



**DELIVERING FISHERY IMPROVEMENTS
IN THE NORTH EAST ATLANTIC**



**Annual Report
2022–2023
September 2023**

“It’s great to see Project UK continuing to make excellent progress. As a member of the steering groups of both Channel scallops and UK scallops, I have been able to witness first hand how far things have come. Not only is Project UK improving the sustainability of these fisheries in particular, but it has also stimulated a wider body of scientific research with implications well beyond the main projects.”

Bryce Stewart
University of York

“We worked with the *Nephrops* Steering Group through Project UK to use the Benthic Impact Tool to build understanding on the potential impact of *Nephrops* trawling and potting on seabed habitats, and predict their recovery times. It was good to work with the Steering Group and its members, which provided a broad range of perspectives and experience along with key information, which benefitted the research process and the results produced.”

Tim Whitton
Bangor university

“Project UK has provided the necessary focus platform for a wide range of stakeholders to focus on what actions and evidence are needed to move data-poor fisheries forward towards a point when they might enter the MSC process. Regardless of the outcome, all of these fisheries are better informed than they were previously, and this puts them on a more sustainable footing. It is important not to underestimate the importance of harnessing coordinated industry effort to drive more sustainable fisheries.”

Professor Michel Kaiser
Acting Director, Lyell Centre,
Heriot-Watt University

“My PhD research has contributed to the Project UK Fisheries Improvement Projects for king scallops. I am focusing on the impact that scallop fisheries have on seabed habitats, and how different management measures can reduce that impact. Collaboration and discussion with Project UK Steering Group members has identified possible future management scenarios to model, ensuring the outputs of my PhD research are relevant to industry and policy makers.”

Mairi Fenton, PhD candidate
Herriot-Watt University





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Preface

This Project UK annual report follows the independent annual reviews of each of the Fisheries Improvement Projects (FIPs), by [Poseidon Aquatic Resource Management](#) (Poseidon), in May 2023. The report summarises the key activities from 2022-23, and includes some significant highlights which have occurred since the annual reviews were published:

Round 1 FIPs

- The conclusion of the crab and lobster and lemon sole FIPs timeline in April 2023
- Defra-led development of two national Fisheries Management Plans directly applicable to Round 1 FIPs
- Gap analysis against Version 3 of the MSC Fisheries Standard conducted by Poseidon
- Discussions with Steering Groups about In Transition to MSC (ITM)

Round 2 FIPs

- Three Regional Management Group meetings for *Nephrops*
- Gap analysis against Version 3 of the MSC Fisheries Standard conducted by Poseidon
- Completion of a post-doctoral thesis on the impacts of *Nephrops* gear on seabed habitats





Executive summary

This report summarises the activities of [Project UK](#), following the 2022-23 annual review of each Fisheries Improvement Project (FIP). Progress has been made through the hard work, collaboration and dedication of over 120 participants across the FIP Steering Groups.

Through six Fishery Improvement Projects, representing 12 fisheries, Project UK is addressing 61 individual improvement actions, each consisting of multiple milestones across a pre-agreed timeframe. These fisheries all bring commercial, economic, and cultural benefits to UK communities and are an important part of the UK's fishing heritage and marine environment.

Project UK represents best practice in working towards an environmentally sustainable future for all fisheries participating in the project. The progress made would not be possible without the drive and commitment of Steering Group members and funders, and their continued hard work and support has led to many achievements to date. Facilitated by the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC), Project UK aims to support UK fisheries in furthering their sustainability aims and meet the high bar of global best practice.

This year, overall progress was seen across the different FIPs, and several key milestones were reached. Compared to 2021-22, fewer score changes were seen this year, following many larger milestones being reached in the previous review period. The wider challenges facing the fishing industry remain, particularly related to the UK's exit from the EU and the current cost-of-living crisis in the UK, making environmental improvements just one of many priorities facing Project UK Steering Group representatives, as well as the wider sector. Post-Brexit legislative change means all six FIPs are awaiting one or more government processes to conclude in order for score improvements to be seen in specific performance indicators (PIs).

In June 2023 Defra launched ten public consultations, seeking input on six Fishery Management Plans (FMPs), as well as the government's vision for Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM) on fishing vessels, and a proposed approach to managing discards in England. Project UK Steering Group members have been keenly anticipating these consultations, the outcomes of which have the potential to significantly improve the way fisheries are managed and monitored in the UK. As these consultations were published following the FIP independent annual reviews, they were not considered in the scoring for this year and as such, improved scores for a number of Principle 1 and Principle 3 performance indicators are likely to be seen next year in 2024.

Two Project UK FIPs reached the end of their timeline in April 2023, and the remaining four FIPs finish in April 2024, making the coming year crucial for the Steering Groups to come together and continue working productively and collaboratively on the remaining challenges. The Steering Groups will also consider what direction to take after their FIP timeline ends; there are a number of paths the FIPs could take, and the Secretariat will support each of the fisheries as they transition out of the traditional FIP process.

Several significant developments have also occurred within the MSC which are relevant to the FIPs and their future. Following five years of work, the MSC Fishery Standard Version 3.0 was implemented in May 2023, setting a higher bar for sustainability in fisheries and reflecting current global best practice. The MSC also expanded its In Transition to MSC (ITM) programme, aimed at supporting fisheries who have improvements to make before they can achieve MSC certification. Finally, considerable progress has been made in the development of a new Round 3 of Project UK fisheries improvement projects.



Overview

Project UK is a collaborative partnership between the fishing industry, scientists, NGOs, fishery managers and the seafood supply chain. The project aims for an environmentally sustainable future for UK fisheries, through implementation of credible Fishery Improvement Projects (FIPs).

Project UK FIPs use the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) pre-assessment processes to identify areas where improvements are needed and develop fishery-specific Action Plans to address these improvements. Together, these tools help UK fisheries to meet globally accepted environmental sustainability criteria.

Each FIP has an associated Steering Group comprising relevant stakeholders who inform, support, and contribute to the success of the FIP. Steering Group members provide information and expertise, and are essential in defining and delivering each Action Plan – which outlines a series of steps for fishery improvement. FIPs run for a pre-determined timeline, usually five years, agreed by the Steering Group using the draft Action Plan to inform their approach. In the case of the Round 1 FIPs for Project UK, some of these will now run for a total of six or seven years, because of the impacts of EU Exit and Covid. This timeline is set in motion following formal agreement of the Action Plan by all relevant Steering Group members. The most up-to-date Action Plan for each FIP can be found on the [Project UK website](#).

Project UK comprises six FIPs. The Round 1 FIPs, launched in 2017, include six fisheries: crab, lobster and monkfish in the South West of England; plaice and lemon sole in the North Sea; and scallops in the English Channel. Both the crab and lobster FIP and the lemon sole FIP came to the end of their timeline in April 2023.

The Round 2 FIPs began in 2019 and cover scallop and *Nephrops* fisheries in the North Sea, West of Scotland and the Irish Sea. These FIPs have just completed their penultimate year and are due for completion in April 2024. Each FIP is publicly listed and updated on the tracking website [FisheryProgress.org](#), ensuring actions are transparent and that Steering Groups are held accountable for maintaining progress. All documents, including pre-assessments, Action Plans, minutes and annual reviews are available to download from both [www.ProjectUKFisheries.co.uk](#) and [FisheryProgress.org](#).

Project UK is facilitated by the MSC, building on the organisation's unique relationship with the fishing industry, supply chain and wider network, to support UK fisheries as they improve their sustainability credentials to a level that meets best practice according to the MSC Fisheries Standard.



Highlights for 2022-2023

This year, across the different projects we have seen 12 performance indicators increase from 60-79 to ≥ 80 . There were also two score decreases from ≥ 80 to 60-70 and three score decreases from 60-79 to ≤ 60 . Score decreases were seen predominantly for stock status in certain areas of the *Nephrops* and Channel scallop FIP.

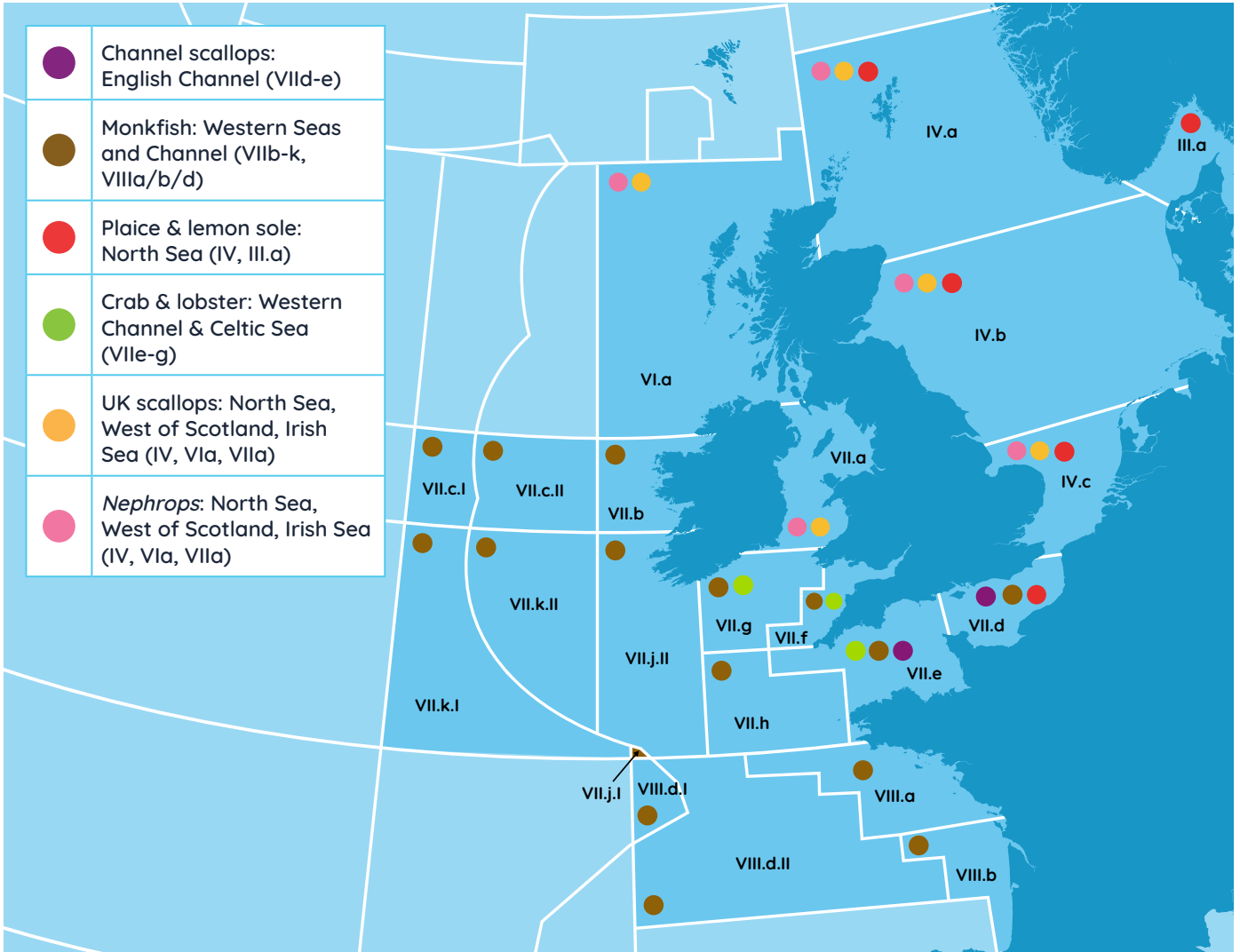
As well as the individual work undertaken with each of the projects to contribute to the delivery of their action plans, the Secretariat (MSC) is also involved in other activities to facilitate progress within, or advocate for, the Project UK FIPs. Activities include:

- Organising 18 Steering Group meetings, three Regional Management Group meetings, and one environmental sub-group meeting
- Working with Northern Irish Fisherman's Federation to organise an in-person event with UK retailers and Northern Irish fishing representatives
- Presenting on Project UK progress at external events, including the Coastal Futures conference and the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Fisheries session
- Hosting a stand and conducting direct outreach with Scottish stakeholders at the Aberdeen Skipper Expo
- Conducting an outreach trip to the West of Scotland to meet with Scottish stakeholders
- Maintaining FisheryProgress.org listings for Project UK throughout the year to ensure it is up-to-date, including social policy requirements, ensuring all FIPs maintained their A-C ratings
- Attending an industry-led crab management workshops in the South West to support the fishery in agreeing feasible management measures
- Supporting the SWFPA scallop committee in discussing appropriate scallop management measures
- Collaborating with the Crab Management Group and the Shellfish Industry Consultation Group to contribute to the development of the Crab and lobster, and King scallop FMPs that are directly relevant to Project UK FIPs
- Presenting on Project UK progress at the MSC's 'Retailer Round Table' event, bringing together UK retailers
- Submitting a formal response to the Marine Scotland HPMA consultation on behalf of the Project UK Steering Groups
- Travelling to Iceland to understand the client group formation and how it can be applied in the UK
- Commissioning a gap analysis for each FIP against Version 3 of the MSC Standard to help inform the Steering Groups on the potential next steps
- Running a webinar for all Steering Group members on Version 3 of the Standard





ICES areas covered by Project UK





Looking ahead: Round 3

Following the demonstrable progress, recognition and support for Rounds 1 and 2 FIPs, there has been significant interest from various UK fisheries and other stakeholders for Project UK to expand into new species and a third round. In 2021 the Secretariat (MSC) undertook broad consultation to gauge interest for potential new species and determine funding and in-kind support requirements to launch a prospective Round 3.

Pre-assessments and draft Action Plans against version 2 of the MSC Fisheries Standard were commissioned based on the outputs of this consultation, with thanks to funding contributions and match funding from a range of partners. The fisheries include:

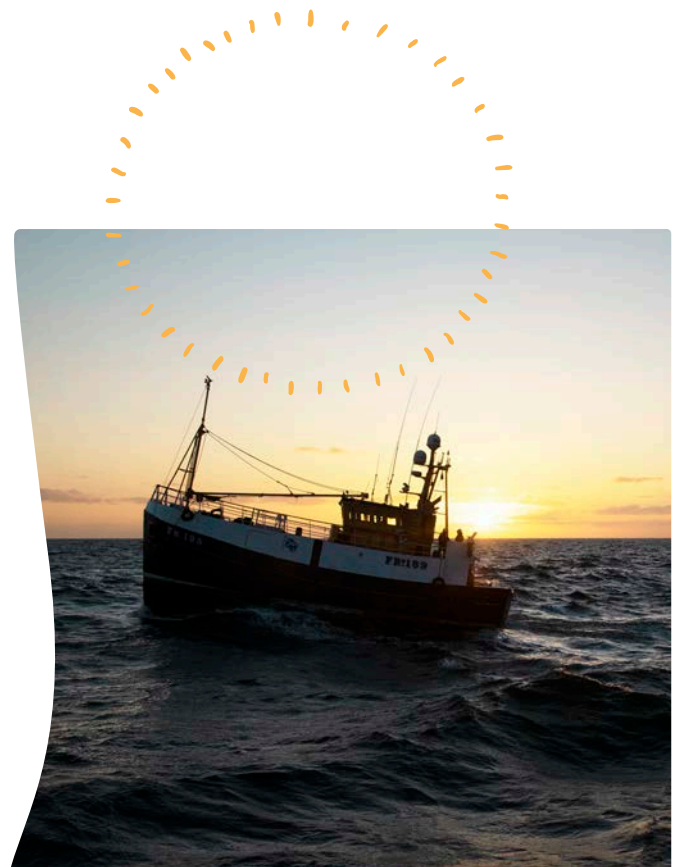
- England: Dover sole, lemon sole, plaice, cuttlefish, squid, turbot (South West)
- England: Brown crab (Southern North Sea)
- Scotland: Sprat (West of Scotland)

In 2022-23, further action has been taken to progress Round 3 including identifying potential match funding from publicly available funds and philanthropic organisations, and drafting a five-year budget that includes estimates of the costs associated with the actions identified in the Action Plans. Stakeholder mapping has begun, to identify all interested parties beyond those already engaged in the pre-assessments.

In May 2023, the MSC also expanded its pilot programme, In Transition to MSC (ITM), making it open to any fishery committed to achieving certification, regardless of size or location. The Round 3 FIPs are considered excellent candidates to sit within the MSC's ITM framework.

