

# Consultation on Three Proposed Joint UK Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs) for Pelagic Stocks



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## Consultation on Three Proposed Joint UK Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs) for Pelagic Fish Stocks

29 September 2026

Dear Consultee,

The [Joint Fisheries Statement \(JFS\)](#) as amended, as required by the Fisheries Act 2020 (the Act), sets out how the UK fisheries authorities (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, Scottish Government, Welsh Government and the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs in Northern Ireland) will prepare and publish 43 Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs) by 2028.

The Scottish Government is the coordinating authority for 21 FMPs with a delivery date of end of 2026. Of the 21 FMPs, 11 are for demersal fish stocks, two are for Nephrops stocks and a further eight are for pelagic fish stocks. The consultations on the 11 proposed FMPs for demersal fish stocks and the consultation on the two Nephrops FMPs have now closed. [A public consultation on five proposed Joint UK Fisheries Management Plans \(FMPs\) for pelagic stocks](#) is currently open with a closing date of 14 October 2026.

This [consultation](#) is for the remaining three pelagic FMPs for which the Scottish Government is the co-ordinating authority. These bring together evidence on the state of the North Sea horse mackerel stocks, the North Sea greater silver smelt, and the West of Scotland greater silver smelt and identify policies and actions necessary to manage these fisheries in an effective and sustainable way. They set out both the vision for the management of the UK pelagic fisheries as well as relevant policies and actions intended to help realise that vision.

This is an opportunity for you to help shape and influence the future of pelagic fisheries management policy in the UK and builds upon previous engagement with a wide range of stakeholders across the UK. The consultation survey has three parts:

1. Personal details and confidentiality (required)
2. Questions on the three FMPs, Strategic Environmental Assessment Environmental Report and the Business and Regulatory Impact Assessment
3. Consultee feedback on the Online Survey (required)

You only need to respond to the questions that you wish to answer. There is a mixture of general and specific questions. However, all respondents must complete the required 'Consultee Feedback on the Online Survey' and 'Personal Details and Confidentiality' sections before they are able to submit their response to the online survey. We welcome any further information and evidence to support this work. You can supply that directly via [FMPs@gov.scot](mailto:FMPs@gov.scot).

The following documents can be found on [Citizen Space](#) (Citizen Space is an online consultation tool) and on the Scottish Government website by clicking on the links below:

- [Consultation document](#)
- [Proposed North Sea horse mackerel FMP](#)
- [Proposed North Sea greater silver smelt FMP](#)
- [Proposed West of Scotland greater silver smelt FMP](#)
- [Strategic Environmental Assessment Environment Report \(SEA\) for the remaining three pelagic FMPs](#)
- [Business and Regulatory Impact Assessment \(BRIA\) for the remaining three pelagic FMPs](#)
- [Detailed Nature Conservation Advice from NatureScot and JNCC for Pelagic FMPs](#)
- Summary of nature conservation advice from Natural England and JNCC for horse mackerel and greater silver smelt in English waters only.

## Responses

To submit your consultation response please complete the consultation questionnaire provided through [Citizen Space](#). If you require a copy of the consultation paper, please contact us at [FMPs@gov.scot](mailto:FMPs@gov.scot).

Responses, additional information, or documents can be sent to:

### **Consultation on the Three Remaining Proposed Pelagic Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs)**

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**Responses should be received by 23:59 on 10 November 2026.**

Yours faithfully,

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Scottish Government  
[FMPs@gov.scot](mailto:FMPs@gov.scot)

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# Introduction

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

Many of our sea fish and shellfish stocks are under a range of pressures such as fishing and climate change. Whilst fishing can bring many socio-economic benefits, it also impacts on our marine environment, for example through accidental bycatch<sup>1</sup>. It is therefore important to consider both the positive and negative effects of fishing as part of overall management of our fisheries and the marine environment.

The [Joint Fisheries Statement \(JFS\)](#) as amended, as required by the [Fisheries Act 2020](#) (the Act), sets out how the UK fisheries authorities (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, Scottish Government, Welsh Government and the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs in Northern Ireland) will prepare and publish 43 Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs) by 2028.

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

There are opportunities for growth if our fishing and seafood industries are managed sustainably, to ensure fishing opportunities are safeguarded for future generations. We are keen to continue to work closely with our stakeholders as we develop and deliver our plans for managing fisheries in the UK.

## Joint UK Fisheries Management Plans for pelagic fish stocks

This consultation document invites views on the following pelagic FMPs:

- Proposed North Sea horse mackerel FMP
- Proposed North Sea greater silver smelt FMP (also referred to as North Sea GSS FMP)
- Proposed West of Scotland greater silver smelt (GSS) FMP (also referred to as West of Scotland GSS FMP)

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<sup>1</sup> fish that are unintentionally caught while targeting other species

The Act requires the relevant authority or authorities to prepare and publish FMPs in accordance with the list and timetable included in the JFS. The Scottish Government is the coordinating authority for these three pelagic FMPs and has coordinated the preparation of these plans on behalf of the other relevant authorities.<sup>2</sup>

The relevant authorities for the three pelagic FMPs which are subject of this consultation varies according to the specific plan but includes the Scottish Government, the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) and the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra). The plans have been prepared with input from industry, scientists, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and Statutory Nature Conservation Bodies (SNCBs) and published jointly by the relevant authorities for the purposes of the Act.

