maximum sustainable yield (MSY) reference points can be estimated for stocks classified as ICES data Categories 1 or 2; MSY proxies can be established for stocks at ICES data Category 3.

We can make a MSY determination for all of the stocks except haddock. Prior to the 2025 Irish Sea haddock was subject to an ICES Category 1 assessment, however in 2025 this was downgraded to a Category 5 Precautionary Approach Advice due to discrepancies identified in the assessment input data⁵. Since the issue occurred ICES have identified that there needs to be a more substantive re-evaluation of the stock assessment and data, with a full benchmark to be undertaken in the 2027-28 cycle. The scientific advice for this stock will likely remain based on ICES

³The Fisheries Management and Support Common Framework outlines the legislation and policies for the sustainable management of fisheries and the seafood sector in the UK

⁴ The MAP was part of the EU Common Fisheries Policy, which was retained and now, as amended, forms part of assimilated UK law.

⁵ ICES advice for Haddock in Division 7.a(Irish Sea). Published 13 November 2025

Precautionary Advice Approach while the issues underlying the assessment are addressed. Actions to improve the assessment are supported within the FMP.

The resulting over-riding policy aim is to maintain or restore all stocks to a sustainable level. For stocks where restoration is necessary, we also have to recognise that this may not be possible solely through the management of the fishery, as a result of factors outside our direct control, and potentially only possible over an extended time scale. This does not mean that we can set aside fishing activity, fishing pressure will still need to be managed to provide the best basis for any possible recovery. The final FMP will benefit from updated scientific stock advice for 2027 to inform any stock specific measures

In summary, the joint Irish Sea FMPs describe existing management measures and regulations, and the available science and evidence to assess the status of the stocks covered by these FMPs in UK waters. The FMPs will ensure that the stocks continue to be sustainably managed above biomass levels consistent with an MSY approach. The links to related policies have been identified and discussed in the appropriate sections of the FMPs.

FMP Common Themes

Each FMP has these following key common sections:

Background: information on the FMP area, the stocks included and the key fisheries.

Stock Assessment, MSY and assessment of evidence providing information on available stock assessments, maximum sustainable yield and stock biology for the individual stocks covered by the FMPs, and the assessment of this information.

Fisheries Management: setting out the current management actions, the current technical measures, as well as monitoring, control and enforcement.

Environmental Considerations: Covering the legal duties and requirements relating to the protection of the natural environment arising from legislation, the conservation advice developed and the risks arising from the operation of the fisheries.

Implementation and Monitoring section which describes the process for implementation and that delivery of the policies and actions in the demersal FMPs will be monitored and assessed against a set of indicators to ensure the overarching

outcomes and actions are effective in achieving the FMP goals and the requirements of the Act.

Stakeholder engagement: Working groups were set up for each of the FMPs to support a co-development process. These groups fed into the early drafts of the FMPs and helped shape the policy goals and actions. The groups held meetings between 2024 and July 2025, subsequent revision has been undertaken by the joint authorities to improve consistency and clarity as other FMPs were progressed across the UK.

Question 1: Do you have any comments on the common sections in either of the draft FMPs?

Policies and actions for the management of Irish Sea fisheries

The FMPs were prepared to meet the requirements of section 6 of the Act, the requirements set out in the JFS and the [Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 \(the SEA regulations\) insofar as it applies to English and Welsh waters](#). Subject to the consultation and prior to final publication the policies and actions will be prioritised and realistic and measurable outcomes identified. Each policy describes the outcome that is being worked towards, and the actions are intended to support the delivery of those outcomes.

For each policy, the proposed FMP sets out:

- a rationale
- ongoing, short and/or longer-term actions
- links the actions to delivery of the fisheries objectives.

You are referred to these policy goals and actions in the relevant FMP to consider when responding to the consultation questions below.

Irish Sea Demersal Stocks

This FMP deals with the demersal fisheries catching cod, haddock, whiting, sole, plaice and *Nephrops*. As noted above management is shared with the EU and the stocks of cod and whiting in particular are considered to be in a long term poor or

declining biological condition. This year's advice for sole, plaice and importantly the western *Nephrops* stock (FU⁶15) are for decreases in catch. The advice for haddock has been reclassified as category 5 due to errors identified within the assessment and the advice includes a significant precautionary reduction.