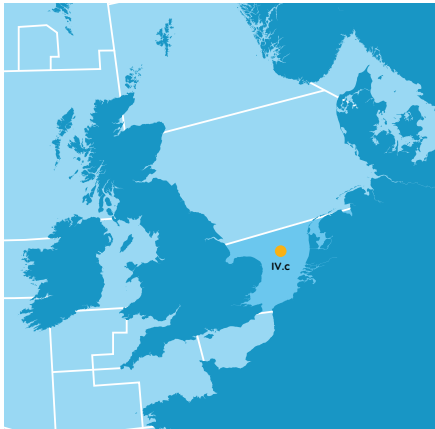
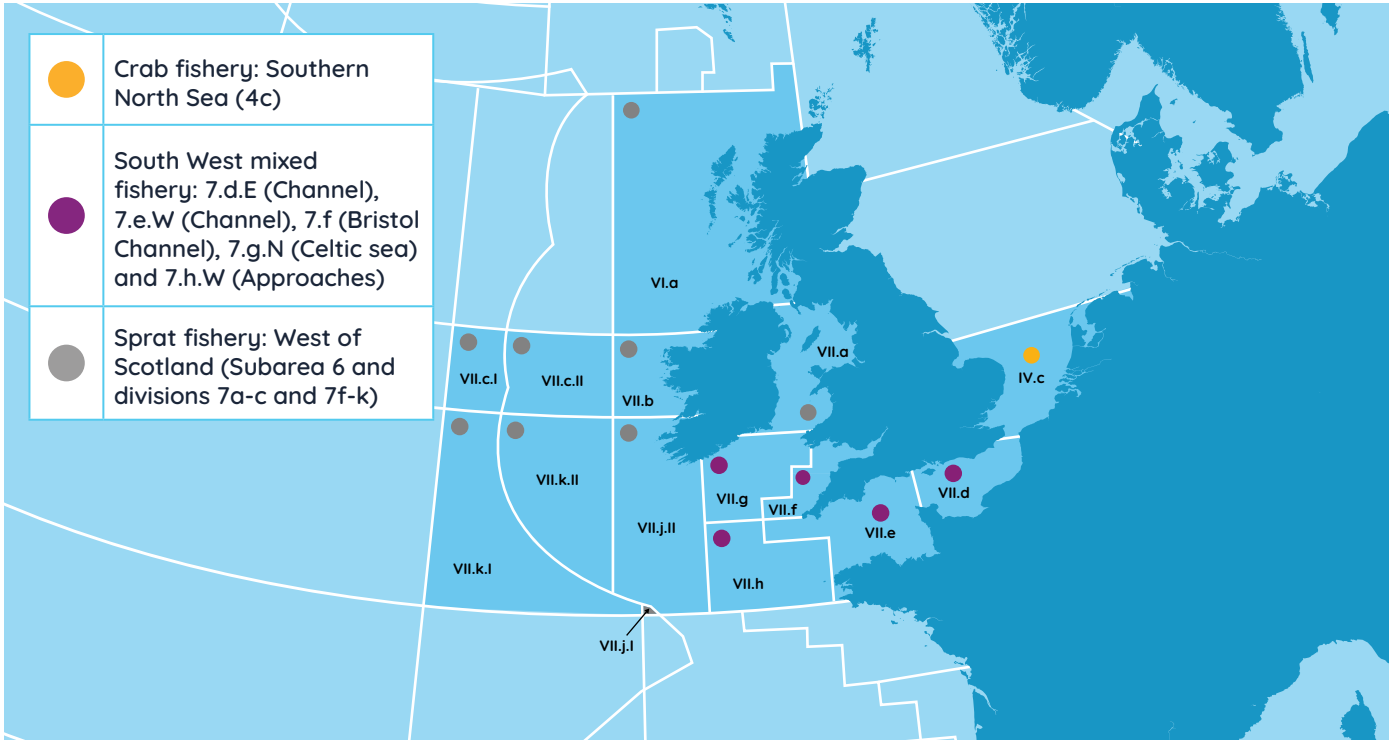
The next steps are to:

- Begin outreach to engage stakeholders to form a Steering Group, and identify potential FIP-leads
- Commission a review of the draft (Version 2) Action Plans against the latest version of the MSC Fisheries Standard (Version 3) ahead of formally launching the Steering Groups
- Begin engaging with Conformity Assessment Bodies (CAB) to prepare the FIPs for entering the ITM programme

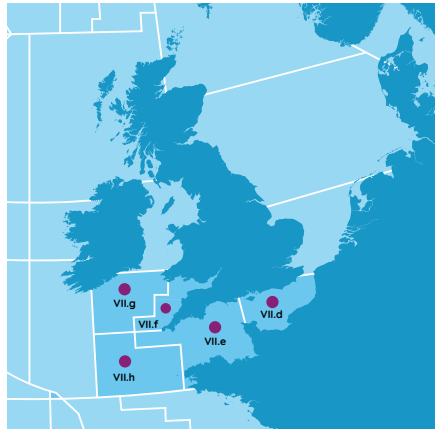




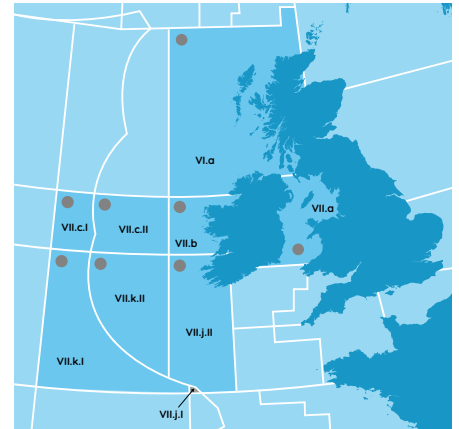
ICES areas – Round 3 Map



Crab fishery



Mixed fishery



Sprat fishery



In Transition to MSC

The In Transition to MSC (ITM) programme is aimed at supporting fisheries that need to make significant improvements to their practices before they can meet the MSC Standard. The programme requires an independent verification of progress, this increases the credibility of FIPs, while providing access to MSC tools and expertise.

What does the programme involve?

1. Entering the programme

A fishery needs to be independently assessed by a conformity assessment body (CAB) to confirm it is eligible. The CAB can then apply to the programme on the fishery's behalf.

2. Regular review of progress

A CAB will verify the fishery's progress against its action plan, with fisheries aiming to improve their scores against the performance indicators identified, through a pre-assessment or an assessment report against the MSC Fisheries Standard.

3. Transition to assessment against the MSC Fisheries Standard

A fishery is expected to enter assessment against MSC's Fisheries Standard, with the prospect of achieving a pass, after it has achieved all its score improvements. An Announcement Comment Draft Report (ACDR) is delivered at the end of the ITM timeline.

To be eligible for the ITM programme, fisheries must:

- Be committed to entering assessment against the MSC Fisheries Standard within five years
- Be within the scope of the MSC programme
- Have a recent MSC pre-assessment (carried out by a CAB, or verified by a CAB); or, a recent MSC assessment
- Have a credible improvement Action Plan (verified by CAB) addressing the gaps to achieve a conditional pass against the MSC Fisheries Standard within five years

How does ITM fit into the MSC programme?

Pre-certification

Pathway to sustainability

- Pathway tools
- Pathway projects



In Transition to MSC



Certification

Closure of conditions of certification





Benefits of ITM:

- Provides enhanced credibility for FIPs, due to the requirements for fishery improvements to be regularly verified independently against their Action Plan and timeline
- Helps prepare the fishery for full MSC assessment and eventual certification
- Access to MSC tools and expertise
- Offers access to a variety of funds in the MSC's Ocean Stewardship Fund
- Fisheries will be publicly listed on the MSC's Track a Fishery website and feature in MSC fishery updates

Version 3 of the MSC Standard

Following five years of research, public consultation and testing, the MSC has published Version 3 of the Fisheries Standard. As part of the review process, over 600 submissions were considered from stakeholders with expertise in fishing, ocean conservation, certification and seafood. This version is mandatory for any new fishery entering the programme from 1st May 2023. MSC certified fisheries seeking recertification, or those fisheries that are part of the MSC's In Transition to MSC programme, can access Version 2.0 of the Standard, but must have transitioned to Version 3.0 by November 2028.

The new Version 3.0 includes significant updates to the Standard across each of the three MSC Principles, aimed at raising fisheries' performance on key issues pertinent to the sector. Some of the changes which will be most relevant for the Project UK FIPs include:

- Strengthening of the requirements to reduce impacts on endangered, threatened and protected (ETP) species
- New requirements aimed at minimising lost and discarded fishing gear ('ghost gear')
- A new 'evidence requirements framework', a method for systematically evaluating the accuracy of information



Consumer insight

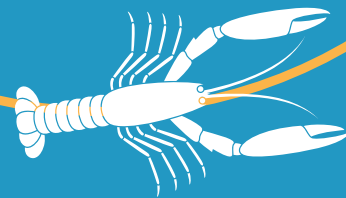
£10.1b

In 2022/23, consumers spent an estimate £10.1 billion on MSC labelled fish and seafood globally



1.29m tonnes

In 2022/23, consumers around the world purchased an estimated 1.29 million tonnes of MSC labelled fish and seafood



67

67 different species were sold with an MSC label across Southern Europe (France, Italy, Spain and Portugal) last year

75%

75% of all MSC labelled fish and seafood products purchased globally, (by volume), was by European consumers



1,350

In the UK, MSC's 3rd largest market by value, over 1,350 products were sold with the blue MSC ecolabel last year and consumers could choose between 52 different MSC certified species (up from 45 in 2020/21)

17%

Consumer spend on MSC labelled products in Southern Europe (France, Italy, Spain and Portugal) grew by 17% between 2021/22 and 2022/23



France

France is the 4th largest market for MSC labelled products (by value) globally and the largest in Southern Europe. Last year, over 2,100 products were sold with the blue MSC ecolabel



Round 1 Progress

Channel scallop, South West crab and lobster, South West monkfish, and North Sea plaice and lemon sole.

The first round of fisheries to participate in Project UK have now completed their sixth year. For the crab and lobster and lemon sole fisheries, this means the FIP timeline, including the agreed one-year extension, has now come to an end. The remaining two FIPs, which had an agreed two-year extension, are continuing to work on the remaining actions in the Action Plan for their final year.




Some key changes across Round 1:

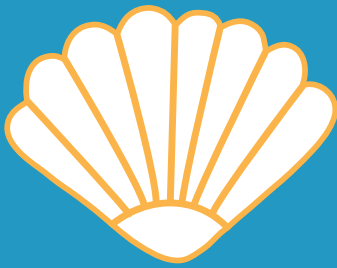
- Benchmarking and full analytical stock assessment for black bellied monkfish (*Lophius budegassa*)
- Development of the King scallop Fisheries Management Plan (FMP) for English and Welsh waters
- Ongoing rollout of Inshore Vessel Monitoring Systems (I-VMS) on <12m UK vessels
- Development of the crab and lobster Fisheries Management Plan
- Development of a risk assessment for gear interactions with ETP species, and potential ghost gear impacts for the crab and lobster FIP





Channel scallop

 SPECIES	King scallop <i>Pecten maximum</i>
 AREA	English Channel (VIIId-e)
 GEAR TYPE	Dredge



2022

In 2022, the value of king scallop caught in the English Channel was estimated to be ~£28million, up ~£1.8 million from 2021

(Source: MMO Provisional Dataset)

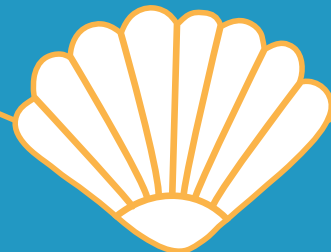
~7,500t

In 2022, the ports with the highest landing of king scallops within the English Channel were **Shoreham-by-sea** (~7,500t) and **Plymouth** (~3400t)

(Source: MMO Provisional Dataset)

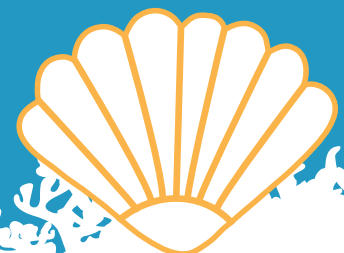
22 countries

In 2022/23, MSC labelled scallops were being sold in 22 countries (top markets: US, France, Canada, UK and Switzerland)



France

In 2022, the second ever king scallop fishery achieved MSC certification, in Baie de Sant-Brieuc, France





Overview

The Channel scallop FIP Action Plan identified 11 actions to address over the lifespan of the FIP. These actions cover 18 of the MSC Standard performance indicators (see Appendix on MSC processes) and have multiple milestones associated with them. An updated pre-assessment and Action Plan was commissioned in 2022, using a more precautionary approach in anticipation of a higher bar associated with the release of Version 3.0 of the MSC Standard.

This year, progress was seen in several key areas, including:

- Working with key stakeholders to contribute to the draft King Scallop Fisheries Management Plan for English and Welsh waters
- Ongoing rollout of Inshore Vessel Monitoring Systems on UK vessels <12m, and progress on accessing I-VMS data already available from Devon and Severn IFCA

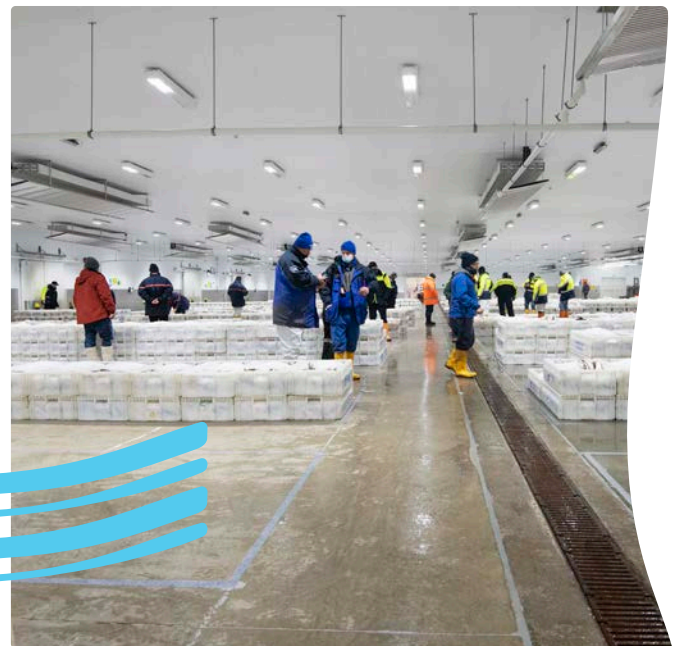
Stock status

Since 2017, annual stock assessments have been undertaken on English scallop stocks. In 2022, following the initial 5-year survey period, the survey design has been updated which allows the surveys to adjust to shifting commercial exploitation patterns. Further, the Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) reference points have also been updated for all assessed areas, as the increased availability of sampling data continues to improve the certainty around the assessments.

The score for the stock status performance indicator (PI 1.1.1) is determined by comparing the harvest rate (HR) to the defined HR MSY. For the four Channel scallop stocks, this resulted in scores of:

- Western English Channel (WEC) Inshore (7.e.I): >80 (previously >80)
- Lyme Bay (7.e.L): <60 (previously 60-79)
- Offshore (7.e.O): >80 (previously >80)
- Eastern English Channel (EEC) (7.d.N): >80 (previously >80)

The most recent Lyme Bay stock assessment showed a considerable increase in the harvest rate above HR MSY, which has resulted in the score decrease. The MSC Standard requires that stocks in this situation have a rebuilding plan in place. The closure of the Lyme Bay area of the scallop fishery after formal consultation with stakeholders could contribute to this rebuilding plan, which would be scored during full assessment. All other Channel stocks are harvested at or below the reference point, and therefore the scores remain at a level demonstrating best practice.





Fishery Management Plan and Harvest Strategy

Consultation on the proposed King scallop Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for English and Welsh waters was opened in July 2023, with full publication planned for late 2023. The FMP has been developed under a co-management approach by the Scallop Industry Consultation Group (SICG) FMP Working Group with Defra and the Welsh Government.

The King Scallop FMP aims to contribute to sustainable and well managed King scallop fisheries in England and Wales and has a long-term vision to achieve maximum sustainable yield (MSY) or a similar proxy which reflects the health of the stock. The FMP includes three overarching objectives:

- **Objective 1:** Deliver biological, social and economic sustainability
- **Objective 2:** Deliver effective management of all English and Welsh fisheries applicable to all King scallop removals from all methods and the management measures in place will apply to all vessels fishing in English and Welsh waters
- **Objective 3:** Deliver effective management that contributes to ecosystem functionality

A formal response to the FMP consultation will be provided from the Steering Group, to encourage the development of a robust harvest strategy and harvest control rules that are responsive to the state of the stocks. These elements should work together towards achieving stock management objectives. Once implemented, this should contribute to score improvements across Principle 1 and Principle 3.

Endangered, threatened and protected (ETP) species

The Channel scallop FIP requires a formal recording protocol to document any interactions with ETP species, even if these are rare occurrences. The Steering Group has been looking to the Clean Catch UK (CCUK) application, which is a new bycatch reporting tool developed by Cefas. After an extensive rebuilding phase, the app is now ready to undergo usability testing. Vessels from Macduff Shellfish and South West Fish Producers' Organisation (SWFPO) have agreed to participate in the testing which is expected to take place in August 2023. Following this, it is hoped that the CCUK app will be accessible and able to be rolled out across the wider fishing fleet. The successful introduction of this app for all vessels in the FIP would provide data on ETP interactions in the fishery that will contribute to increasing scores for Pls 2.3.1, 2.3.2 and 2.3.3.