In addition to the requirements of the Act, FMPs are subject to legal duties and requirements relating to the protection of the natural environment arising from legislation such as the Habitats Regulations<sup>3</sup>, the Marine Strategy Regulations 2010<sup>4</sup>, and the UK Marine Policy Statement<sup>5</sup>, the Environment Act 2021<sup>6</sup>, the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009<sup>7</sup>, and the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010<sup>8</sup>.

An Environmental Report which describes the likely environmental impacts of implementing the policies and actions in these FMPs, has been produced, as required under the [Environmental Assessment of plans and programmes Regulations 2004](#).

A partial business regulatory impact assessment (BRIA) has also been developed, which describes the anticipated economic impact of these FMPs on the fishing sector and associated businesses. We would welcome additional economic evidence to update our assessment.

This consultation is particularly relevant to:

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

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<sup>2</sup> The definition for a “co-ordinating authority” is given in Annex A (p. 55) of the JFS, which is: - **“Coordinating Authority:** The fisheries policy authority which will coordinate the preparation and management of the plan on behalf of the other fisheries policy authorities acting jointly”.

<sup>3</sup> [The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017](#)

<sup>4</sup> [The Marine Strategy Regulations 2010](#)

<sup>5</sup> [UK marine policy statement - GOV.UK](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Environment Act 2021](#)

<sup>7</sup> [Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Marine \(Scotland\) Act 2010](#)

# Background: Fisheries Management Plans

## Why are we publishing FMPs?

The Act sets out the legal framework to manage fisheries in the UK, including the provision to prepare and publish FMPs. FMPs are intended to support the protection of fish stocks and, where necessary, the recovery of fish stocks, which in turn will support a sustainable fishing industry and safeguard the environment.

## What are FMPs?

FMPs are documents prepared and published under the Act that set out policies designed to maintain relevant stocks of sea fish at sustainable levels, or where necessary, restore them to sustainable levels (or contribute to this). They are evidence-based action plans that support delivery of sustainable fisheries for current and future generations. FMPs are strategic plans that must be reviewed and, if necessary, revised at least once every six years. They set out both a long-term vision for the fishery (or fisheries), together with the policies and management interventions necessary in the short to medium-term to achieve this vision. Where appropriate, FMPs may identify actions to address wider issues identified during their development such as environmental, social and economic considerations.

## How FMPs work

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

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

FMPs identify a range of policies and actions. Plans are intended to be adaptive and developed over time as further evidence is gathered, and measures are implemented. Whilst each FMP focuses on specific stock(s), they will often need to be considered in a holistic manner, particularly where there are strong stock interactions and connections between different fisheries.

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

## **FMPs and other coastal States**

FMPs provide a long-term framework for managing fishing activity, with the policies and actions focused on ensuring stock sustainability and a healthy marine environment. The policies and actions within the FMPs reflect and respect the international management arrangements that are in place for each of the FMPs covered by this consultation.

The UK, whilst having regulatory autonomy over its fisheries, is committed to working with other coastal States, building on our strong and constructive relationships to ensure sustainable management of shared fisheries resources. In order to deliver the objectives of the Fisheries Act, the policies and actions in current and future FMPs will be implemented, and iterated where necessary, to reflect commitments made through annual consultations with the EU and other coastal States as well as negotiations in multilateral and bilateral forums.

The FMPs state that comprehensive TAC sharing arrangement between the coastal States to support the distribution between coastal States is important for securing the long-term sustainability of the shared stocks and is an action set out within a number of the pelagic FMPs.

These plans may inform multi-year strategies for conservation and management of shared stocks, including those proposed by the UK and EU under the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA).

Regulatory measures to implement FMPs will apply to all vessels fishing in UK waters. The UK will notify the EU of any changes affecting EU vessels. The UK will also be working with other partners to promote sustainable management of international fisheries through bilateral and multilateral forums.

## **Approach to the development of the FMPs**

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

FMPs are being developed across the UK in different ways, allowing us to try new approaches and test how best to develop the plans and engage with stakeholders.

## Why FMPs for horse mackerel and greater silver smelt?

The three fish stocks covered by these FMPs are of limited importance to the UK fishing industry. They are landed in relatively small quantities by UK vessels, and either they make up only a small part of the catch for the fleets that target them, or they are mainly taken as bycatch in other fisheries.

However, despite the UK having little direct commercial interest in these stocks, it is still important to manage them sustainably. The FMPs set out actions to help ensure these stocks remain or are restored to a healthy and productive status in the future. They also play a role in the wider marine ecosystem and, given their presence in UK waters, it is important that appropriate management measures are put in place.

