

# Eleventh meeting of the Specialised Committee on Fisheries on 17 September 2025 - Minutes

Hybrid (Brussels and video conference)

11:00 am to 1:00 pm Central European Summer Time (CEST) and 10:00 am to 12:00 pm British Summer Time (BST)

## **Item 1: Opening of the Specialised Committee and adoption of the agenda**

The EU, as host, welcomed both delegations to the eleventh meeting of the Specialised Committee on Fisheries (SCF). The delegations adopted the provisional agenda for the meeting.

## **Item 2: Fisheries management and conservation**

### **a) Update on fisheries management and control measures**

#### **i. Ongoing consultations on MMO Stage 3 Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)**

The UK updated on the stage 3 MPA bylaws consultation and on potential compensatory MPA designations to account for the impact of offshore wind on benthic habitats in MPAs, highlighting the recent engagement with the EU and Member States, under the ongoing consultation and engagement processes. The EU welcomed this engagement and reaffirmed stakeholders' concerns on the cumulative impact of UK fisheries management measures. The delegations are committed to continue working together to minimise disruption to stakeholders and take stakeholders views into account. The UK reiterated the importance of MPAs to meet environmental commitments, including international commitments. Following interest from the UK, the EU also offered a dedicated meeting with Member States to discuss the recent Joint Recommendations on MPAs in EU waters.

### **b) Mixed fisheries science and rebuilding (including Celtic Sea technical measures and Celtic Sea haddock)**

The delegations noted the very challenging Celtic Sea context and reaffirmed the relevant Written Record commitments ([EU publication](#), [UK publication](#)) to support the recovery of vulnerable Celtic Sea stocks. The delegations welcomed the recent technical discussions, noting the informal technical group that will lead the work in this area and the importance of agreeing to Terms of Reference for this group. The EU noted the work to support the consideration of urgent remedial measures for these stocks.

### **c) Irish Sea technical measures**

The Delegations welcomed the recent technical discussions on the Irish Sea and reaffirmed the need to continue to progress the work to reduce whiting bycatches. The UK updated on the work being undertaken by Northern Ireland.

### **d) Pollack commercial and recreational**

The delegations noted the need for caution on pollack management and the contribution of recreational catches to fishing mortality. The UK noted they are currently assessing the effectiveness of voluntary guidelines for recreational anglers, introduced in February 2025. The EU sought UK engagement on the proposal the EU tabled in July for recreational management measures for pollack. Both delegations confirmed their desire to work together on the management of the stock, and to continue discussions on the best approach forward to ensure the sustainability of this fishery.

### **e) Skates and rays**

The delegations reaffirmed their commitment to advance on the sustainable management of skates and rays and to explore alternatives to the current group Total Allowable Catches (TACs) structure, through a gradual approach that avoids unintended consequences. The delegations presented the outcomes of the respective sentinel fisheries and relevant scientific work on skates and rays. The EU further updated on the workshop organised by the Northwestern Waters Advisory Council (NWWAC) of 2 September 2025.

### **f) Spurdog management measures**

The delegations noted they looked forward to the ICES response to the joint request, which is expected to be published 7 October 2025. The joint request submitted in February 2025 was to consider various management scenarios for spurdog. The delegations expect this to improve understanding on the estimated impact of management measures, including of changes to the maximum landing size, and to serve as the basis for upcoming management discussions.

### **g) Guidelines for special stocks**

The Parties noted the importance of this matter, as the last outstanding TCA commitment and acknowledged its complexity and the need for careful consideration at legal and technical levels. The EU welcomed the recent exchanges on its counterproposal, transmitted after the last Working Group on 24 July, reiterating its expectations on advancing swiftly on this important topic. The UK welcomed the EU's counter proposal and stated that technical discussions should take place to pursue this further.

## **h) Multi-year strategy (MYSt) for Channel king scallops**

The delegations took stock of the progress made in 2025, towards the formulation of a MYSt for Channel king scallops, noting that the first joint report of the EU-UK expert science group on the common understanding of the science is expected soon, and should underpin the technical management discussions.