Habitat management

To improve the outcome status (2.4.1) and management scores (2.4.2) there remains a need to gather additional information on the spatial footprint of under 12m vessels; this is likely to be achieved through the implementation of inshore vessel monitoring systems (IVMS) on fishing vessels. While there has been significant progress in the rollout of IVMS on all <12m vessels, led by the Marine Management Organisation (MMO), technical difficulties have delayed completion of the rollout which was scheduled for May 2023. Progress in additional habitat actions for this FIP is largely dependent on the data gathered through IVMS.

In June 2022, management measures for the four ‘tranche one’ Marine Protected Areas were implemented; of these four, the South Dorset MPA is located in the English Channel and now has a byelaw to protect the MPA from the impacts of bottom towed fishing gear. The MMO also consulted on management measures for tranche two of the designated MPAs, which includes a further two in the English Channel.

In June 2023, management measures for tranche three MPAs were consulted on, including the East of Start Point MPA in the English channel which was designated in 2019 to protect the broad-scale habitat feature sub-tidal sand. Full management measures are expected to be rolled out in all currently designated MPAs by the end of 2024. Once implemented, this will provide protection to designated seabed features and habitats and contribute to improved scores for PIs 2.4.1, 2.4.2 and 2.4.3.

Summary of MPA stages and consultations

Stage	MPAs	Located in English Channel	Consultation	Byelaws implemented
Stage 1	Four MPAs	South Dorset	2021	13 th June 2022
Stage 2	13 MPAs	Offshore Brighton Wight Barfleur Reef	May – July 2022	Measures by end of 2024
Stage 3	41 MPAs with features not already covered	11 MPAs – most notable East of Start Point	January - March 2023	Measures by end of 2024
Stage 4	5 MPAs with highly mobile species	N/A	TBC	Measures by end of 2024



Gap analysis against the MSC Standard Version 3

As part of this year's annual review, Poseidon undertook a gap analysis which compared the current scoring of the FIPs against version 3.0 of the MSC Standard, which came into effect in May 2023.

For Channel scallops, no score changes were predicted across Principle 1 and Principle 3, although for some PIs there are additional evidence requirements. Within Principle 2, further work is required to understand the full extent of additional actions for endangered, threatened and protected species and habitats performance indicators. In addition, new requirements regarding ghost gear management would need to be addressed.

Year seven: Priorities and challenges

The Channel scallop FIP is now in the final year, with the timeline ending in April 2024. Significant work has been undertaken in the last 12 months across many actions of the FIP, although this has not directly resulted in any score changes this year. A number of these workstreams will be completed in the next 12 months, which are expected to improve scores across all three MSC Principles. The priorities and challenges are listed in relation to the three principles of the MSC Standard:

Principle 1: Sustainable fish stocks

The score for harvest strategy and harvest control rules is currently <60, and improving this remains a priority for the remainder of the FIP. This will be achieved by the delivery of the King Scallop FMP, which is crucial for improved scores across Principle 1. Within the FMP, the stock management should be designed to ensure it can be responsive to the status of individual stocks within the English Channel, as reflected in the annual stock assessments and advice delivered by Cefas (Lawler *et al.*, 2023).

However, it is understood that the first iteration published later this year will not specify the harvest strategy being adopted but will list management approaches that will be discussed and progressed during consultation events and SICG working group discussions. The chosen management approach is expected to be set out within the second iteration (currently expected in March 2025). Until this is achieved, the scores across Principle 1 are not expected to reach a level where the fishery would be successful in a full MSC assessment.

For the development of biological reference points, a long-term abundance time-series is required (10-15 years); King scallops currently has 5-6 years of data. Because of this, Cefas have confirmed that reference points will not realistically be defined until a longer time series is obtained, and harvest rate MSY will continue to be used.





Principle 2: Minimising environmental impact

For Year 7, the Steering Group should continue to engage with Cefas regarding the rollout of the Clean Catch application, and encourage vessels within the FIP to actively use the app when it is more widely available.

Until the implementation of I-VMS on <12m vessels is complete in UK waters, scores for habitat performance indicators are not expected to increase. However, due to a specific byelaw, I-VMS has already been implemented on vessels fishing in the Devon and Severn IFCA area and the Secretariat has been attempting to access this data in the form of a fishery footprint map. To date, this has not been resolved, and the Secretariat will continue with this request in Year 7, as this will provide a ‘case study’ for the Channel scallop FIP, with regards to how I-VMS data can be requested and viewed in future.

It should be recognised however that the likely timeframe for full implementation of I-VMS, including the development of a statutory instrument and sufficient data collection, will not be achieved within the timeframe of this FIP.

Principle 3: Effective fisheries management

Principle 3 actions identified in the Action Plan are focussed on the development of the national King scallop FMP for English and Welsh waters. While the FMP is being delivered through a partnership between the SICG and Defra, the FIP Steering Group has worked closely with SICGWG members during the development process. For Year 7, the Steering Group will submit a formal consultation response on the FMP, encouraging the development of a cohesive harvest strategy and well-defined harvest control rules which are responsive to the state of the stock.

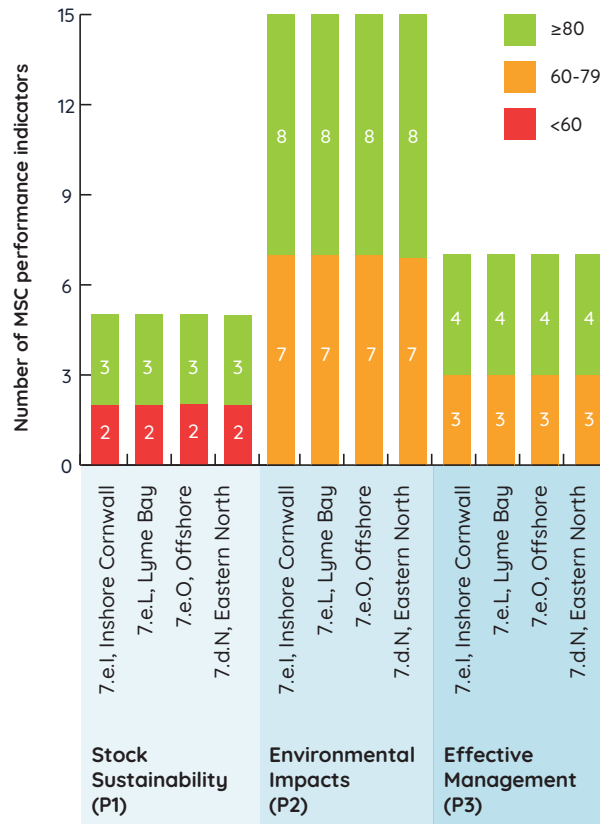
The national King scallop FMP will also document short and long-term objectives for stock management and environmental interactions which, when implemented, will contribute to improved Principle 3 scores.





MSC performance indicators




Scoring levels across MSC performance indicators for each Channel scallop fishery at the end of Year 6.



Top 10 ports for highest landings of Channel scallop



Monkfish

 SPECIES	Monkfish <i>Lophius budegassa</i> and <i>L. piscatorius</i>
 AREA	Western Seas and Channel (VIIb-k, VIIIa/b/d)
 GEAR TYPE	Beam trawl, demersal trawl, trammel/tangle net

79%

MSC labelled monkfish sales have increased by 79% over the past 5 years

4 countries

In 2022/23, MSC labelled monkfish sold in 4 countries (top markets: Switzerland, Czech Republic, Austria and Sweden)

MSC Faroe

In May 2023, the MSC Faroe Island demersal fishery included monkfish in their recertification assessment - making it the second monkfish fishery worldwide to be MSC certified or in assessment, after Iceland certified its monkfish in 2018

~£9.4m

In 2022, monkfish landings into the South West were worth an estimated ~£9.4 million



Overview

The initial South West monkfish Action Plan identified 11 actions to address over the lifespan of the FIP, and these actions cover 17 of the MSC Standard performance indicators. An updated pre-assessment and Action Plan was commissioned in 2022, using a more precautionary approach, in anticipation of a high bar associated with the release of Version 3.0 of the MSC Standard. As with the other FIPs, each action consists of multiple milestones.

In 2022, both species of monkfish had full analytical stock assessments. The most recent assessment suggests the stocks remain in good condition. Overall, the FIP is on track with real improvements in Principle 1 which should see an overall pass by the end of the final year of the FIP. Key improvements this year were:

- Increased score for stock status (1.2.1) and assessment of stock status (1.2.4) for black bellied monkfish, *Lophius budegassa*
- Improved understanding of gear selectivity, with further research planned for Year 7

Stock status

This FIP includes both species of monkfish found in the South West: black bellied, *Lophius budegassa* and white bellied *L. piscatorius*. In 2022, for the first time, a full analytical assessment and benchmarking was undertaken for *L. budegassa*, meaning both species are now ICES 'Category 1' species. Recent stock assessments (2023) suggest both stocks are healthy, with biomass for both species estimated to be above $MSY B_{trigger}$, and fishing mortality below F_{MSY} . This action for the FIP is now complete, with the score for stock status (PI 1.1.1), and assessment of stock status (PI 1.2.4), increasing to ≥ 80 for black bellied monkfish across all gear types.

Harvest Strategy and harvest control rules

The Steering Group has continued to engage with ICES regarding the black bellied monkfish species benchmarking and assessment process. In November 2022, the mixed fisheries advice was published and now includes both species of monkfish under two ecoregions (Celtic Seas, and Bay of Biscay and the Iberian Coast). Although both species are managed together using a joint total allowable catch (TAC), there is confidence in the harvest strategy being appropriate to manage the stocks because both species are included in the mixed fisheries advice. These scores will be reviewed again at the Year 7 annual review.

Secondary species

Effective management of secondary species in this FIP is expected to be achieved through gear selectivity measures like mesh size. It is understood that historical work such as Project 50% significantly contributed to the adoption of larger mesh sizes in the fishing fleet, although the legacy of this work still needs to be understood and documented. The Steering Group have obtained logbook information to better understand the mesh size currently being used in the South West, however this is only relevant to the cod-end, whereas Project 50% focussed on increasing mesh sizes in different sections of the net. Actions in Year 7 are focussed on collecting and documenting information on mesh sizes currently being used in the South West monkfish fishery. Other actions include gathering information on selectivity trials related to increasing the cod-end mesh size to 100mm, consistent with what is being proposed in the Channel Demersal Non-Quota Species FMP, to determine if further trials are needed.



Endangered, threatened and protected (ETP) species

Some evidence on ETP interactions in the fishery have been documented in annual Bycatch Monitoring Programme Reports by Kingston *et al.* (2021). This evidence suggests there is some bycatch of harbour porpoise, common dolphin and seals associated with two meters of the 'gillnet' Unit of Assessment. Further verification of this data will be undertaken in Year 7.

As with other FIPs, an action for this Steering Group has been to implement a recording protocol to report interactions with ETP species. To achieve this, the Steering Group has been looking to the Clean Catch UK application, a new bycatch reporting tool developed by Cefas. After an extensive rebuilding phase, the app is now ready to trial and, if successful, will be rolled out to be used by the wider fleet. Vessels from Macduff Shellfish and South West Fish Producers' Organisation (SWFPO) have agreed to participate in the initial trial.

On behalf of the Steering Group Western Fish Producers' Organisation have also worked with [Shark Trust](#) to create bespoke ETP species posters, providing information on elasmobranchs which the fishery may interact with. These posters are available to fishing vessels via the Producer Organisations in the South West.

Gap analysis against the MSC Standard Version 3

As part of this year's annual review, Poseidon undertook a gap analysis which compared the current scoring of the FIPs against version 3.0 of the MSC Standard, which came into effect in May 2023.

For monkfish, no score changes were predicted across Principle 1 and Principle 3, although for some PIs there are additional evidence requirements. Within Principle 2, further work is required to understand the full extent of additional actions for endangered, threatened and protected species and habitats performance indicators. In addition, new requirements regarding ghost gear management would need to be addressed.

Year seven: Remaining priorities and challenges

For Year 7, most of the remaining priorities identified in the Action Plan are focussed on improvements across Principle 2, looking at the management of fishing impacts in MPAs, and understanding the nature and frequency of ETP species interactions. The priorities and challenges are listed in relation to the three principles of the MSC Standard:



**STEERING
UK FISHERIES
TOWARDS
SUSTAINABILITY**



Principle 1: Sustainable fish stocks

As both species of monkfish are now included in the mixed fisheries advice, actions for Year 7 are to continue engagement with ICES over the black-bellied species benchmarking and stock assessment process. It is important to monitor the mixed fisheries advice and ensure the stocks remain healthy. In the final year, Poseidon will consider whether there is now sufficient information on stock biomass of each species to support the harvest strategy, and increase the scores for PIs 1.2.1, 1.2.2 and 1.2.3.

Principle 2: Minimising environmental impact

In Year 7 the Steering Group will focus on obtaining verification of the ETP bycatch estimates provided by Kingston *et al.* (2021) and understanding whether these estimates mean that bycatch from the monkfish fishery is likely to hinder the recovery of those species to favourable conservation status. In this context, a favourable conservation status reference point is set as a minimum of 50% of carrying capacity but may be higher depending on the life-history characteristics of the species. The Steering Group will also maintain a focus on utilising additional recording avenues such as the Clean Catch app, to refine understanding of inshore ETP interactions.

For habitat outcome status (PI 2.4.1), the Steering Group intends to conduct a review of the MPA network in the South West of the UK, taking into account designation features and good environmental status, and their vulnerability to the fleet activities. This output will likely be in the form of a matrix, which collates and summarises the environmental assessment work that has likely already been undertaken as part of the MPA designation process.

The draft Channel demersal non-quota species Fisheries Management Plan was also published for consultation in July 2023. Although not directly applicable to monkfish, this FMP will support data collection and management for many of the secondary species in this fishery, which will contribute to improving scores within Principle 2.

Principle 3: Effective fisheries management

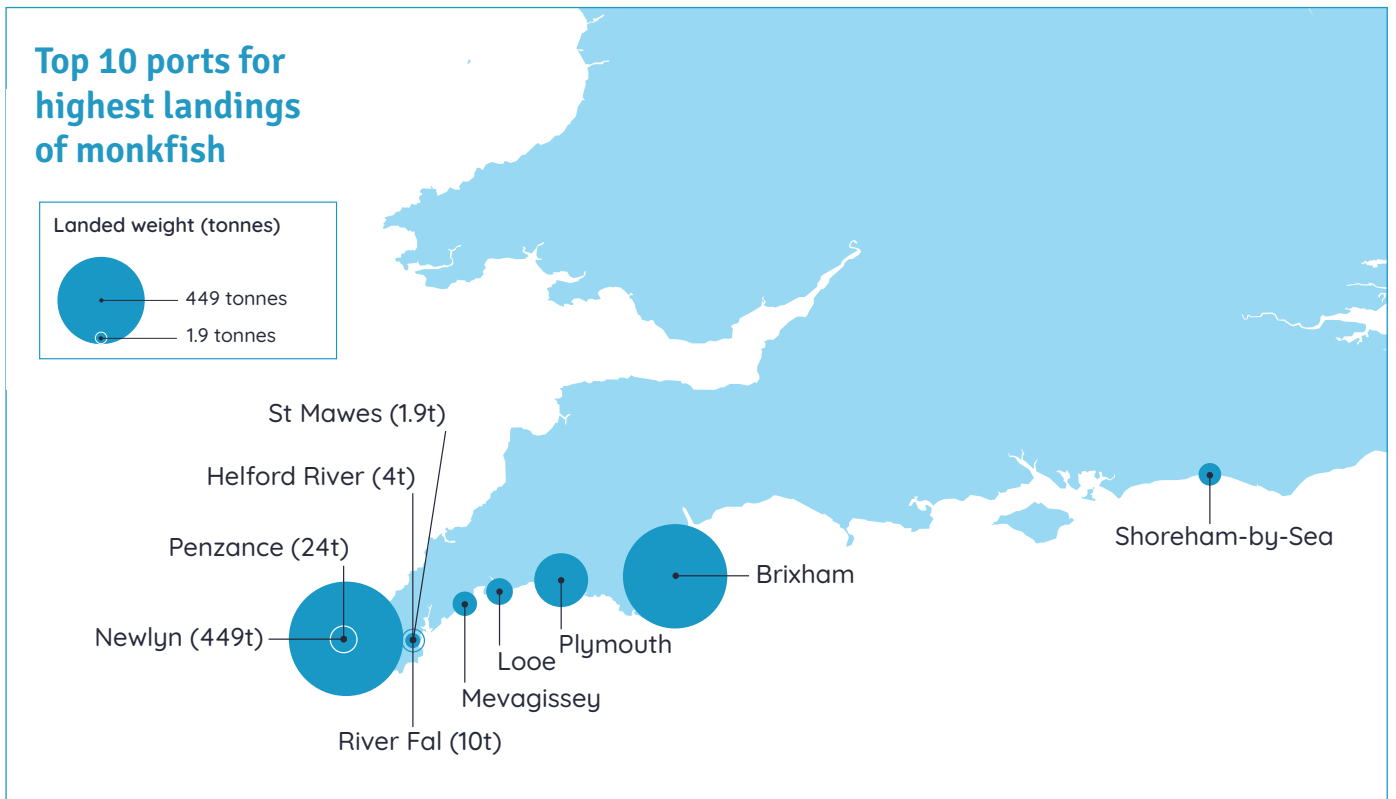
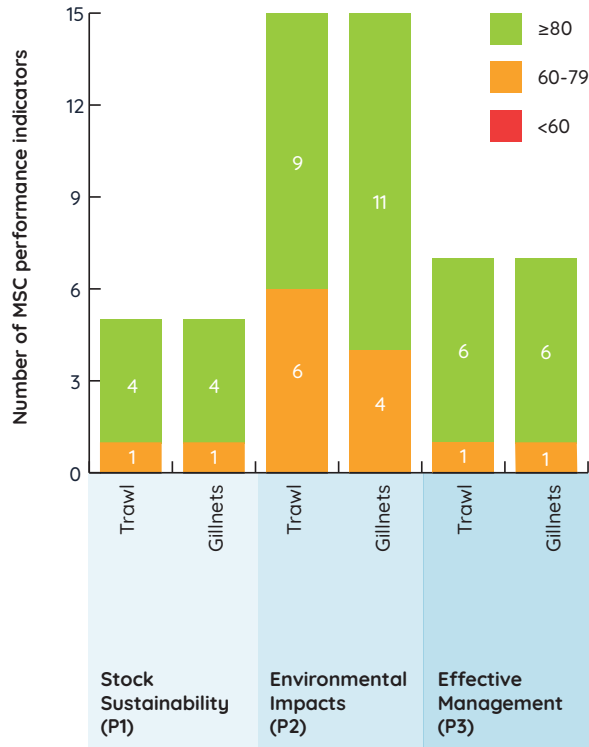
In July 2023, Defra launched a public consultation on their proposal to expand the use of REM in English waters. REM could provide an opportunity for many fisheries, including the monkfish FIP, to demonstrate evidence of compliance with legislation. REM trials are expected to begin in 2024, and industry representatives on the Steering Group are encouraging their members to participate in these trials, if applicable. There is also a consultation on reforming the policy for how discards are managed in the UK, the outcomes of which will also be relevant to the Principle 3 scores for this FIP.