Pelagic stocks are typically widespread and occur across International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) subareas<sup>9</sup> 1–14. Within UK waters, the management of pelagic fisheries under the three FMPs covered by this consultation is as follows:

- The proposed **North Sea horse mackerel FMP** covers two separate horse mackerel stocks: horse mackerel in UK waters of ICES Division 4.a, which forms part of the Western<sup>10</sup> horse mackerel stock, and horse mackerel in UK waters of ICES Divisions 4.b–c and 7.d, which form part of the North Sea horse mackerel stock.
- The proposed **North Sea greater silver smelt FMP** covers the North Sea GSS fishery in UK waters of ICES Subarea 4 and Division 2.a (North Sea).
- The proposed **West of Scotland greater silver smelt FMP** covers the West of Scotland GSS fishery in UK waters of ICES Division 6.a (West Coast of Scotland) and Division 5.b (Faroes Grounds).

The areas covered by these FMPs have distinct issues and challenges that warrant separate consideration. Whilst each area has its differences, there are also similarities across FMPs to ensure consistency in management approaches.

## Summary of the Scottish-led pelagic FMPs

All of our sea fish and shellfish stocks are complex to manage. The vision for all 43 UK FMPs is that the fisheries they cover are managed sustainably, to help ensure that we maintain or restore stocks' biomass above levels capable of producing

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<sup>9</sup> The International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) divides the Northeast Atlantic and adjacent seas into a grid of statistical areas, subareas, and divisions.

<sup>10</sup> The proposed North Sea horse mackerel FMP covers area 4a, however, Western horse mackerel is also featured as part of the [Celtic Sea and Western Channel \(CSWC\) FMP](#) and this FMP should therefore be read in conjunction with that document.

maximum sustainable yield (MSY) and highlights areas that could lead to refinements of management approaches in the future.

The three pelagic FMPs which are subject to this consultation have been developed by the Scottish Government, Defra and DAERA, and with input from industry, scientists, eNGOs and SNCBs.

These plans have been developed within the wider context of the Marine Plans in place in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Consideration will also be given to the objectives and principles outlined in the TCA when considering measures. It should also be noted that the pelagic stocks covered by these FMPs are jointly managed, and therefore overall fishing opportunities are determined through international negotiation. These stocks are also subject to different management measures in different areas of the sea by individual coastal States.

These FMPs sets out policies and actions to restore or maintain the pelagic stocks in UK waters at sustainable levels and contribute to this, ensuring that they can continue to play a key role in providing positive socio-economic benefits to the UK, whilst also setting out a number of actions to improve management where this is needed. The FMPs have been developed in line with the fisheries objectives of the Act, as required by the JFS.

The draft pelagic FMPs will apply to all areas in Scottish waters<sup>11</sup>, English waters<sup>12</sup> and Northern Irish waters where fishing activity for the above given species takes place.

Pelagic fisheries in UK waters are seasonal and primarily target key commercial species such as mackerel, herring and blue whiting. These are highly directed fisheries, focusing on fish in the open water column, with target species accounting for the vast majority of both catch volume and economic value. The stocks covered by the three pelagic FMPs are relatively less important economically to the UK, however, similar to other pelagic stocks, they play an important role in the marine ecosystem and given their presence in UK waters, it is important that appropriate management measures are in place.

Catch limits in the form of Total Allowable Catches (TACs) are set annually, informed for the majority of these stocks, by scientific advice from ICES. These FMPs cover more than one ICES advice area and/or TAC, and for some stocks, a single ICES advice sheet may feed into more than one UK quota. These are explained further within each FMP.

These FMPs therefore describe a vision with policies and actions which set out how management can continue to support an MSY approach<sup>13</sup> for the pelagic fisheries in UK waters, and highlights areas that could lead to refinements to management approaches in the future. Areas for action include those which support the wider

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<sup>11</sup> Scottish waters refer to the Scottish inshore and Scottish offshore regions as set out in section 322 of the [Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009](#).

<sup>12</sup> English waters refer to the English inshore and English offshore regions as set out in section 322 of the [Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009](#).

<sup>13</sup> An explanation of a MSY approach to fishing is provided in [Advice published by ICES](#)

delivery of policies within the JFS, and which contribute to the delivery of the fisheries objectives in the Act. In most cases further policy development work will be needed for any new actions, which could include additional evidence gathering or public consultation, along with the completion of appropriate impact assessments.

## Status of the stocks covered by the three remaining pelagic FMPs

The health of sea fish stocks can change over time, and ICES provides new advice on an annual basis for most stocks. The fisheries policy authorities review stocks annually and, as these three stocks are jointly managed, the approach to setting overall fishing opportunities are determined through international negotiation and through the sustainability objective in the Act.

Different pelagic stocks are subject to different management measures in different areas of the sea by individual coastal States, so we will endeavour to work in cooperation to jointly deliver sustainable management and catching opportunities for these stocks.

ICES advice is organised into assessment categories ranging from Category 1 (the highest level of information available) to Category 6 (the lowest). Additionally, benchmark exercises are used by ICES to evaluate existing and new scientific evidence and methods and, where relevant, apply them in the stock assessment process. They are part of the continuous improvement process which ensures that ICES advice is based on the best available scientific evidence.