Alongside the important socio-economic considerations for these fisheries and the maintenance of viable fishing activity, there are ongoing challenges in the Irish Sea arising from the interactions of fishing and other marine development activities, notably offshore windfarms, on specific species and the wider ecosystem.

The resulting policies seek to set management objectives in line with the Act for each stock and embed fisheries management within the wider ecosystem-based approach for marine management.

Policy goals.

There are 6 policy goals identified in the FMP

- Policy Goal 1: Harvest the stock of sole sustainably, at a level commensurate with Maximum Sustainable Yield.
- Policy Goal 2: Harvest stocks of cod, whiting, haddock, plaice and *Nephrops* sustainably, contributing to restoring and maintaining the biomass above the level capable of producing MSY.
- Policy Goal 3: Support evaluation of the impact on fish stocks and fishing fleets from other developments impacting upon marine habitats.
- Policy Goal 4: Support ecosystem-based sustainable management by minimising the impact of Irish Sea demersal fisheries on the marine ecosystem.
- Policy Goal 5: Support progress towards sustainable fishing by maximising any economic and social benefit.
- Policy Goal 6: Minimise the impact of fish activities on climate change and support the fishing industry to adapt to climate change.

Question 2: Do you have any comments on the policy goals in the draft demersal FMP?

⁶ Functional Unit (FU) are considered biologically separate assessment areas for *Nephrops*

Question 3 Do you have any comments on the possible actions identified under each respective goal?

Irish Sea Pelagic FMP (Herring)

The draft FMP proposes to manage a single stock, that of Irish Sea herring (defined as that within division 7.a North of 52°30'N). Similar to the demersal stocks, this stock is also subject to joint management with the EU. This stock is of key economic importance to the Northern Ireland pelagic industry and to historic small scale inshore fisheries.

Herring stocks are subject to a degree of mixing between stock areas, and this has presented a number of issues for the advisory process. For the Irish Sea stock, the principal source of mixing is considered to be fish linked to the Celtic Sea. The Celtic Sea stock is considered to be in poor biological condition. This mixing may complicate the management due to unwanted catches of the Celtic Sea stock.

As a result, the policies within this FMP, seek to restore and maintain the stock at or above MSY levels, while also seeking to improve the assessment and realising the best socio-economic and cultural benefits.

Policy goals and questions

There are 5 policy goals in this FMP:

- Policy Goal 1: Harvest Irish Sea herring fishery sustainably with biomass restored and maintained above the level capable of producing MSY.
- Policy Goal 2: Use the best available scientific evidence to support management decisions relating to the setting of sustainable fishing opportunities.
- Policy Goal 3: Deliver wider sustainable management by taking steps to minimise the impact of Irish Sea herring fisheries on the marine ecosystem.
- Policy Goal 4: Support the fishing industry to deliver socio-economic and cultural benefits for rural and coastal communities.
- Policy Goal 5: Minimise the impact of fishing activities on climate change and support the fishing industry to adapt to climate change.

Question 4: Do you have any comments on the goals in the draft pelagic FMP?

Question 5: Do you have any comments on the possible actions identified under each respective goal?

Implementation

Once formally published, the plan will need to be implemented. This will be a phased process, and DAERA will be working closely with the commercial and recreational fishing sector and wider stakeholders to develop implementation plans.

Publishing the FMPs is the start of a multi-year cycle, FMPs will be formally reviewed at least every six years. In addition, the report prepared and published every 3 years in relation to the JFS under section 11 of the Act, will also report on the extent to which the policies contained in these FMPs have been implemented.

Under each policy goal there will be interdependent short- and longer-term actions and separate review points may need to be established for specific actions. We expect that actions will need to be further refined as the evidence base is improved over the lifetime of the FMPs.

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 and will continue beyond their publication.

Conclusion

In summary, the Irish Sea demersal and pelagic FMPs describe existing management measures and the available science and evidence to assess the status of demersal (cod, haddock, whiting, sole, plaice and *Nephrops*) and pelagic (herring) stocks around Northern Irish, Welsh and English waters of the Irish Sea in 2026 to determine a sustainable level of exploitation. Each FMP sets out policies and proposed actions to manage the relevant fisheries sustainably in the long-term.

Impact Assessments

Through this public consultation we are also seeking views on supporting impact assessments, a combined Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) for both FMPs and individual Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Environmental Reports (ERs).