MSC performance indicators

Scoring levels across MSC performance indicators for each Monkfish fishery at the end of Year 5.





Lemon sole

 SPECIES	Lemon sole <i>Microstomus kitt</i>
 AREA	North Sea (IV, VIId and III.a)
 GEAR TYPE	Demersal trawl, seine

April 2023

The lemon sole fishery has now finished its FIP timeline, which came to an end in April 2023

Waitrose

MSC certified lemon sole is currently sold on UK supermarket Waitrose fish counter, sourced from the Icelandic fishery and was first introduced in 2021

£940k

Sales of MSC lemon sole have grown significantly over the last 5 years, increasing from £305k to £940k (wholesale value)

Faroe Island

In May 2023, the MSC Faroe Islands demersal fishery included lemon sole in their recertification assessment - making it the second lemon sole fishery world-wide to be MSC certified or in assessment, behind ISF Iceland lemon sole which certified in 2019



Overview

The timeline for the North Sea lemon sole FIP came to an end in April 2023 and the final annual review indicated that no performance indicator would be expected to fail in an MSC assessment. Progress over the six-year timeline has been significant, with scores for 13 performance indicators increasing to ≥ 80 .

Score	Number of PIs	
	Pre-assessment	Year 6
≤ 60	2	0
60-79	13	6
≥ 80	12	22

However, there are still activities underway to ensure the lemon sole fishery demonstrates best practice against the MSC Standard.

Harvest strategy and harvest control rules

Lemon sole is managed through the North Sea Multi Annual Plan as a bycatch species and is currently fished using a joint total allowable catch (TAC) with witch (*Glyptocephalus cynoglossus*). In 2022, an expert Principle 1 assessor was commissioned by the Steering Group to provide detailed Principle 1 scores for this fishery. Following this review, which demonstrated favourable scores, a conformity assessment body (CAB) was also commissioned to provide scoring predictions for Principle 1 performance indicators. The results of this process suggested that uncertainty remains on how PI 1.2.1 and PI 1.2.2 would score, with predicted scoring ranges varying between the three assessors.

The Steering Group has also contributed to the UK review of lemon sole and witch joint management; an ongoing process considering the separation of lemon sole and witch TACs from 2024, which could deliver the stock specific management required under the MSC Standard.

Alternative measures for bycatch

This year, the Steering Group reviewed and updated a comprehensive document focussed on reviewing the alternative measures for minimising mortality of unwanted catch in the fishery. This completed document was sent to fishery managers for review. Since then, other developments in North Sea fisheries, including the development of several Fishery Management Plans, have occurred and can be considered as a review of the effectiveness of measures to reduce unwanted catch. This action contributes towards PI 2.2.2 (secondary species management), which would be expected to score ≥ 80 in an MSC assessment.

Habitats

This action continues to align with the SFSAG Northern Demersal Fishery. As there is an overlap of vessels and gear type between the SFSAG fishery and this FIP, many of the performance indicator scores for the FIP will be harmonised with the scores for the certified fishery. There is a condition on the SFSAG certificate for PI 2.4.2, which requires some quantitative evidence that the measures/partial strategy is being implemented successfully for VMEs, and some evidence that the Unit of Assessment (UoA) complies with management requirements and with protection measures afforded to VMEs.

It is expected that the implementation of management measures within Marine Protected Areas by 2024, coupled with VMS data to understand compliance with these measures, will provide appropriate evidence to improve the score of this PI for the lemon sole FIP.



Gap analysis against the MSC Standard Version 3

As part of this year’s annual review, Poseidon undertook a gap analysis which compared the current scoring of the FIPs against version 3.0 of the MSC Standard, which came into effect in May 2023.

For lemon sole, no score changes were predicted across Principle 1 and Principle 3, although for some PIs there are additional evidence requirements. Within Principle 2, further work is required to understand the full extent of additional actions for endangered, threatened and protected species and habitats performance indicators. In addition, new requirements regarding ghost gear management would need to be addressed.

Remaining priorities and challenges for lemon sole

Although the timeline for the lemon sole FIP has now concluded, a small number of actions remain in progress that should be considered should the fishery enter full MSC assessment. The priorities and challenges are listed in relation to the three principles of the MSC Standard:



Principle 1: Sustainable fish stocks

The key piece of work to be addressed for Principle 1 is the separation of the TAC for lemon sole and witch. Defra are currently working with ICES to discuss the implementation of a single species TAC for lemon sole in 2024. As part of this process, it is likely that the stock advice areas will also be reconsidered to align with the stock assessment areas (ICES area 3a, 4, 7d). Once in place this should deliver robust management that is appropriate to the state of the stock and contribute to improving the scores for the remaining Principle 1 actions.

Principle 2: Minimising environmental impact

As with many of the Project UK FIPs, further progress for Principle 2 scores will be largely dependent on the successful implementation of effective measures in place to manage the impact of towed fishing gear on Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems within MPAs. These measures are expected to be implemented by the end of 2024, and it is anticipated this would increase the habitat scores to SG80.





Principle 3: Effective fisheries management

Substantial work has been undertaken by the Steering Group on the FIP level Lemon Sole Fishery Management Plan. Although this document is not formally adopted, it provides a useful and comprehensive compendium of fishery-specific information. Going forward, this should be treated as a living document and updated to include developments in the fishery such as the anticipated single species TAC, and habitat management measures from 2024.

North Sea lemon sole management is being considered in the development of the Southern North Sea and Eastern Channel mixed flatfish (4b, 4c, 7d) Fishery Management Plan. However, the lemon sole stock extends throughout the North Sea, and it remains to be understood how joint FMPs in other nations will interact and contribute to management of lemon sole.



Next steps and opportunities

As the timeline for this FIP has now come to an end, there are several options available for the fishery to progress towards MSC certification. A client group, who will take ownership of any future certificate, will need to decide which of these options to proceed with:

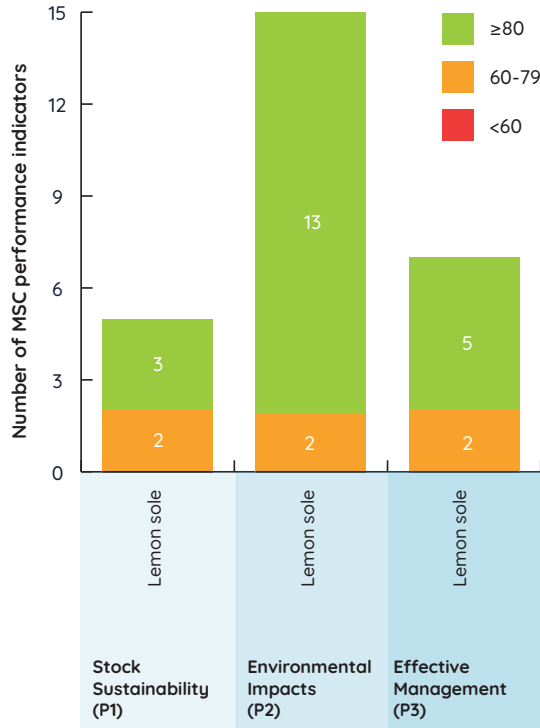
- As vessels and the gear type are already certified against Version 2.0 through the SFSAG and Osprey certificates for other species, the client groups could apply for a scope extension to add lemon sole to the current certificates. The next step would be to approach the CAB responsible for the current certificates to request a scope extension to add lemon sole and discuss the associated costs. The species would therefore be assessed against version 2.0 of the MSC Standard.
- Aim to enter full MSC assessment on Version 3.0 of the MSC Standard. To do this, a client group would need to take responsibility for the certificate and understand any costs involved in the assessment.
- Enter the 'In Transition to MSC' (ITM) programme using a new ITM Action Plan to work towards Version 3.0 of the Standard. This Action Plan would aim to address any evidence gaps which may be apparent, as the FIP Action Plan was previously working towards Version 2.0 of the Standard.

The MSC as Secretariat for Project UK will offer support to the lemon sole Steering Group as it transitions out of the FIP process.



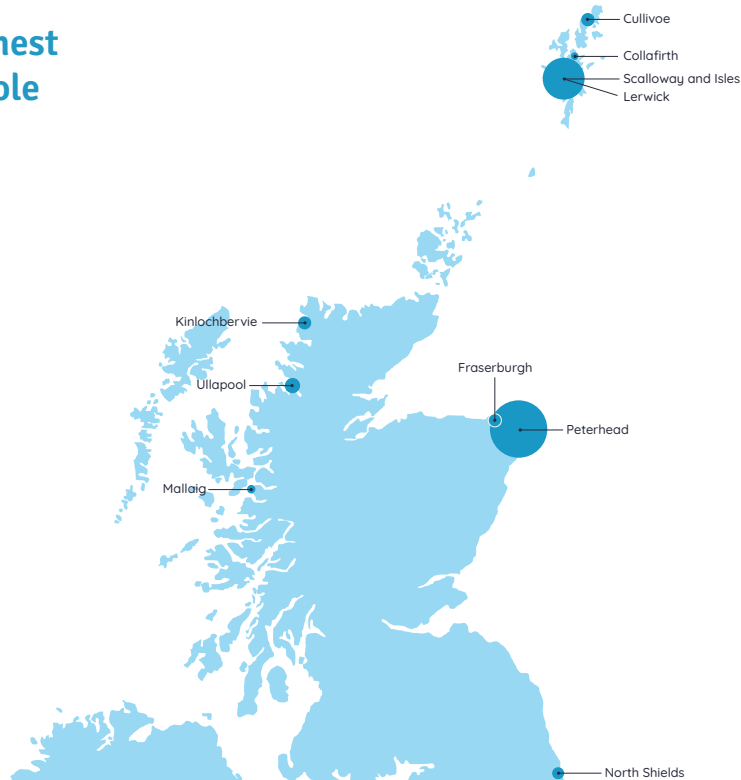
MSC performance indicators

Scoring levels across MSC performance indicators for each Lemon sole fishery at the end of Year 6.






Top 10 ports for highest landings of lemon sole

Landed weight (tonnes)





Crab and lobster

 SPECIES	Brown/edible crab <i>Cancer pagurus</i> European lobster <i>Homarus gammarus</i>
 AREA	Western Channel & Celtic Sea (VIle-g)
 GEAR TYPE	Pots/traps

April 2023

The crab and lobster fishery has now finished its FIP timeline, which came to an end in April 2023

~£7.3

In 2022, the value of pot caught brown crab landed in the South West of the UK was ~£7.3 million pounds

(Source: Provisional Dataset)

Shetland

There is currently **only one brown crab fishery worldwide which holds MSC certification**, based in Shetland, and one MSC certified European lobster fishery, based in Normandy and Jersey

9

Nine different MSC certified crab species are sold worldwide, with sales increasing five-fold since 2018





Overview

The timeline for the UK crab and lobster FIP came to an end in April 2023 and the final annual review for the FIP indicated that no performance indicator would be expected to fail in an MSC assessment. The initial Action Plan identified six actions that cover nine of the MSC Standard performance indicators. However, an updated pre-assessment and Action Plan was commissioned in 2022, using a more precautionary approach in anticipation of a higher bar associated with the release of Version 3.0 of the MSC Standard.

This updated Action Plan identified a further three actions to address and some of the PIs that were improved to ≥ 80 were decreased back to 60-79 through the more precautionary scoring.

While this may seem frustrating to Steering Group members who worked hard to deliver the actions that lead to the initial score changes, it means the fishery will be in a much stronger position when entering MSC assessment, having addressed these additional new requirements. This means that the performance indicator scores as presented at the end of Year 6 are not truly reflective of the work that has gone into the FIP.

Score	Number of PIs	
	Pre-assessment	Year 6
≤ 60	2	0
60-79	7	9
≥ 80	18	18

Principle	Component	Performance Indicator	Pre-Assessment Year 0	Actual Year 1	Actual Year 2	Actual Year 3	Actual Year 4	Actual Year 5	Actual Year 6
1	Outcome	1.1.1 Stock status	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80
		1.1.2 Stock rebuilding	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
	Management	1.2.1 Harvest Strategy (Action 1)	<60	<60	60-79	60-79	60-79	60-79	60-79
		1.2.2 Harvest control rules and tools (Action 2)	<60	<60	<60	<60	<60	60-79	60-79
		1.2.3 Information and monitoring	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80	60-79	60-79	60-79
	1.2.4 Assessment of stock status	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80	
2	Primary species	2.1.1 Outcome	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80
		2.1.2 Management (Action 3)	60-79	60-79	60-79	60-79	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80
		2.1.3 Information	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80
	Secondary species	2.2.1 Outcome	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80
		2.2.2 Management (Action 3)	60-79	60-79	60-79	60-79	60-79	≥ 80	≥ 80
		2.2.3 Information (Action 4)	60-79	60-79	60-79	60-79	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80
	ETP species	2.3.1 Outcome (Action 5)	60-79	60-79	60-79	60-79	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80
		2.3.2 Management (Action 5)	60-79	60-79	60-79	60-79	≥ 80	60-79	60-79
		2.3.3 Information (Action 5)	60-79	60-79	60-79	60-79	≥ 80	60-79	60-79
	Habitats	2.4.1 Outcome	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80
		2.4.2 Management	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80
		2.4.3 Information	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80	60-79	60-79
	Ecosystem	2.5.1 Outcome	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80
		2.5.2 Management	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80
2.5.3 Information		≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80	
3		3.1.1 Legal and customary framework	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80	
		3.1.2 Consultation, roles and responsibilities	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80	
		3.1.3 Long term objectives	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80	
		3.2.1 Fishery specific objectives	60-79	60-79	60-79	60-79	60-79	60-79	60-79
		3.2.2 Decision making processes	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80	60-79	60-79
		3.2.3 Compliance and enforcement	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80
		3.2.4 Management performance evaluation	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80	≥ 80	60-79	60-79
Total number of PIs equal to or greater than 80			18	18	18	18	22	18	18
Total number of PIs 60-79			7	7	8	8	4	9	9
Total number of PIs less than 60			2	2	1	1	1		
Overall BMT Index			0.80	0.80	0.81	0.81	0.89	0.83	0.83



National Fisheries Management Plan (FMP) development

Demonstrating progress against the majority of the remaining actions is reliant on the delivery of the national Crab and Lobster Fisheries Management Plan by Defra, which went live for consultation in July 2023, closing October 2023. Through representation on the Crab Management Group, and regular cross collaboration with the FIP, the Steering Group has remained keenly interested in the drafting of the FMP. The FMP includes crab and lobster specific management objectives and has an overarching aim to *'deliver harvest strategies for crab and lobster fisheries in English waters which incorporate agreed harvest control rules (HCRs) and are supported by regular, reliable stock assessments'*.