The summary below reflects the ICES assessment framework in place at the time the draft FMPs were prepared.

1. North Sea horse mackerel
  - a. the Western horse mackerel stock is classed as a Category 1\* stock;
  - b. horse mackerel in the Southern and Central North Sea (SCNS) and eastern English Channel was upgraded to a category 1\*\*\*\* stock following ICES benchmarking exercise in 2024 although at the time of writing the FMP this is currently under review.
2. North Sea GSS is classed as a Category 2\* stock based on most recent ICES advice<sup>14</sup>.
3. West of Scotland GSS is classed as a Category 1\* stock at the time of writing this FMP.

(\*) The stock has a high level of data available and there is sufficient available scientific evidence for the relevant fisheries policy authorities to make MSY assessments for this stock. This includes stocks with quantitative (Category 1) or qualitative (Category 2) assessments.

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<sup>14</sup> [Item - Greater silver smelt \(\*Argentina silus\*\) in subareas 1, 2, and 4 and in Division 3.a \(Northeast Arctic, North Sea, Skagerrak, Kattegat\) - International Council for the Exploration of the Sea - Figshare](#)

(\*\*\*\*) Although the SCNS and eastern English Channel horse mackerel stock has been upgraded to Category 1, the evidence base remains insufficient to establish robust MSY reference points. The latest scientific assessment indicates that spawning stock biomass is below Blim and that catch advice is therefore currently set at zero. Strengthening the evidence base remains a priority, particularly because the stock is managed as a bycatch-only stock, limiting the quantity of fishery-dependent data available to inform scientific assessments. While acknowledging these evidence limitations, the stock is currently classed as a Category 1 stock by ICES, therefore, the policies and actions for the SCNS and eastern English Channel horse mackerel stock have been drafted to meet the requirements of section 6(3)(a) of the Fisheries Act 2020.

It is important to note that these FMPs are produced with the available evidence at the time. As far as possible, the management approach set out in the draft FMPs provides flexibility for fisheries managers to adapt to changing circumstances. Should ICES advice significantly change, or other material circumstances change, following the publication of the draft FMPs within this consultation, steps will be taken as needed to adjust the FMPs prior to final publication.

Under [section 8\(1\)](#) of the Act, as well as the six-year (or sooner if required) review of FMPs, an FMP can also be replaced or amended at any time following a consultation allowing the plan to be kept up to date. The decision to review earlier will be taken by the fisheries policy authorities.

## Policies and actions for the management of horse mackerel and greater silver smelt fisheries in UK

The proposed FMPs, including their policies and actions which are subject to the consideration of this consultation will be prioritised appropriately following publication to ensure realistic and measurable outputs. They were drafted to meet the requirements of policies set out in the JFS and section 6(3)(a) of the Fisheries Act 2020.

For each policy, the FMP sets out:

- a rationale;
- ongoing, short and longer-term actions; and
- how the actions support delivery of the fisheries objectives.

Each policy describes the outcome that is being worked towards, and the actions are intended to support the delivery of those outcomes.

Where there is sufficient available evidence to assess MSY for the pelagic stocks covered by the FMPs, the FMPs must contain policies which will at least contribute to restoring or maintaining the stock at MSY. In addition, in accordance with section

5.4 of the JFS, the design and structure of FMPs directly relate to the fisheries objectives identified in section 5.4.2 and may also address wider issues in fisheries management depending upon the specific goals or targets of each plan and may contribute to one or more of the remaining fisheries objectives.

In developing the policies and actions for these FMPs, the relevant fisheries policy authorities have considered the current policy landscape including applicable international agreements and declarations, conservation advice and wider policy development underway, in addition to considering what additional evidence, measures or policies may be needed to support both the vision of the FMPs and delivery of the fisheries objectives.

FMPs are one of the tools that support the achievement of the fisheries objectives, although they are not the only policy vehicle available to do this. The fisheries policy authorities have also considered the conservation advice received from the SNCBs and included the outputs from that work in considering where policy action may be needed.

The FMPs will be monitored and assessed against a set of indicators to ensure the overarching outcomes and actions are effective in achieving the FMP policy goals and the requirements of the Act.

There is significant overlap in policies for these three FMPs, apart from policies 1 and 2 in the North Sea horse mackerel FMP which are different to account for the complexities around the two stocks covered by that plan. The similarities are intentional to ensure that there is harmonisation in management approaches and delivery as far as practicable. Area specific considerations, which do not span all three FMPs, are denoted in the individual FMPs.