Fisheries management is a devolved matter, and the implementation of new legislation, voluntary regulation, codes of practice, guidance or policy changes will be taken forward and assessed by respective national fisheries authorities as appropriate.

Each national fishery authority is responsible for ensuring its own assessment requirements are met, however for this consultation a RIA and joint ERs have been drafted for Northern Irish, Welsh and English waters.

Regulatory Impact Assessment

A full RIA is not required at the consultation stage because the proposals do not, by themselves, introduce new legislation, voluntary regulation, codes of practice, guidance or policy changes.

An initial RIA was therefore undertaken to help identify possible economic impacts of the FMPs on the fishing sector and associated businesses. This document is a narrative assessment and does not include monetised or quantified costs to businesses.

Whilst the FMP identifies potential actions that could be introduced post-publication, these individual proposals will need to be developed further and do not currently have sufficient detail for a full economic analysis to be completed. As the FMP is implemented, appropriate assessments will be required from each authority for any specific interventions.

Question 6: Do you have any comments on the attached initial RIA?

Strategic Environmental Assessment

DAERA, Welsh Government and Defra are required to consider the environmental impact of any policy, plans or programmes. The Environment Act 2021 sets out environmental principles to guide policy making. Activities taken as part of the development of the joint FMPs also should be in line with the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 and the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015.

These FMPs fall within The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (SEA Regulations 2004) because the geographical coverage extends into English and Welsh waters.

The Regulations 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 these regulations.

What is the Environmental Report and how was it developed

The SEA process considers the likely significant environmental effects of implementing the policies and actions set out in the draft Irish Sea demersal and pelagic FMPs. The ERs set out the findings of this process.

An ER has been prepared by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) on behalf of the co-ordinating authority DAERA for each of the FMPs to meet the requirements of the SEA Regulations 2004.

The reports describe the current state of the environment (the baseline) and the likely significant effects of proposals in the draft FMPs to the baseline. The assessment identifies where the draft FMPs 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. The scope and level of detail was informed through an early consultation with the relevant statutory consultation bodies: Northern Ireland Environment Agency, Historic Environment Division (DAERA), Natural England, Cadw (Welsh Historic Monuments), Natural Resources Wales together with further advice from the JNCC, as an advisor to the UK government and devolved governments on UK-wide nature conservation. We also drew on published information on the state of the environment and the potential impact of fishing on environmental features.

Summary of Environmental Reports

The ERs have 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 for demersal ER: Biodiversity, Fauna, Flora, Geology, and sediments (soil), Water, Climatic factors, Cultural heritage, Landscape, and seascape.

The following issues (from Schedule 2 paragraph 6 of the SEA Regulations 2004) were scoped into the assessment for pelagic ER: Biodiversity, Fauna, Flora, Geology, and sediments (soil), Water, Climatic factors, Cultural heritage.

The reports assess the likely significant effects of the draft Irish Sea demersal and pelagic FMPs on these issues.

The assessments were 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 the 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 FMP.

Existing environmental effects of demersal and pelagic 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 both FMP's proposed policy goals and actions have been assessed both alone and in combination.

Irish Sea demersal FMP Environmental Report

This report considers and acknowledges the existing environmental effects of fishing for haddock, cod, whiting, plaice, sole, and Norway lobster (*Nephrops norvegicus*) using towed gear and static gear on those issues scoped into this assessment, in relation to Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), the UK MS descriptors of good environmental status (GES) for the wider marine environment, and climatic factors. The potential positive and negative environmental effects of the Irish Sea demersal FMP policy goals and proposed actions alone and in-combination have also been assessed.

The SEA has concluded that beyond the direct impact on targeted stocks, the fishery has an impact on the wider marine environment primarily through seabed disturbance (from mobile demersal gears). Actions have been proposed to investigate these impacts and use this evidence to develop robust mitigation strategies. The potential positive and negative environmental effects of the Irish Sea demersal FMP's policy goals and proposed actions alone and in-combination have also been assessed. The contribution of demersal fishing to climate change related issues and cultural heritage, through structural damage for example, was also identified as a potential impact.

The assessment did not identify any negative impacts from the FMP policy goals and actions that poses a significant risk to the environment. The policy goals can, where appropriate, be developed to avoid any potential negative effects identified by the assessment process.