There are four proposed initial management interventions:

- Harmonisation of lobster and crawfish Minimum Landing Size
- Prohibiting the landing of soft brown crab for bait
- Pilot finer scale management for brown crab and lobster in selected fishery units
- Implement measures to improve the information base on recreational crab and lobster fishing

The ongoing development and publication of this FMP, including formalisation of a harvest strategy and harvest control rules will be imperative to improved scores across Principle 1 and Principle 3 for this FIP. The FMP also provides the opportunity for the fishery to progress towards internationally recognised best practice fisheries management.

Endangered, Threatened and Protected (ETP) species and ghost gear requirements

Although it is a static gear fishery with little bycatch, Version 3.0 of the MSC Standard includes higher evidence requirements to demonstrate, measure and mitigate the environmental impacts of the fishery. In 2023, the Steering Group completed two risk assessments to better understand the risk of potting gear to entangle marine megafauna and other ETPs at different operational scales and locations.

The ETP interaction risk analysis concluded a low overall risk to entanglement in vertical pot lines, and to bycatch and subsequent mortality of ETP species. It also demonstrated that there are potentially viable mitigation approaches, which could be effective at further reducing interactions with ETP species, if implemented across the fleet.

The abandoned, lost or discarded fishing gear (ALDFG) risk analysis concluded that while there is a low risk for habitat damage and marine megafauna entanglement, there is a medium risk for gear loss and subsequent ghost fishing. The independent consultants concluded that to improve the score for ETP management (2.3.2), mitigation measures relevant to the risk assessments should be routinely implemented across the fishery.





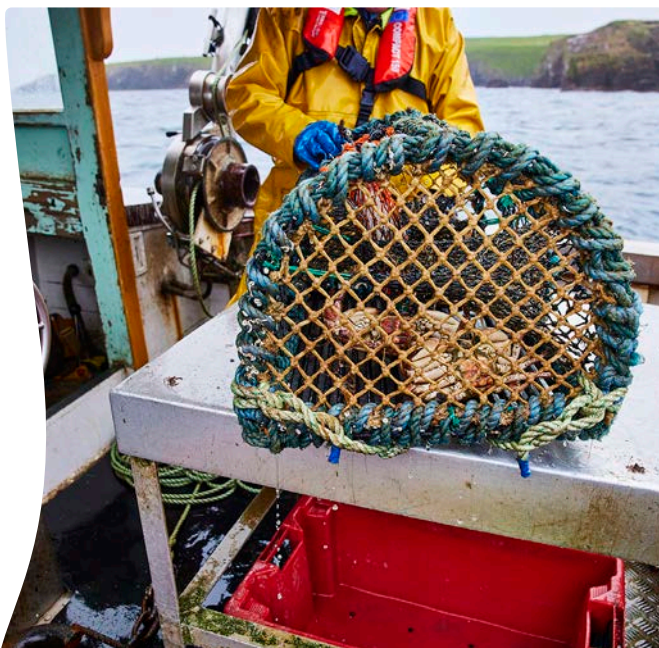
Gap analysis against the MSC Standard Version 3

As part of this year's annual review, Poseidon undertook a gap analysis which compared the current scoring of the FIPs against version 3.0 of the MSC Standard, which came into effect in May 2023.

For crab and lobster, no score changes were predicted across Principle 1 and Principle 3, although for some PIs there are additional evidence requirements. Within Principle 2, further work is required to understand the full extent of additional actions for endangered, threatened, and protected species and habitats performance indicators. In addition, the aforementioned new requirements regarding ghost gear management would need to be addressed.

Remaining priorities and challenges for crab and lobster

Although the timeline for the crab and lobster FIP has now concluded, several actions remain in progress that will help to ensure the fishery demonstrates best practice, and is ready to enter full MSC assessment. The priorities and challenges are listed in relation to the three principles of the MSC Standard:



Principle 1: Sustainable fish stocks

An updated stock assessment has been conducted by Cefas for this fishery and was expected in early 2023. This assessment is now considerably delayed, and a final publication remains unknown. The stock assessment plays a key role in understanding the stock status of the target species, and therefore will be a critical factor in determining Principle 1 scores for the fishery.

The development and publication of the national crab and lobster FMP has provided the basis for a harvest strategy and harvest control rules, but does not yet provide a definitive strategic approach for how these fisheries will be managed. The Steering Group, as well as the MSC as Secretariat, intends to respond to the FMP consultation to encourage the development of a robust harvest strategy and harvest control rules that are responsive to the state of the stocks. These elements should work together towards achieving stock management objectives.

The publication of the first iteration of the crab and lobster FMP is expected by the end of 2023. However, the robustness and detail included in the first iteration must be sufficient in demonstrating that the harvest strategy and harvest control rules in use are appropriate and effective in achieving the exploitation levels required. Until this is achieved, the scores across Principle 1 are not expected to reach a level where the fishery could go into full assessment.



Principle 2: Minimising environmental impact

The revised pre-assessment for this FIP was conducted in 2022 and was more precautionary in nature, to reflect the higher bar that Version 3 of the MSC Standard sets. Two additional actions were included in the one-year extension, one for ETP management and information (2.3.2 and 2.3.3) and one for habitat management (2.4.3). Scores for these performance indicators remain at SG60-79, despite progress being made in preparing risk assessments for ETP interactions and ghost fishing.

To improve these performance indicator scores, the fishery should prepare a formal strategy for implementing best practice mitigation measures focussed on ETP interaction and abandoned, lost and discarded fishing gear across all vessels. There should be some evidence that these measures are routinely implemented across the fishery, and that the effectiveness of the measures is reviewed as appropriate.

Principle 3: Effective fisheries management

Since the new pre-assessment was drafted, two new actions were incurred in Principle 3 because of post-Brexit legislative changes. Demonstrable progress against most of the remaining actions is reliant on the delivery of the national Crab and Lobster Fisheries Management Plan by Defra. Improved Principle 3 scores should be seen when harvest control rules are finalised and coordinated mechanisms for management between regulators across different jurisdictions are agreed.

Next steps and opportunities

As the timeline for this FIP has now come to an end, there are several options available for the fishery to progress towards MSC certification. A client group will need to decide which of these options to proceed with:

- Aim to enter full MSC assessment on Version 3.0 of the MSC Standard. To do this, a client group would need to take responsibility for the certificate and understand any costs involved in the assessment.
- Enter the 'In Transition to MSC' (ITM) programme using a new ITM Action Plan to work towards Version 3.0 of the Standard. This Action Plan would aim to address any evidence gaps which may be apparent as the FIP Action Plan was previously working towards Version 2.0 of the Standard.
- Enter the ITM programme, as above, using a new ITM Action Plan to focus on the remaining actions working towards Version 2.0 of the Standard. The ITM programme provides FIPs with access to certification using Version 2.0, with the understanding that all fisheries must be certified against Version 3.0 by November 2028.

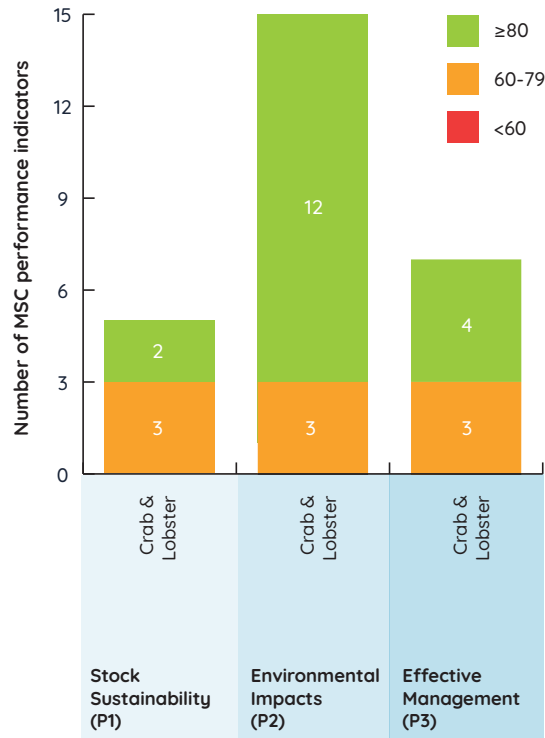
The MSC, as Secretariat for Project UK, will support the crab and lobster Steering Group as it transitions out of the FIP process and towards full assessment.



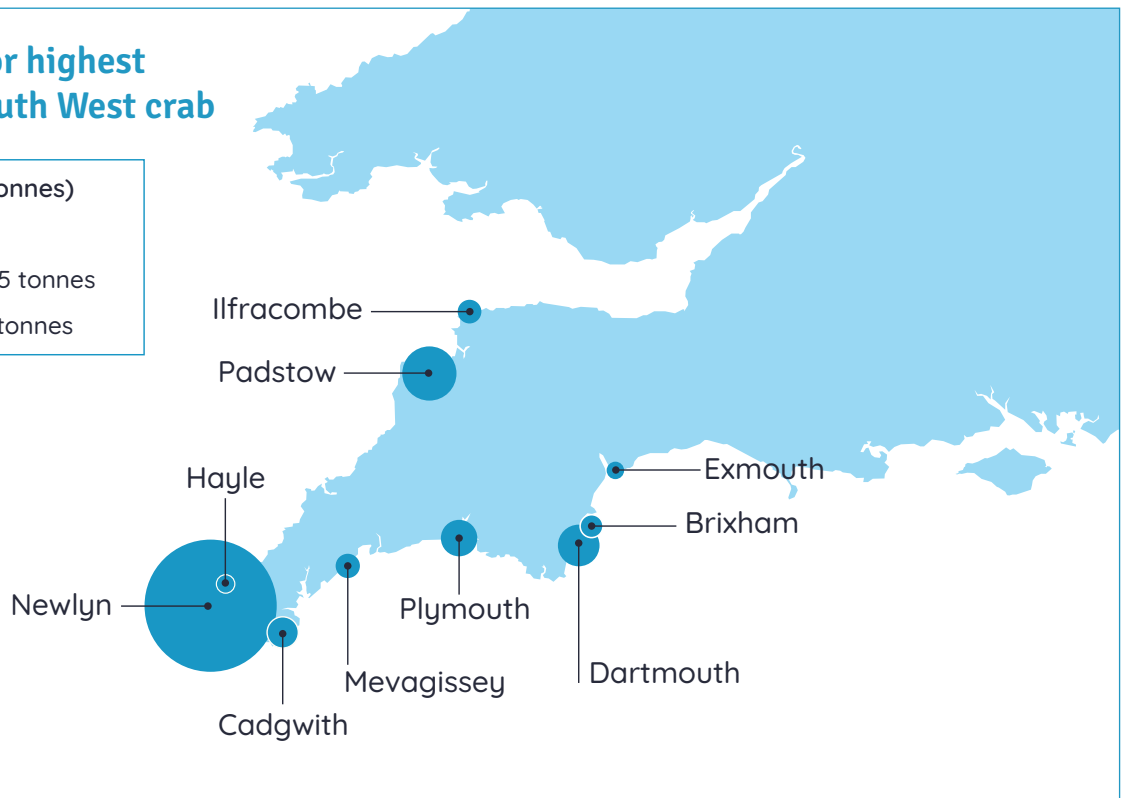
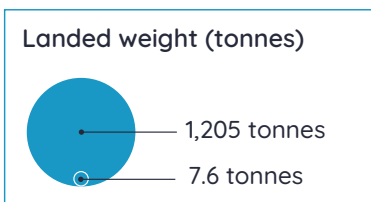


MSC performance indicators

Scoring levels across MSC performance indicators for each Crab and Lobster fishery at the end of Year 6.



Top 10 ports for highest landings of South West crab





Round 2 Progress

UK Scallops in the North sea, Irish sea and West of Scotland and Nephrops in the North sea, Irish Sea and West of Scotland.

The Round 2 fishery improvement projects (FIPs) for UK-wide scallops and Nephrops are larger in scale than the fisheries within Round 1 of Project UK and cover three large geographical areas. The initial pre-assessments and Action Plans were started in 2019, and updated documents were commissioned in 2023.

Progress over the last year includes:

- Completion of the post-doctoral report from Bangor University on the impact of Nephrops gear on seabed habitats
- Outputs from the Herriot-Watt University PhD project on scallop dredge impacts are nearing completion
- Holding three Regional Management Group meetings for Nephrops

This year is the penultimate year for the Round 2 FIPs, with the fourth annual review conducted by Poseidon in May 2023. While progress has been made, many of the actions for both FIPs are now falling behind target. In some cases, this is due to post-Brexit legislative changes which has meant progress is delayed across multiple




actions. In other cases, the geographical scale and complexities of the fisheries have made consensus building difficult. Regardless, several key challenges remain for each FIP.

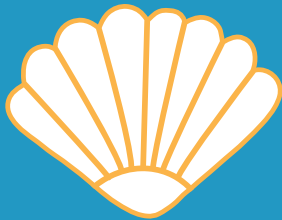
This year, with the five-year timeline nearing its end in April 2024, there has been increased attention on the Round 2 FIPs, with stakeholders voicing concerns about the progress being made, particularly on the future management of the fisheries. All Project UK FIPs are scored and reported on by independent consultants, Poseidon, to determine whether progress is being made. This progress is published through FisheryProgress.org, which currently rates all Project UK FIPs A-C, indicating that regular progress has been made towards delivering actions and contributing to score improvements.

Over the course of Year 5, the Secretariat will continue to support the FIP Steering Groups to progress all performance indicators towards a score of >80, as well as discuss what the options are for the FIPs when their timelines end in April 2024.



UK Scallops

 SPECIES	King scallop <i>Pecten maximus</i>
 AREA	North Sea, West of Scotland, Irish Sea (IV, VIa, VIIa)
 GEAR TYPE	Dredge



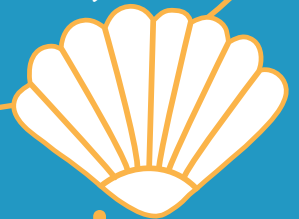
2022

In 2022, the ports within the FIP area that had the highest landings of King scallop were **Hartlepool** (~971t) and **Kirkcudbright** (~621t)

(Source: MMO Provisional dataset)

76%

Global sales of MSC labelled scallops have increased by 76% over the past 5 years with consumer spend reaching ~ £153.8 million (2022/23)

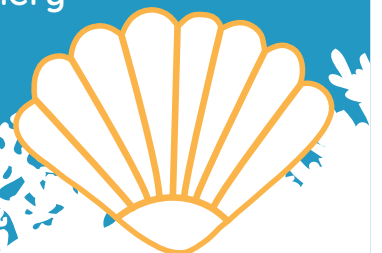


MSC cert.

Waitrose introduced MSC certified King scallops (also known as Great Atlantic scallops), from Shetland to their fish counter for the first time this year, demonstrating retailer support for a local small-scale fishery

£7.6m

In 2022/23, MSC labelled scallops were sold at 10 major UK retailers with a total wholesale value of over **£7.6million**





Overview

The UK scallop FIP Action Plan identifies 15 actions to address over the five-year duration of the FIP, and these actions cover 20 of the MSC Standard performance indicators (PIs). Each of these actions consist of multiple milestones. There has been clear progress for the English scallop fishery through the development of a national King Scallop Fishery Management Plan in English and Welsh waters. However, the proposed FMP was published for consultation after this year's annual review, and therefore could not be considered in the scoring. Other progress includes:

- Continued annual stock assessments, including definition of an MSY harvest rate reference point for the Yorkshire/Durham stock (27.4.b.S)
- Significant progress with the Herriot-Watt University PhD research, looking at the impacts of impact of scallop fisheries on seabed habitats

Stock information and monitoring

This year, the Cefas scallop stock assessment (Lawler *et al.*, 2023) established a harvest rate (HR) MSY reference point for the dredged portion of the English North Sea Yorkshire/Durham stock (27.4.b.S), which allows the harvest rate from 2018 to 2021 to be reviewed with respect to HR MSY. Based on this, the Yorkshire/Durham stock score was increased to SG80 for PI 1.2.3 and 1.2.4. There was also an improved score for PI 1.2.3 and PI 1.2.4 for the Clyde based on the introduction of annual stock surveys since 2019.

Harvest strategy and harvest control rules

Due to the large geographical area that the UK scallop FIP encompasses, developing agreed harvest strategies and harvest control rules at a UK level remains a challenge. There will not be a single UK-wide scallop FMP, and the devolved administrations are progressing fisheries management measures at differing rates.