For the proposed North Sea horse mackerel FMP the policies are:

- Policy 1a: Harvest the Western horse mackerel stock in ICES division 4.a sustainably, contributing to maintaining the biomass above the level capable of producing MSY.
- Policy 1b: Harvest the SCNS and Eastern Channel horse mackerel stock sustainably, contributing to restoring the biomass above the level capable of producing MSY
- Policy 2a: Use the best-available scientific evidence to support management decisions relating to the setting of sustainable fishing opportunities for the Western horse mackerel stock in ICES division 4.a
- Policy 2b: Use the best available science, including emerging evidence from ongoing research, to strengthen the management and support the recovery of horse mackerel in the southern and central North Sea and Eastern Channel
- Policy 3: Monitor catches of horse mackerel and ensure that where possible all catches are counted against quotas
- Policy 4: Deliver wider sustainable management by minimising the impact of the horse mackerel fishery on the marine ecosystem
- Policy 5: Support fishing businesses to deliver socio-economic and cultural benefits for communities

- Policy 6: Reduce the impact of fishing on climate change and support the fishing industry to adapt to the impacts of climate change

For the proposed North Sea greater silver smelt FMP and the proposed West of Scotland greater silver smelt, the policies are:

- Policy 1: Harvest the (relevant) GSS stock sustainably, contributing to maintaining or restoring the biomass above the level capable of producing MSY
- Policy 2: Use the best-available scientific evidence to support management decisions relating to the setting of sustainable fishing opportunities
- Policy 3: Monitor catches of (relevant) GSS and ensure that where possible all catches are counted against quotas
- Policy 4: Deliver wider sustainable management by minimising the impact of the GSS fishery on the marine ecosystem
- Policy 5: Reduce the impact of fishing on climate change and support the fishing industry to adapt to the impacts of climate change

## North Sea horse mackerel FMP

This FMP covers two separate horse mackerel (*Trachurus trachurus*) stocks: horse mackerel in UK waters of ICES Division 4.a, which forms part of the Western horse mackerel stock, and horse mackerel in UK waters of ICES Divisions 4.b–c and 7.d, which form part of the Southern and Central North Sea (SCNS) and Eastern Channel horse mackerel stock. These stocks reflect two genetically distinct populations, which are known to mix in the Channel and in the central North Sea. However, the extent of this genetic mixing is uncertain.

Western horse mackerel is caught as part of a directed pelagic fishery and is also featured as part of the Celtic Sea and Western Channel (CSWC) FMP and the two FMPs should therefore be read in conjunction.

The SCNS horse mackerel is caught as part of a bycatch fishery in the Southern and Central North Sea and Eastern Channel. The target fishery for horse mackerel in these areas has been closed since 2025 due to the poor state of the stock and is currently only landed as bycatch.

Horse mackerel is of relatively low economic importance to the UK fishing sector compared with other pelagic species such as mackerel and herring. Despite its limited economic importance, the continued presence of horse mackerel in UK waters and its role within the wider marine ecosystem highlight the importance of maintaining effective and adaptive management measures.

Both the Western horse mackerel and SCNS and Eastern Channel horse mackerel stocks are jointly managed, shared with the EU, and therefore overall fishing opportunities are determined through international negotiation.

The first two policies largely relate to management measures to achieve long-term sustainability of the horse mackerel stocks, and the remaining policies set out actions in relation to wider sustainable management. Policies 1 and 2 have been separated to reflect the differing health and evidence base underpinning the Western horse mackerel and SCNS and Eastern Channel horse mackerel stocks.

**Q. 1 For the North Sea horse mackerel FMP, do you agree with the proposed policies?**

**Q. 2 What are your views on the proposed actions for each policy in the North Sea horse mackerel FMP?**

## North Sea greater silver smelt FMP

This FMP focuses on greater silver smelt (*Argentina silus*), also known as greater Argentine. It covers the North Sea greater silver smelt (GSS) fishery in UK waters of ICES Subarea 4 and Division 2.a (North Sea).

GSS is a deep-water schooling species that is caught by semi-pelagic and demersal fishing vessels. It is therefore more accurately described as a semi-pelagic, benthopelagic or bathypelagic species.

Historically, greater silver smelt was harvested for its high oil content and used in fishmeal production. Today, in the North Sea, the species is caught both in targeted fisheries and as bycatch in fisheries targeting other species. The targeted fishery is mainly carried out by licensed Norwegian midwater and bottom trawlers in ICES Division 2.a. Greater silver smelt is also caught as bycatch in trawl fisheries operating along the Norwegian Deep in Division 4.a (the northern North Sea), where catches can vary from year to year. Available data indicate that, since 2006, most catches have been taken by Norwegian vessels fishing in Norwegian waters.

The stock is jointly managed by the UK and the EU. While there is currently little direct commercial interest in greater silver smelt from the UK fishing industry, the UK has an interest in the stock because it is caught as bycatch in other fisheries and plays an important role in the North Sea ecosystem.

The first two policies in this FMP focus on management measures to support the long-term sustainability of the North Sea greater silver smelt stock. The remaining policies set out actions to support its wider sustainable management.

**Q. 3 For the North Sea greater silver smelt FMP, do you agree with the proposed policies?**

**Q. 4: What are your views on the proposed actions for each policy in the North Sea greater silver smelt FMP?**

## West of Scotland greater silver smelt FMP

This FMP focuses on greater silver smelt (*Argentina silus*), also known as greater Argentine which consists of the West of Scotland GSS fishery in UK waters of ICES Division 6.a (West Coast of Scotland) and Division 5.b (Faroes Grounds).