The assessment recommends that:

- Future iterations of the Irish Sea demersal 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 marine heritage assets.
- Future iterations of the Irish Sea demersal FMP should consider how fisheries management can contribute to reducing potential negative interactions with submerged prehistoric landscapes or seascapes.
- The Irish Sea demersal FMP would benefit from providing more specific detail on how the FMPs will interact with Marine Plans. Noting how the FMPs could positively or negatively interact with this programme, would improve the in-combination assessment.

These recommendations will be considered in future iterations of the plan.

Question 7: Do you have any comments on the assessment of environmental effects set out in the environmental report for the Irish Sea demersal FMP?

Irish Sea pelagic FMP Environmental Report

This report considers and acknowledges the existing environmental effects of herring fishing using pelagic trawls, drift nets, and bottom set gillnets 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 Irish Sea pelagic FMP's policy goals and proposed actions alone and in-combination have also been assessed.

This SEA has concluded that beyond the direct impact on targeted stocks, the fishery has an impact on the wider marine environment primarily through bycatch of unwanted / protected species (in passive nets) and prey reduction. The contribution of fishing related litter was also identified as a potential impact associated with herring fishing. The impact of herring fishing in MPAs is managed in the 0-12 nautical miles zone in Northern Ireland waters and English waters. Management in MPAs beyond the 12 nautical mile limit is in development. The contribution of herring fishing to climate change related issues and its interactions with cultural heritage, through structural damage for example, were also identified as potential impacts.

The assessment of the likely negative effects did not identify any negative effects that posed a significant risk to the environment. The policy goals and actions can, where appropriate, be developed to avoid any potential negative effects identified by the assessment progress. The environmental effects of implementing the Irish Sea pelagic FMP's policy goals and actions will also be monitored to identify unforeseen adverse effects at an early stage, so appropriate remedial action can be undertaken.

The assessment recommended that:

- Future iterations of the Irish Sea pelagic FMP should consider how to develop the cultural heritage of each fishery
- The Irish Sea pelagic FMP would benefit from providing more specific detail on national and UK programmes to reduce marine litter and how this FMP contributes to those programmes.
- The Irish Sea pelagic 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.

These recommendations will be considered in future iterations of the plan.

Question 8: Do you have any comments on the assessment of environmental effects set out in the environmental report for the Irish Sea pelagic FMP?

What happens next?

Following the closing date, all responses will be analysed and considered along with any other available evidence. A summary of responses will be made available on the DAERA website. A list of respondents will be published where we have been given permission to do so.

The responses to this consultation will inform the policies and actions within the final FMPs. The final FMPs will be published by DAERA.

How to respond

You are invited to share your views directly online via the Citizen Space website. Alternatively, should you wish to provide a written response via email or post, please do so to the addresses below. A response form to use for email and hard copy is included on the Citizen Space website.

The consultation survey has three parts:

1. Personal details and confidentiality (required)
2. Questions on the two draft FMPs, the RIA and the Environmental Report.

3. Consultee feedback on the online survey (required)

You do not have to respond to all the questions, but you do have to complete the personal details and confidentiality section.

When responding, please state whether you are doing so as an individual or representing the views of an organisation. If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, please make it clear who the organisation represents, and where applicable, how the views of its members were assembled.

Accessible versions of this document are available on request.

Written responses should be sent to: E-mail: **FMPs@daera-ni.gov.uk**

or by post to:

**Fisheries Management Plan Consultation
Marine and Fisheries Division
Rathkeltair House
Market Street
Downpatrick
Co Down
BT30 6AJ**

Timing and duration of this consultation

The consultation will commence on **30th July 2026** and close on **21st October 2026**.

Enquiries

If you have any general enquiries regarding these FMPs, please contact:

Fmps@daera-ni.gov.uk

Annex A – Consultation Questions

Question 1: Do you have any comments on these common sections in either of the draft FMPs?

Question 2: Do you have any comments on the policy goals in the draft demersal FMP?

Question 3 Do you have any comments on the possible actions identified under the respective goals?

Question 4: Do you have any comments on the goals in the draft pelagic FMP?

Question 5: Do you have any comments on the possible actions identified under the respective goals?

Question 6: Do you have any comments on the attached initial RIA?

Question 7: Do you have any comments on the assessment of environmental effects set out in the environmental report for the Irish Sea demersal FMP?

Question 8: Do you have any comments on the assessment of environmental effects set out in the environmental report for the Irish Sea pelagic FMP?