In English and Welsh waters, the King scallop FMP has recently been published for consultation. The FMP has a long-term vision to achieve maximum sustainable yield (MSY), or a similar proxy which reflects the health of the stock. It also includes objectives to ensure that the environmental impacts associated with scallop fishing are understood and mitigated, where necessary. A formal response to the FMP consultation will be provided from the Steering Group, to encourage the development of a robust harvest strategy and harvest control rules that are responsive to the state of the stocks. These elements should work together towards achieving stock management objectives.

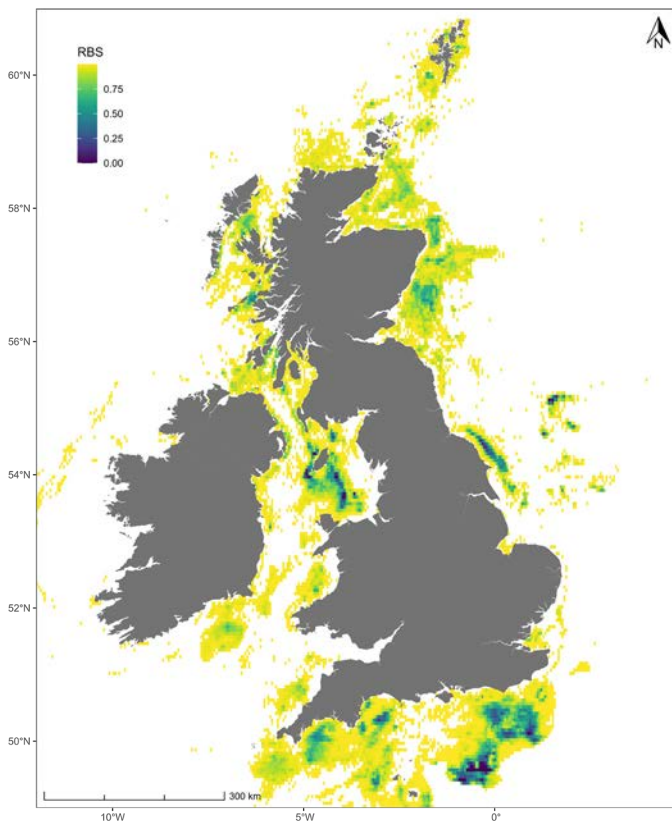
In Northern Ireland, scallops are included in the Northern Irish Inshore FMP being delivered by DAERA, with a timeline for publication of 2022-2024, although consultation for this FMP has not yet commenced. The timeline for the development of a Scottish scallop FMP is currently unknown.





Habitat impacts of dredge gear

During Year 4, the PhD research being undertaken at Herriot-Watt University has progressed, and this year focussed on adopting the Bangor habitat impact tool to analyse Relative Benthic Status (RBS) for each ICES division area. RBS is calculated by looking at the fishing effort (swept area ratio), depletion rate and recovery rate of a habitat or area. An RBS score of <0.8 indicates that a score of ≥ 80 for habitat outcome status is unlikely to be met and therefore management measures may be required. The RBS was mapped around the UK, as shown in the figure below.



The Steering Group also provided input into potential spatial and effort management scenarios to be modelled as part of the PhD work. It is expected the results of these scenarios will be available during the next year of the FIP and will help inform future management decisions.

Although this research continues to provide significant and relevant information to the FIP, the scores for habitats PIs are likely not to reach SG80 until government-led processes such as I-VMS are fully implemented across the fishery. With the rollout of Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM), including I-VMS, nearly at 100% for scallop vessels in Scottish waters, it is hoped this data could be accessed by the Steering Group in its final year, year 5.

Endangered, threatened and protected (ETP) species

Similar to the other Project UK FIPs, the UK scallop FIP needs to implement a protocol for recording any interactions with ETP species. The Steering Group intends to use the Clean Catch UK (CCUK) app, which is a new bycatch reporting tool developed by Cefas. The app has recently undergone extensive rebuilding and is expected to be ready to trial in August. Following this, it is hoped that the CCUK app will be accessible and available for rollout across the wider fishing fleet in 2023.

The Steering Group also identified the need to produce an ETP species advisory guide to aid in ETP species identification, which is being completed in collaboration with Shark Trust. This project is behind schedule; however the Secretariat has recently obtained the necessary templates to create these advisories. These are expected to be completed in Year 5.



Gap analysis against the MSC Standard Version 3

As part of this year's annual review, Poseidon undertook a gap analysis which compared the current scoring of the FIPs against version 3.0 of the MSC Standard, which came into effect in May 2023.

For UK scallops, no score changes were predicted across Principle 1 and Principle 3, although for some PIs there are additional evidence requirements. Within Principle 2, further work is required to understand the full extent of additional actions for endangered, threatened and protected species and habitats performance indicators. In addition, new requirements regarding ghost gear management would need to be considered.

Year 5: Priorities and challenges for UK scallops

The large geographical scope of this FIP means that some areas have been able to improve scores more quickly than others. This year, five score changes were achieved however, overall the UK scallop FIP is behind target. Developments are expected in several key areas across all three Principles in Year 5, which will likely be reflected in score changes in the next year. The remaining priorities and challenges are listed in relation to the three principles of the MSC Standard:

Principle 1: Sustainable fish stocks

To improve scores across Principle 1, significant work remains on agreeing the most appropriate form of management that can be adopted by all stakeholders across the fishery, including inshore and nomadic fleets, and ensuring that the form of management implemented is responsive to the state of the scallop stocks. Progress will likely be made for the English North Sea with the consultation and publication of the King Scallop Fishery Management Plan (FMP), however the timeline to develop an FMP in Scottish waters remains unclear. It is hoped that the publication of the FMP in English and Welsh waters in 2023 will lay the groundwork for other devolved administrations.





Principle 2: Minimising environmental impact

Habitat and ecosystem scores across Principle 2 will continue to be informed by the PhD work, and ongoing research into low impact scallop dredge designs, both taking place at Herriot-Watt University. An environmental subgroup workshop for both Round 2 FIPs is currently being planned for late 2023, where the Steering Group can start to examine the results of the PhD research and focus on areas where future management measures may be most beneficial. There is also a Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) Quality Status Report expected in autumn of 2023, which uses habitat maps and species records to map sensitive areas sensitivities, combined with a map of fishing effort to calculate the disturbance to the seafloor. This should contribute significantly to the habitat information requirements of the FIP in Year 5.

Principle 3: Effective fisheries management

Progress in Principle 3 will largely be seen through consultation and delivery of the King scallop FMP in English and Welsh waters by Defra. The Steering Group will also continue to work on the FIP level FMP being drafted by individual Steering Group members which compiles fishery-specific information and evidence of relevant work completed through the FIP.

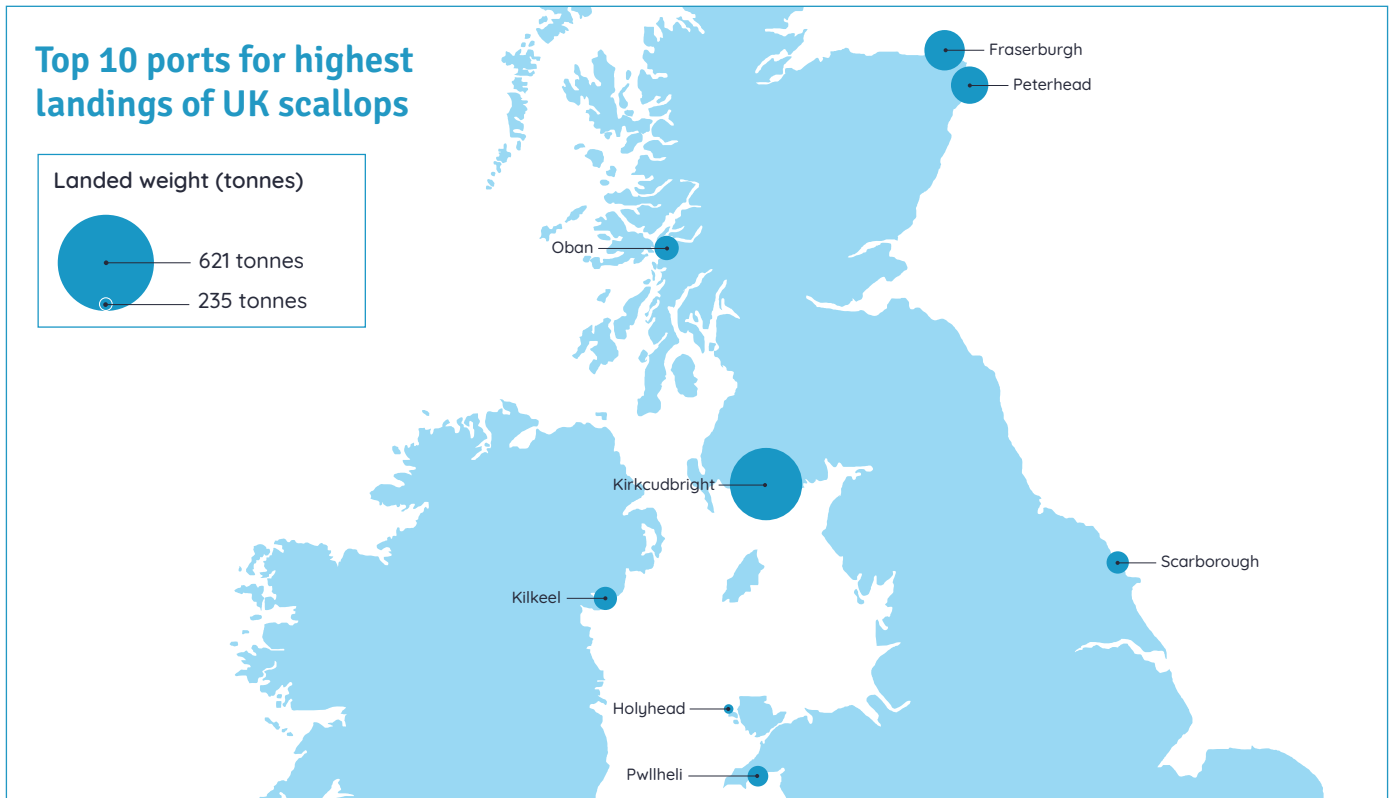
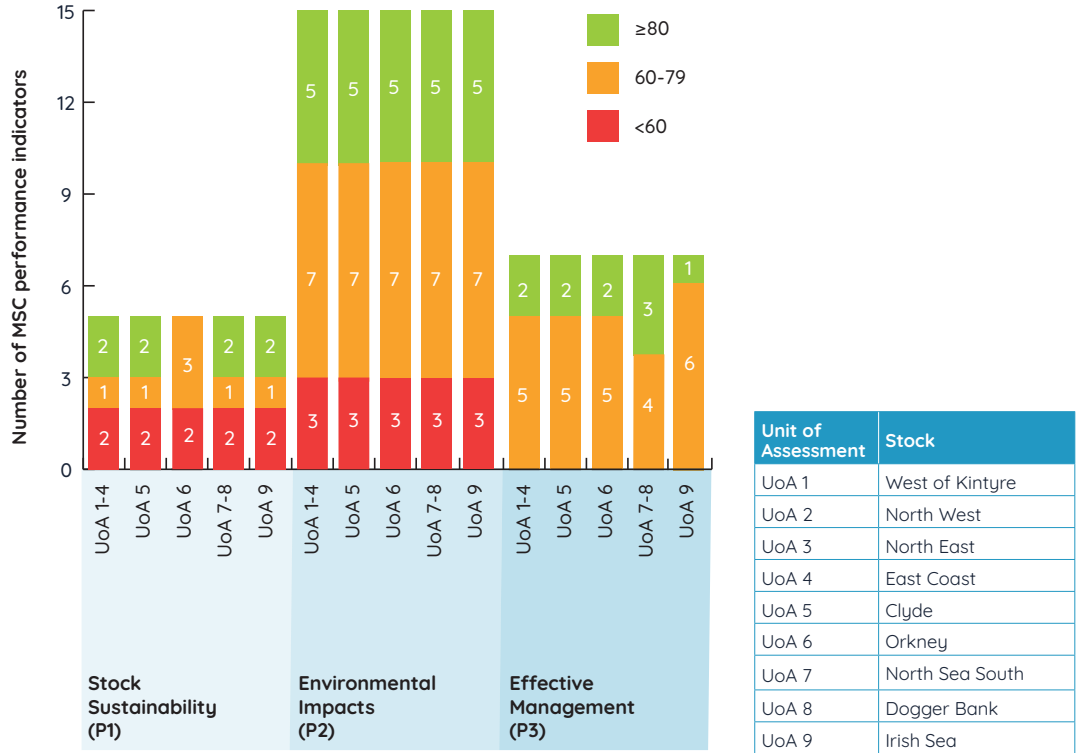
The Secretariat will continue to work with Marine Scotland and DAERA on behalf of the Steering Group to better understand the timeline for development of scallop FMPs in Scotland and Northern Ireland.








MSC performance indicators

Scoring levels across MSC performance indicators for each scallop dredge fishery at the end of Year 4.





Nephrops

 SPECIES	<i>Nephrops Nephrops norvegicus</i>
 AREA	North Sea, West of Scotland, Irish Sea (IV, VIa, VIIa)
 GEAR TYPE	Demersal trawl, creel

2022

In 2022, the **value of *Nephrops* landed into the UK** was approximately £104.6 million, an increase of £13.9 million since 2021

(Source: MMO Provisional dataset)

1 There is currently only one **MSC certified *Nephrops* fishery**, the Joint Demersal Fishery in the North Sea and adjacent waters

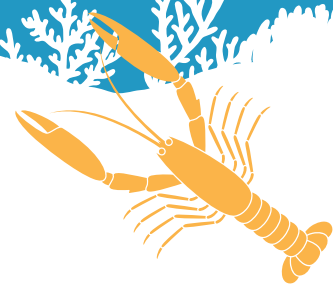
74%

There has been a 74% increase in **volume sold of MSC certified *Nephrops*** from 18/19 to 22/23 globally

5,823t

Data shows the **value of Scampi sold in the UK market** in 2022/23 was worth approximately £63,544,000 and volume sold was 5,283 tonnes

(Source: 2023 Seafish report)





Overview

The *Nephrops* FIP includes demersal trawl and creel fisheries in the North Sea, West of Scotland and Irish Sea across 12 Function Units (FUs). The Action Plan identifies 11 actions to address over the five-year duration of the FIP, and these actions cover 14 of the MSC Standard performance indicators. Each of these actions consists of multiple milestones. A number of actions have made progress during the last year, although there remains significant work to do in Year 5. Key progress includes:

- Improved score for decision making processes to ≥ 80
- Completion of a post-doctoral thesis looking at the impacts of *Nephrops* fishing on seabed habitats

Harvest strategy and harvest control rules

Following the establishment of *Nephrops* Regional Management Groups for the North Sea, Irish Sea and West of Scotland, three meetings were held in early 2023 to discuss potential approaches to management and appropriateness of technical measures at a functional unit level. This remains a challenging topic, with mixed views across the regional groups. Suggested management measures were provided to a Principle 1 expert, who will model these management scenarios against historic stock fluctuations to better understand the potential impacts if these measures are adopted. It is expected this work will be completed in Year 5.

In addition, an output from the meetings was the development of a Harvest Strategy Management Flowchart, which details the steps to be taken upon reviewing published ICES stock assessments and advice at functional unit level, including consideration of remedial measures should the abundance be below pre-determined reference points. This Flowchart has been shared with Marine Scotland, as the Steering Group hope that this process is a proposal that could be adopted in the development of future *Nephrops* Fishery Management Plans.

Biomass reference points

The North Sea and Western Waters Multiannual Plans require that remedial measures should be taken if the *Nephrops* stocks fall below specified reference points, but does not define the reference points or the specific remedial measures to be used. During Year 4 the FIP has been exploring and encouraging the joint UK administrators to submit a joint request to ICES to define Blim and BMSY for *Nephrops* FUs. However, due to the complexity and potential economic and political implications of redefining the reference points, which would also affect European *Nephrops* functional units, the Steering Group are still discussing the most appropriate approach.





Fisheries Management Plans

Under the Joint Fisheries Statement published in November 2022, two *Nephrops* FMPs are listed for development with a timetable for delivery from 2022-2024. Marine Scotland is the coordinating authority with DAERA, Defra and Welsh Government providing support as Joint Authorities. The two FMPs are:

- North Sea *Nephrops* FMP
- West Coast of Scotland *Nephrops* FMP

Consultation for these FMPs is expected to start in 2024, and the Steering Group remain keenly interested in contributing to any consultation process. Although the timeline for delivery of the FMPs is not aligned with the FIP timeline, the development of a robust harvest strategy and harvest control rules for *Nephrops* stocks will contribute significantly to Principle 1 and Principle 3 scores in any future MSC assessment.