Similar to the North Sea GSS, the West of Scotland GSS is caught by both semi-pelagic and demersal fishing fleets and is more accurately classified as a semi-pelagic, benthopelagic, or bathypelagic species. Historically, the stock was also targeted for its high oil content, making it valuable for fishmeal production.

The fishery for West of Scotland GSS is largely undertaken by non-UK vessels and is based in ICES Division 5.b and 6.a, where the species is caught as part of an industrial targeted fishery by EU vessels. Whilst the direct interest for UK vessels in GSS landings is currently negligible, this FMP sets out actions that support the continued sustainable exploitation of West of Scotland GSS.

West of Scotland GSS is jointly managed by the UK and EU. Although this is not a fishery of direct commercial interest to the UK currently, the UK has a wider interest in the stock as a bycatch in other fisheries, and as a part of the marine ecosystem.

The first two policies set out below largely relate to management measures to achieve long-term sustainability of the West of Scotland GSS stock, and the remaining policies set out actions in relation to wider sustainable management.

Implementation of this FMP will take account of relevant international obligations and relationships, including where stocks are shared with, or exploited by, other coastal States.

**Q. 5 For the West of Scotland GSS FMP, do you agree with the proposed policies?**

**Q. 6 What are your views on the proposed actions for each policy in the West of Scotland GSS FMP?**

## Implementation and review

Once published, the actions and policies within the FMPs will need to be implemented. This will be an iterative process, and the Scottish Government will be working closely with the other relevant authorities, the fishing sector and wider stakeholders to develop implementation plans.

Publishing the FMPs is the start of a multi-year cycle, and we will ensure that they strike the balance between building momentum for short-term actions and setting direction for the longer term. This can be further iterated as the evidence base is improved.

FMPs must be reviewed at least every six years. This formal review will assess how the FMP has performed in terms of meeting the objectives of the Act. An earlier review may take place if relevant evidence, international obligations, or wider events require a change in the policies set out in the FMPs. The decision to review earlier will be taken by the fisheries policy authorities.

The effectiveness of the FMPs will be regularly assessed, and the results reported at least every three years as part of the JFS report, as required by the Act.

The Marine Management Organisation, governments in the UK and stakeholder groups have been central to the development of the draft FMPs. Stakeholder involvement and ongoing collaboration underpins successful delivery of the FMPs and will continue beyond their publication.

## General considerations

In summary, the three joint UK FMPs subject to this consultation describe existing management measures and regulations, and the available science and evidence to assess the status of the stocks covered by them in UK waters. The FMPs will ensure that we maintain or restore the stocks so that they continue to be sustainably managed above biomass levels consistent with an MSY approach. The links to related policies have been identified and discussed in the appropriate sections of the FMPs.

### **Q. 7 Do you have any comments on the specific sections in any of the three proposed FMPs? For example, on the:**

- **Stock assessment and MSY section** which provides information on available stock assessments, MSY and stock biology for the individual stocks covered by these FMPs.
- **Fisheries management section** which outlines proposals to maintain the sustainable management of these fisheries in UK waters for the long-term. It also covers the current technical measures, as well as monitoring, control and enforcement.
- **Environmental considerations section** which covers legal duties and requirements relating to the protection of the natural environment arising from legislation. It provides details of the conservation advice developed by the SNCBs which describes the risks arising from pelagic fisheries contained within these three FMPs.
- **Implementation and monitoring section** which describes the process for implementation and states that the FMPs will be reviewed and improved over time as more evidence becomes available. The delivery of the policies and actions in the FMPs will be monitored and assessed against a set of indicators to ensure the overarching outcomes and actions are effective in achieving the FMP policies and the requirements of the Act.

**Q. 8 Do you have any other additional comments on the three proposed pelagic FMPs?**

## Impact Assessments

Through this public consultation we are also seeking views on the following supporting impact assessments.

The three pelagic FMPs are joint plans between Defra, DAERA and the Scottish Government. Fisheries management is devolved, and the implementation of new legislation, voluntary regulation, codes of practice, guidance or policy changes will be taken forward and assessed by respective national fisheries authorities as appropriate. Any assessment of impacts will be in line with each authority's individual assessment processes.

A partial Business and Regulatory Impact Assessment (BRIA) is also subject to this consultation. A full BRIA is not required at the consultation stage because the plans do not introduce new legislation, voluntary regulation, codes of practice, guidance or policy changes. If any of the above are implemented in the future as a result of the FMP, a full BRIA and appropriate assessments from each authority will be completed on specific interventions.

**Q. 9 Do you have any comments on the partial Business Regulatory Impact Assessment (BRIA)?**

## Environmental Report

A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is required for any qualifying public plans, programmes, and strategies during their preparation and prior to publication if they are likely to have a significant effect on a European marine site (either positively or negatively).

The three proposed pelagic FMPs, therefore, fall within the scope of the [Environmental Assessment of plans and programmes Regulations 2004](#) because the geographical coverage extends beyond Scotland as defined in the 2004 Regulations. The Scottish Government has undertaken the assessments required in line with the Conservation (Natural Habitats, & c.) Regulations 1994 and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, known as the Habitats Regulations, and determined that the pelagic FMPs may have a likely significant effect (either positive or negative) on European sites or on European offshore marine sites and, therefore, have completed a SEA Environmental Report which can be accessed via the [consultation link](#).

The scope and level of detail was informed through early consultation with UK SNCBs and conservation advice. We drew on published information on the state of the environment and the potential impact of fishing on environmental features.

**Q. 10 Do you have any comments on the assessment of the environmental effects of the three pelagic FMPs which are subject to this consultation, as set out in the environmental report?**

Around the UK, and particularly in Scotland there are a lot of different island communities which have a strong fishing presence. As required under the [Islands \(Scotland\) Act 2018](#) an Island Community Impact Assessment (ICIA) will be considered prior to the final publication of the FMPs. Fisheries management measures tend to be applied on a consistent basis and will not generally have a different or unbalanced impact on island communities. We will consider whether an ICIA is needed prior to finalising the FMPs and taking into account any feedback from this consultation.

**Q. 11 Do you have any comments on any potential islands impacts arising from the draft FMPs?**

# Pelagic Fisheries Management Plans

## Privacy Notice

This is a joint consultation between Scottish Government, Defra and the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs in Northern Ireland.

This privacy notice explains how the fisheries policy authorities (FPAs) listed above will use your data when processing consultation responses. If you have any queries about the content of this privacy notice, please email [FMPs@gov.scot](mailto:FMPs@gov.scot).

### Who collects your personal data

The FPAs are joint controllers for the personal data we collect.

If you need further information about how the Scottish Government uses your personal data and your associated rights, you can contact [DataProtectionOfficer@gov.scot](mailto:DataProtectionOfficer@gov.scot).

The data protection officer for Defra is responsible for checking that Defra complies with legislation. You can contact them at [DefraGroupDataProtectionOfficer@defra.gov.uk](mailto:DefraGroupDataProtectionOfficer@defra.gov.uk), or you can contact the Defra data protection manager at [data.protection@defra.gov.uk](mailto:data.protection@defra.gov.uk) as well as the address below:

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs  
Seacole Building  
2 Marsham Street  
London  
SW1P 4DF

You can contact DAERA at [dataprotectionofficer@daera-ni.gov.uk](mailto:dataprotectionofficer@daera-ni.gov.uk) for more information on how they use your personal data.

### What personal data we collect and how it is used

We collect your:

- Name
- Contact details
- Opinions
- Organisation

The FPAs use your personal data when they consult you and receive your comments and views on proposed legislation or policy on subject matters that you have indicated are of interest to you. The FPAs may contact you directly inviting you to give your comments and views in reply to a consultation exercise or you may decide to reply to a consultation exercise that you have seen on GOV.UK or elsewhere.

If you reply to a consultation exercise, your personal data will consist of your name and contact details and the opinions that you give in your reply. The FPAs will use your personal data to record your opinions and take your reply into account – as far as possible with all other replies – when decisions are being made as a result of the consultation.

### **Lawful basis for processing your personal data**

Your consent is the lawful basis for the use of your personal data for the purpose of this consultation exercise. If the FPAs have contacted you directly to inform you of a consultation exercise, it's because you have previously informed them that you would like to receive communications in relation to the subject matter of the consultation. Whether you received the consultation exercise directly from the FPAs or any other way, if you reply to the consultation exercise, you do so freely and voluntarily after having the opportunity to be fully informed by the consultation documents.

### **Withdrawing your consent**

The processing of your personal data is based on consent. You can withdraw consent at any time by emailing [FMPs@gov.scot](mailto:FMPs@gov.scot). If you withdraw your consent, The FPAs will not be able to contact you about this consultation, other related consultations or the published Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs). We may still use your response to update the FMPs, but this will be anonymised and won't be associated with your personal data.

### **Who we share your personal data with**

As this is a joint consultation, all FPAs (the Marine Directorate in Scottish Government, Defra and the Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs in Northern Ireland) will have access to your response and your personal data.

The FPAs will publish a summary of responses; this will not include any personal data.

Within the FPAs, your personal and identifying data will be available to teams working on the consultation. These would include the following: the policy team named in the consultation documents, the Consultation Coordinator and the team analysing the consultation responses. Your personal data will be processed by 'Citizen Space' as the chosen third-party provider for this service.

We respect your personal privacy when responding to access to information requests. We only share information when necessary to meet the statutory requirements of the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

### **How long we hold personal data**

The FPAs will hold your personal data for up to 3 years after the end of the consultation period. Your personal data will then be redacted; the rest of the

response will be kept for at least 7 years and will be appraised by our Information Appraisal team to decide if the information is of historical value. If so, it will be transferred to The National Archives for historical preservation. If not of historical value, it will be destroyed in accordance with retention schedules.

### **What happens if you do not provide the personal data**

If you do not provide the personal data, the policy team will not be able to contact you about the pelagic FMPs consultation or other related consultations.