Stock status

This year, the score for stock status was reduced to 60-79 for FU9 (Moray Firth) due to a fall in abundance of *Nephrops* by 40% and uncertainty as to whether the stock is fluctuating around MSY; and for FU13 (Clyde and Jura) due to a high harvest rate being well above FMSY. Farn Deep (FU6) remains at 60-79 due to catches being generally above scientific advice, and the abundance being just above MSY $B_{trigger}$. Devil's Hole (FU34) also remains at 60-79 due to catches being well above scientific advice. All other stocks score ≥ 80 .

Primary species outcome status and management

The two main primary species caught in the *Nephrops* trawl fishery are cod and whiting. The fishery needs to demonstrate that these species are highly likely to be above biologically based limits, or if below, that the fishing activity will not hinder the recovery of those species. The score for PI 2.1.1 remained at ≥ 80 for whiting in the West of Scotland and the North Sea because stocks are currently above MSY and considered healthy. Whiting in the Irish Sea continues to score ≤ 60 due to low spawning stock biomass (SSB) and forecasted bycatch levels which mean F remains above F_{lim} . For cod in the West of Scotland, there was a decrease in score this year to ≤ 60 due to forecasted catch scenarios concluding a decrease in SSB for cod.

		West of Scotland	Irish Sea	North Sea
Whiting	2.1.1	80	<60	80
	2.1.2	80	60-79	80
Cod	2.1.1	<60 (previously 60-79)	60-79 (previously <60)	60-79
	2.1.2	60-79 (previously 80)	80 (previously 60-79)	80

Summary of scores for whiting and cod as of end of Year 4 (2023)



Habitat outcome status

A habitat post-doctoral study was completed in 2023 (Whitton and Hiddink, 2023) to inform the assessment of habitat outcome status utilising the Benthic Impact Tool to calculate Relative Benthic Status and determine the impact of the trawl and creel gear on commonly encountered habitats and VMEs. The results suggested that the creel component would score ≥ 80 for all habitat types, while there remains uncertainty on the impacts of trawl gear specifically in relation to interaction with VMEs. For this reason, no score increases were justified for the habitats performance indicators, despite the report contributing significantly to the understanding of the impacts of *Nephrops* fishing on seabed habitats.

Decision making

The score for PI 3.2.2 increased to ≥ 80 this year due to the procedures within the Trade and Cooperation Agreement being established for annual negotiations for total allowable catch (TAC) at ICES division level.

Gap analysis against the MSC Standard Version 3

As part of this year's annual review, Poseidon undertook a gap analysis which compared the current scoring of the FIPs against version 3.0 of the MSC Standard, which came into effect in May 2023.

For *Nephrops*, no score changes were predicted across Principle 1 and Principle 3, although for some PIs there are additional evidence requirements. Within Principle 2, further work is required to understand the full extent of additional actions for endangered, threatened and protected species and habitats performance indicators. In addition, new requirements regarding ghost gear management would need to be addressed.

Year 5: Priorities and challenges for *Nephrops*

Overall, the *Nephrops* FIP is behind schedule on the Action Plan, and some substantial challenges remain. The Secretariat will continue to support the group to progress performance indicators in the final year. The priorities and challenges for the next year are listed in relation to the three principles of the MSC Standard:

Principle 1: Sustainable fish stocks

The PI for harvest strategy still scores ≤ 60 for all FUs and would prevent the fishery from achieving MSC certification. The development of two *Nephrops* FMPs by Marine Scotland has the potential to contribute to improved Principle 1 scores in future, and stakeholders are keen to keep management discussion within this formal legislative process, rather than considering any management measures ahead of the FMP publication. The Secretariat continues to engage with Marine Scotland on the FMP development on behalf of the Steering Group, including whether there is an intention for all conservation reference points for *Nephrops* stocks to be defined and used within the FMP. The Steering Group can be most effective in Year 5 by continuing to engage with Marine Scotland and demonstrating support for the development of harvest strategies and harvest control rules for all UK *Nephrops* functional units, including the development of specific conservation reference points.



Principle 2: Minimising environmental impact

Most of the Principle 2 scores for *Nephrops* currently score 60-70. To improve these scores, I-VMS and REM remains a key topic for the Steering Group, as this will provide important information on the footprint of the fishery in inshore waters and an understanding of vessel compliance with spatial restrictions. I-VMS is being pursued by the UK administrations at slightly different stages; Scotland intend to begin their rollout in 2024.

The post-doctoral report on habitat impacts published this year will be further reviewed by the environmental subgroup, and the appropriateness of current management in place within MPAs should be considered within the Steering Group. The Secretariat will also continue to engage with NatureScot to discuss how the results from the post-doctoral report can be used and fed into any consultation processes for Scottish waters.

Like other FIPs, the *Nephrops* Steering Group have also been waiting to use the Clean Catch UK bycatch reporting tool to begin a recording protocol of any interactions with ETP species. Following several delays in the rollout, the app is expected to be ready to trial in August 2023. As PI 2.3.1 (ETP outcome status) currently scores ≤ 60 for the trawl component, progress here remains a priority for the group in Year 5.

Principle 3: Effective fisheries management

In the final year, progress for fishery-specific objectives (3.2.1) relies predominantly on the development of the *Nephrops* FMPs for the North Sea and West of Scotland, expected from Marine Scotland in 2024. There is also the FIP level FMP being drafted by members of the Steering Group, which provides a useful and comprehensive compendium of fishery-specific information and any relevant work undertaken within the FIP. Work should continue on this FIP level FMP, which can signpost to the national *Nephrops* FMP as it is developed, to ensure there is no duplication of work.

There remains a requirement for all FIPs to demonstrate compliance with national and international legislation, including the Landing Obligation. The existing SFSAG Northern Demersal Fishery certificate includes a condition related to PI 3.2.3 (compliance and enforcement) for the monitoring, control and surveillance system to demonstrate an ability to enforce the Landing Obligation and demonstrate that systematic non-compliance does not occur. As there is an overlap of vessels and gear type between the SFSAG fishery and this FIP, this condition would therefore be harmonised across this fishery if it were to enter assessment.

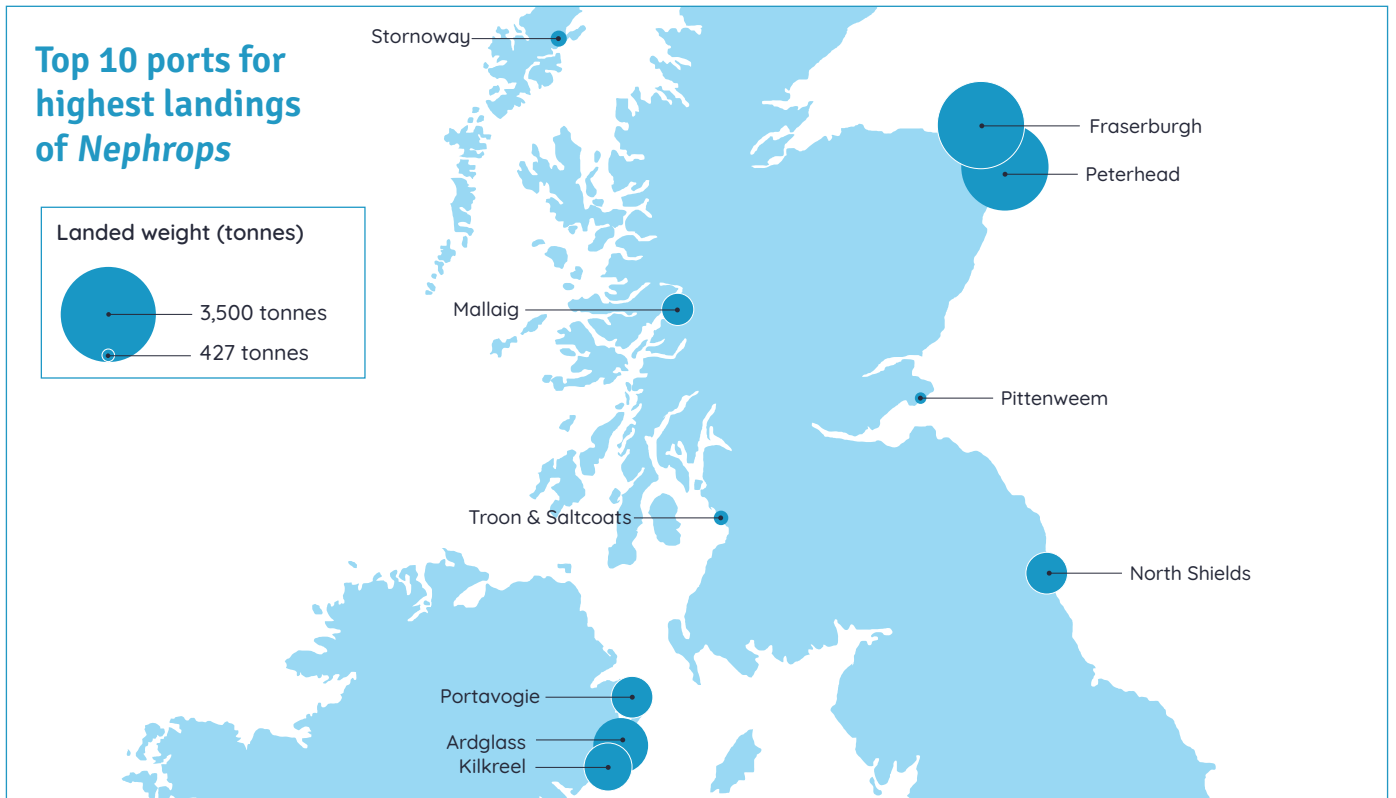
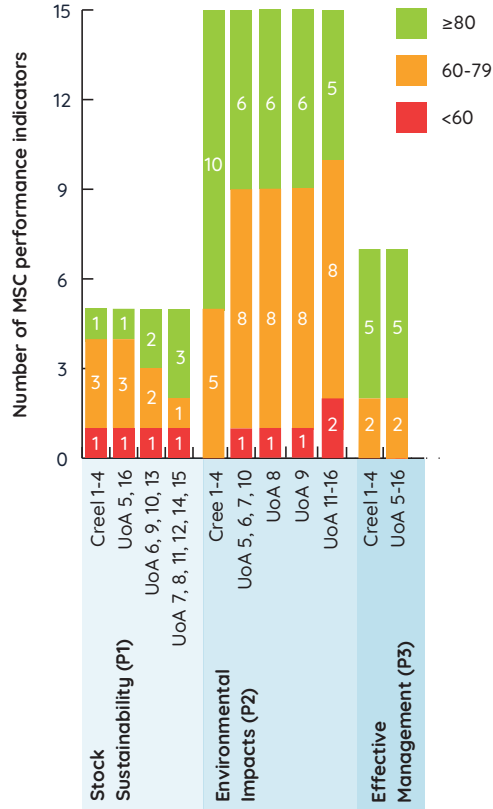




MSC performance indicators

Scoring levels across MSC performance indicators for *Nephrops* fishery at the end of Year 4.

Unit of Assessment	Gear	Stock Area
UoA 1	Creel	FU 6 Farn Deeps
UoA 2		FU 34 Devil's Hole
UoA 3		FU 5 & FU 10
UoA 4		FUs: 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15
UoA 5	TR1 & TR2 demersal trawl	FU 5 Botney Gut - Silver Pit
UoA 6		FU 6 Farn Deeps
UoA 7		FU 7 Fladen Ground
UoA 8		FU 8 Firth of Forth
UoA 9		FU 9 Moray Firth
UoA 10		FU 10 Noup
UoA 11		FU 11 North Minch
UoA 12		FU 12 South Minch
UoA 13		FU 13 Clyde & Jura
UoA 14		FU 14 Irish Sea East
UoA 15		FU 15 Irish Sea West
UoA 16		FU 34 Devil's Hole





Concluding remarks

Throughout the last year, all of the Project UK Steering Groups have continued to meet regularly to work on the ambitious Action Plans and maintain momentum on driving improvements towards sustainability in these fisheries.

Round 1 Steering Groups have now been working together for six years, and Round 2 for four years; this demonstrates significant commitment and buy-in to the improvement projects, and to a more sustainable future for UK fisheries.

The progress so far is a testament to the collaboration and progress built through these pre-competitive, multistakeholder partnerships. There have been several successes this year, however there are still considerable challenges which will require innovation and collaboration from all Steering Group members in the final year.

Key focus areas for 2022-23 include:

- Formal responses to the Defra-led Fisheries Management Plan consultations, in line with the requirements of the FIP Action Plans
- Supporting the North Sea lemon sole fishery as it transitions towards full MSC assessment
- Supporting the South West fisheries, including the recently finished crab and lobster FIP, by organising meetings to discuss next steps, including possible client group formation
- Providing information and workshops on the MSC's In Transition to MSC programme
- For Round 3 fisheries, identifying possible client groups and FIP-leads for each of the new FIPs in the ITM programme

- Continued engagement with the UK administrations to reiterate the importance of the successful implementation of processes such as IVMS, the Clean Catch UK app, and management measures within MPAs
- Continued engagement with Marine Scotland and DAERA on their respective plans for FMP development to manage King scallop and Nephrops stocks within their waters
- Reviewing finalised habitat impacts research to inform future management discussions in King scallop fisheries
- Supporting the remaining FIPs as they approach the end of their timeline, April 2024, and preparing the Steering Groups for the potential next steps

Project UK is an ambitious project and its aims could not be achieved without the drive, investment and commitment of Steering Group members and funders. With such high levels of investment, over many years, the final year for the FIPs is an important year to explore the opportunities that may exist for these fisheries entering MSC full assessment and realising the potential benefits that come along with this status.

The Secretariat (MSC) looks forward to continuing working with Steering Group members, whose expert input provides an invaluable contribution in realising the success of Project UK.



Appendix: MSC processes

MSC definition of a credible FIP

To meet the MSC definition of a credible Fishery Improvement Project, the project must:

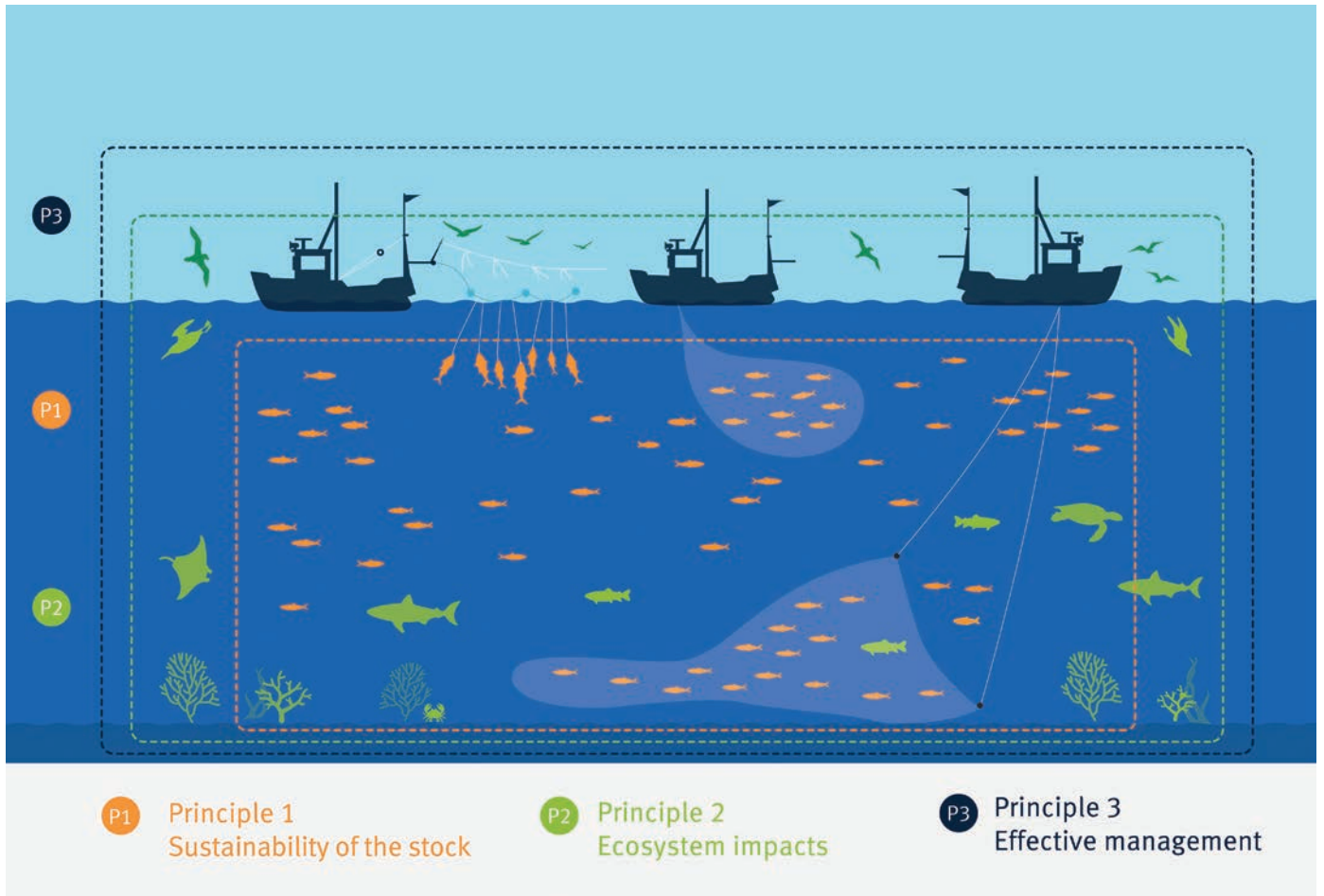
- Conduct an initial **gap analysis** against the MSC Standard (MSC pre-assessment).
- Produce an **Action Plan** inclusive of activities, budgets, roles and responsibilities, that is linked to the MSC performance indicators and scoring guideposts and is ultimately capable of delivering an unconditional pass against the MSC Standard.
- **Regularly report progress** against the Action Plan.
- Have a **mechanism** to verify and provide assurance about the robustness of the process and progress being made in the FIP (i.e. pre-assessment and progress reports prepared or reviewed by an MSC assessor or an independent technical consultant).
- Have a **pre-determined limit to the amount of time** spent as a FIP, which should generally be no longer than five years.
- **Aim** to reach a level where the fishery could choose to enter full MSC assessment and achieve MSC certification through a transparent, third-party process, to verify the success of the FIP.

MSC Fisheries Standard (MSC Standard)

The MSC Fisheries Standard is used to assess whether a fishery is well-managed and sustainable. Fisheries are assessed by accredited independent certifiers called Conformity Assessment Bodies (CABs) – also called certification bodies.

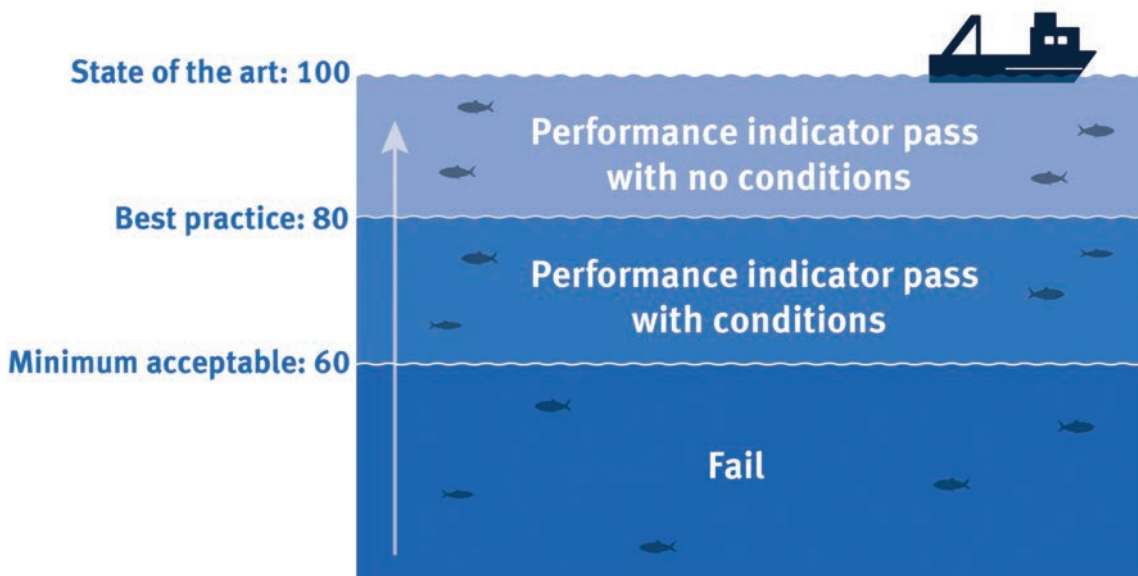
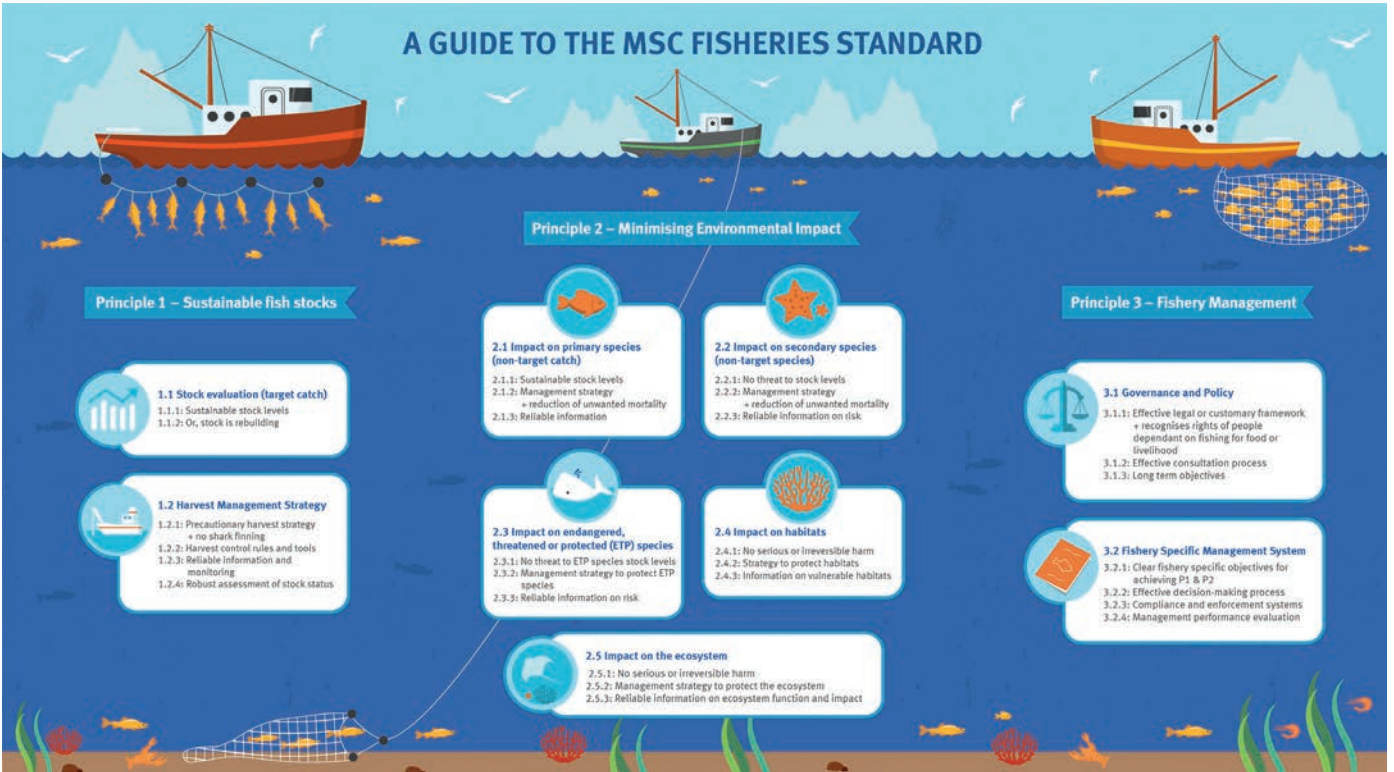
The MSC Fisheries Standard has three core principles (Principles 1, 2, and 3) that every fishery must meet:

- 1. Sustainable fish stocks:** Fishing must be at a level that ensures it can continue indefinitely and the fish population can remain productive and healthy.
- 2. Minimising environmental impact:** Fishing activity must be managed carefully so that other species and habitats within the ecosystem remain healthy.
- 3. Effective fisheries management:** MSC certified fisheries must comply with relevant laws and be able to adapt to changing environmental circumstances.



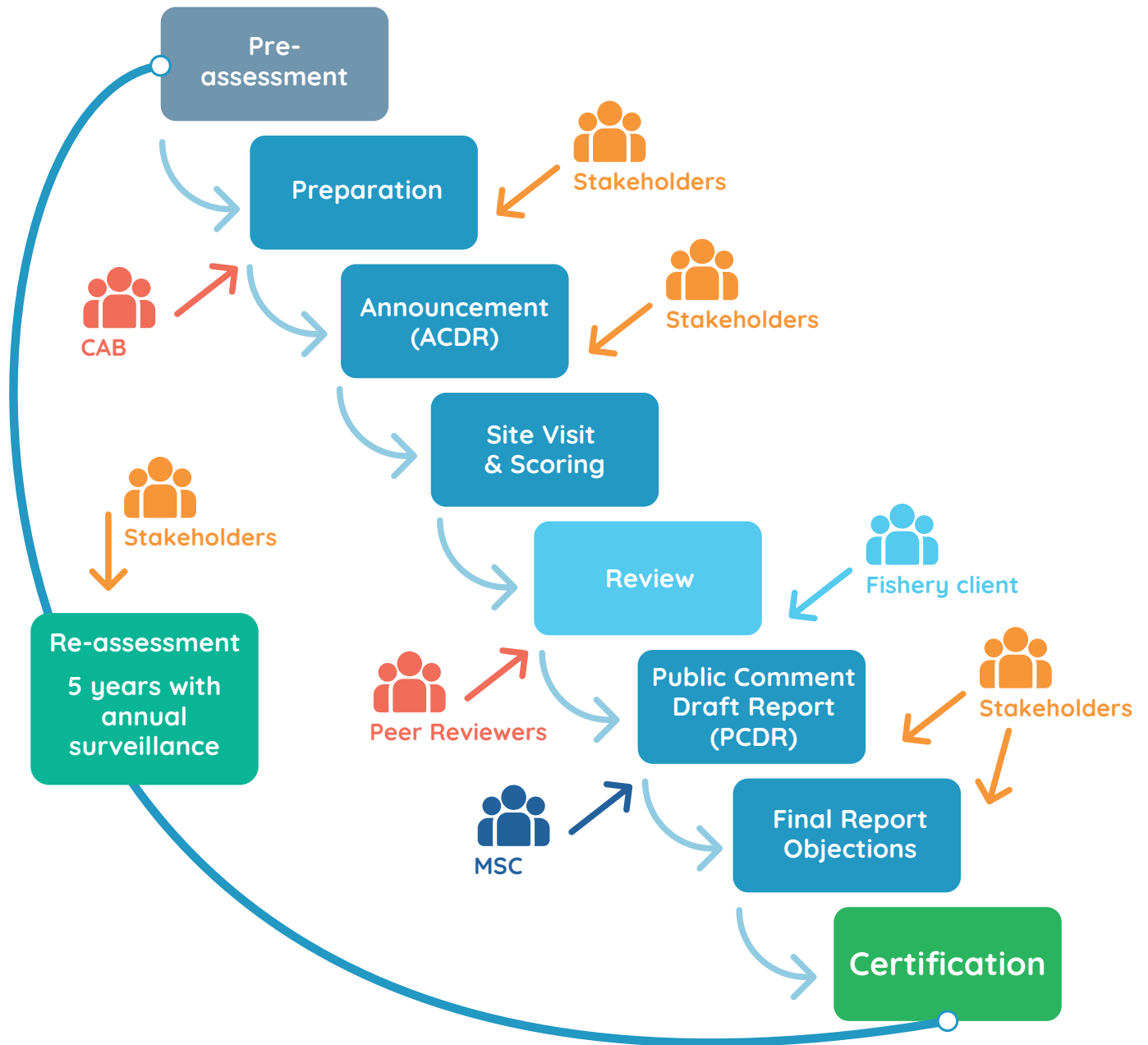
There are 28 performance indicators that sit under the three principles of the MSC Fisheries Standard. A fishery is assigned a score for each performance indicator, where 60 is the minimum acceptable performance, 80 is global best practice and 100 is state of the art performance.

To become certified, a fishery must score at least 60 for each of the 28 performance indicators. If a fishery scores between 60 and 79 for any performance indicator, it will be required to take appropriate action as a condition of certification. This action needs to improve the performance of the fishery so that it scores 80 or above for that indicator. The timeframe to make these improvements is typically five years or less. The fishery must also score an average score of 80 across all performance indicators under each of the three principles.





MSC Fisheries Certification Process





Glossary

Much of the glossary terms were sourced and can be found in the MSC-MSCI Vocabulary document here: [msc-msci-vocabulary.pdf](#). Unless stated otherwise, these terms are as defined by the MSC.

B_{lim}

Limit reference point for spawning stock biomass (SSB), defined by ICES.

B_{trigger}

Value of spawning stock biomass (SSB) that triggers a specific management action, defined by ICES.

Bycatch species

Organisms that have been taken incidentally and are not retained (usually because they have no commercial value).

Ecosystem

Referred to as the fisheries impact on the wider ecosystem structure and function, including consideration of the removal of the target stock, the impacts of the fishery on both the ecosystem's inherent health and balance (e.g. structure, trophic relationships and biodiversity) and the impact on the services provided by the ecosystem.

ETP

Endangered, Threatened or Protected (ETP) species are 'in scope' species that are recognised by national threatened species legislation or species that are listed in binding international agreements such as the Convention on International Trade in Endangered species (CITES). Species classified as 'out-of scope' (amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals) that are listed in the IUCN Redlist as vulnerable (VU), endangered (EN) or critically endangered (CE) are recognised as ETP species.

FIP

Fisheries Improvement Project. Multi-stakeholder initiatives that aim to help fisheries work towards sustainability.

Fish stock

The living resources in the community or population from which catches are taken in a fishery. Use of the term fish stock implies that the particular population is a biologically distinct unit. In a particular fishery, the fish stock may be one or several species of fish or other aquatic organisms.

Habitat

The chemical and bio-physical environment, including biogenic (made by organisms) structure, where fishing takes place.

Harvest Control Rule (HCR)

A set of well-defined pre-agreed rules or actions used for determining a management action in response to changes in indicators of stock status with respect to reference points.

Harvest Strategy (HS)

The combination of monitoring, stock assessment, harvest control rules and management actions, which may include a management plan.

Main primary or secondary species

Species that form a significant part of the total catch weight, accounting for more than 5% of the total catch weight, or 2% of the total catch weight if they are deemed a less resilient species.

Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY)

The highest theoretical equilibrium yield that can be continuously taken (on average) from a stock under existing (average) environmental conditions without affecting significantly the reproduction process.



Minor primary or secondary species

Applies to both primary and secondary species, these are species that are more rarely caught in the fishery accounting for less than 5% of the total catch weight, or 2% of the total catch weight if they are deemed a less-resilient species.

Priority Marine Feature (PMF)

A variety of habitats and species that are a priority for conservation in Scotland's seas, which were developed by Marine Scotland, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) and Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH).

Primary species

Species caught in the fishery that are not the targeted stock (not covered by Principle 1) or ETP but are managed by tools and measures that are intended to achieve stock management objectives.

Productivity and Susceptibility Analysis (PSA)

Used as the 'Level 2' analysis in the Risk Based Framework. This semi-quantitative approach examines several attributes of each species that contribute to or reflect its productivity or susceptibility, in order to provide a relative measure of the risk to the scoring element from fishing activities.

Reference points

Biological reference points; stock status reference points used to define management action in response to stock status.

Risk Based Framework (RBF)

Used for assessing data-poor fisheries – this is a framework of assessment tools for scoring 'outcome' performance indicators in cases where insufficient information is available to score a fishery using the default Scoring Guideposts. See PSA and SICA for examples of tools.

Secondary species

Species caught in the fishery that are not the targeted stock (not covered by Principle 1) or ETP. Are not considered 'primary' as they are not managed to achieve stock management objectives; or are species that are out of scope of the programme, but where the definition of ETP species is not applicable.

Scale Intensity Consequence Analysis (SICA)

Scale Intensity Consequence Analysis (in relation to using the RBF) – used as the 'Level 1' analysis in the RBF. This qualitative approach identifies the activities mostly likely to be associated with 'worst case' impacts on any species, habitat or ecosystem. A SICA is best conducted with the participation of a diverse group of stakeholders who are able to provide a range of knowledge about the fishery under assessment.

Spawning stock biomass (SSB)

Total weight of all sexually mature fish in the stock.

Steering group

A collaborative group made up of NGOs, government, retailers and supply chain to help drive forward improvements identified in each FIP.

Unit of Assessment (UoA)

The target stock(s) combined with the fishing method/gear and practice (including vessel type/s) pursuing that stock, and any fleets, or groups of vessels, or individual fishing operators or other eligible fishers that are included in an MSC fishery assessment. In some fisheries, the UoA may be further defined based on the specific fishing seasons and/or areas that are included.

Vulnerable Marine Ecosystem (VME)

These are ecosystems that are classified as vulnerable due to their respective characteristics and processes, such as rarity, fragility, life-history dependency by various species, structure complexity and the functional significance of the ecosystem. See FAO guidelines for more information. www.fao.org/in-action/vulnerable-marine-ecosystems/en



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