### **Use of automated decision-making or profiling**

The personal data you provide is not used for:

- automated decision making (making a decision by automated means without any human involvement)
- profiling (automated processing of personal data to evaluate certain things about an individual)

### **Transfer of your personal data outside of the UK**

The FPAs will only transfer your personal data to another country that is deemed adequate for data protection purposes. Where necessary, the FPAs will seek assurances of appropriate safeguards where a restricted transfer is deemed essential.

### **Use of AI software for consultation analysis**

Your responses might be processed by a third party. We may use artificial intelligence software to support our analysis process. Any external contractors employed by the Scottish Government to carry out the consultation analysis of responses, will have to demonstrate compliance at a high level with Scottish Government data protection and cyber security guidance. Any commissions using AI will go through the Scottish Government steps for due diligence around AI.

### **Your rights**

Based on the lawful processing above, your individual rights are:

- The right to be informed
- The right of access
- The right to rectification
- The right to erasure
- The right to restrict processing
- The right to data portability

Rights in relation to automated decision making and profiling More information about your individual rights under the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA 2018), can be found [here](#).

### **Complaints**

You have the right to [make a complaint](#) to the Information Commissioner's Office at any time.

### **Personal information charter**

[Our personal information charter](#) explains more about your rights over your personal data.

## Duration of the consultation

This consultation will run for 6 weeks, closing at 23:59 on 10 November 2026. Responses must be received by 23:59 on 10 November 2026.

The consultation period takes account of the statutory deadline to publish final plans by the end of 2026 and the limited direct commercial interest in the stocks concerned. Additionally, shared similarities with the first five pelagic FMPs currently under consultation mean stakeholders will already be familiar with the structure, layout and proposed approach. For these reasons, the Scottish Government as coordinating authority, alongside Defra and DAERA have agreed that a six-week consultation period is appropriate for these plans.

At the end of the consultation period, we will summarise the responses and place the summary on the Scottish Government's FMPs webpage.

## Next steps in the process

Where respondents have given permission for their response to be made public, and after we have checked that they contain no potentially defamatory material, responses will be made available to the public at [Citizen Space](#). If you use the consultation hub to respond, you will receive a copy of your response via email. Following the closing date, all responses will be analysed and considered along with any other available evidence. Responses will be published where we have been given permission to do so. An analysis report will also be made available.

## Comments and complaints

If you have any comments about how this consultation exercise has been conducted, please send them to the contact address above or email [FMPs@gov.scot](mailto:FMPs@gov.scot)

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

## Scottish Government consultation process

### Scottish Government consultation process

Consultation is an essential part of the policymaking process. It gives us the opportunity to consider your opinion and expertise on a proposed area of work.

You can find all our consultations online: [Citizen Space](#). Each consultation details the issues under consideration, as well as a way for you to give us your views, either online, by email or by post.

Responses will be analysed and used as part of the decision-making process, along with a range of other available information and evidence. We will publish a report of this analysis for every consultation. Depending on the nature of the consultation exercise the responses received may:

- indicate the need for policy development or review
- inform the development of a particular policy
- help decisions to be made between alternative policy proposals
- be used to finalise legislation before it is implemented

While details of particular circumstances described in a response to a consultation exercise may usefully inform the policy process, consultation exercises cannot address individual concerns and comments, which should be directed to the relevant public body.

# Responding to this consultation

Please respond to this consultation using the Scottish Government's consultation hub, Citizen Space. Access and respond to this consultation online at [Citizen Space](#).

You can save and return to your responses while the consultation is still open. Please ensure that consultation responses are submitted before the closing date. If you are unable to respond using our consultation hub, **please complete and send the Respondent Information Form to:**

**Fisheries Management Plans  
Consultation – Three Proposed Joint UK Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs)  
for Pelagic Stocks  
Victoria Quay  
Area 1B North  
Edinburgh  
EH6 6QQ**

Additionally, you can email us your response to [FMPs@gov.scot](mailto:FMPs@gov.scot)

## Handling your response

If you respond using the consultation hub, you will be directed to the About You page before submitting your response. Please indicate how you wish your response to be handled and, in particular, whether you are content for your response to be published. If you ask for your response not to be published, we will regard it as confidential, and we will treat it accordingly.

All respondents should be aware that the Scottish Government is subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 and would therefore have to consider any request made to it under the Act for information relating to responses made to this consultation exercise.

If you are unable to respond via Citizen Space, please complete and return the Respondent Information Form provided alongside this document.

To find out how we handle your personal data you can view the privacy policy here: [Privacy - gov.scot](#). A joint UK privacy notice is available below.

If responding via email, please structure your response around the questions in bold throughout this document.

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

Large print and braille versions of this document are available on request. The online consultation survey has three parts:

1. Personal details and confidentiality (required)
2. Questions on the pelagic FMPs, the BRIA and the SEA (required)
3. Consultee feedback on the online survey (required)

You only need to respond to the questions that you wish to, for example, if you only have an interest in one FMP, you do not need to respond to questions on the others. However, all respondents must complete the required 'Consultee feedback on the online survey' and 'personal details and confidentiality' sections before you are able to submit your response to the online survey.