## **Item 3: Fishing opportunities, including scientific coordination**

### **a) Sole in area 7hjk roadmap and plaice in area 7fg roadmap**

The delegations updated on the workshop of 3<sup>rd</sup> of June and welcomed the resulting report, which is currently being finalised. The delegations noted the importance of addressing the identified data gaps in order to improve the scientific basis for the assessments of sole in area 7hjk and plaice in area 7fg.

### **b) North Sea lemon sole roadmap**

The delegations acknowledged the options identified by ICES for improving the North Sea lemon sole stock assessment. Both delegations recognised that additional data will be required as part of the upcoming benchmark exercise of 2027 and reaffirmed the need for national administrations and industry to contribute to address the existing data deficiencies.

### **c) Rockall cod roadmap**

The delegations noted the work undertaken by Ireland and UK experts to improve the evidence underpinning the management of cod in area 6b, and which will be discussed at the upcoming ICES working group. Both delegations reaffirmed the importance of improving the scientific basis of this stock, towards the sustainable management of cod in area 6b.

### **d) Horse mackerel rebuilding**

The delegations reaffirmed their interest to engage in technical discussions and cooperate towards the development of measures to rebuild the stock in the southern North Sea and eastern Channel and maintain good scientific evidence about its condition.

### **e) Seabass ICES catch allocation tool**

The delegations welcomed the recent technical exchanges and reiterated the importance of having a functional seabass allocation tool ahead of the annual consultations for 2026 fishing opportunities, following the joint request submitted to ICES in July.

## **Item 4: Control and enforcement, data exchange**

### **a) Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS) arrangements**

The delegations agreed on the importance of joint MCS arrangements and that they expect to finalise technical discussions in coming weeks, for subsequent adoption of the arrangement by the SCF, by means of an SCF recommendation.

### **b) Common technical guidelines for interoperability of Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM) systems**

The delegations noted the recent discussions towards the development of common guidelines for interoperability of REM systems in the pelagic sector of the North-East Atlantic, and reaffirmed their ambition to agree at technical level in coming months.

### **c) Data sharing using the United Nations/ Fisheries Language for Universal Exchange (UN/FLUX)**

The delegations noted the ongoing work on the joint arrangements for data sharing, to be formalised as a recommendation of the SCF, once discussions are finalised.

### **d) Footnote monitoring and data exchange**

The delegations recalled the commitment to exchange data on the utilisation of footnotes and interannual flexibilities, and signalled their intention to exchange this data later in the year.

## **Item 5: Any Other Business (AOB)**

The UK raised concerns on the albacore tuna fishing in UK waters. The EU is actively working with Member States to address the situation.

## **Item 6: Closure**

The EU, as host, closed the eleventh meeting of the Specialised Committee on Fisheries.

[Approved by the Joint Secretariat of the Specialised Committee on Fisheries]

## **Annex 1: List of participants in the eleventh meeting of the Specialised Committee on Fisheries**

### **EU delegation**

- EU Co-Chair of the Specialised Committee on Fisheries
- European Commission officials
- Delegation of the European Union to the UK official
- Representatives of EU member states

### **UK delegation**

- UK Co-Chair of the Specialised Committee on Fisheries
- UK government officials from Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
- Scottish Government officials
- Northern Ireland Executive officials
- Welsh Government officials
- Isle of Man Government officials
- Government of Jersey officials
- States of Guernsey officials
- Marine Management Organisation officials
- UK Mission to the European Union officials

## Annex 2: Non-quota stocks (NQS) landings

Cumulative UK and EU landings of non-quota species from each other's waters. Each year these figures will be updated quarterly with provisional figures available from the most recent data exchange between the delegations.

### UK NQS landings (tonnes)

Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
<b>Provisional 2025 totals</b>	2,544	4,635	6,321	11,412
<b>Final 2024 totals</b>	2,430	4,719	7,310	10,636

### EU NQS landings (tonnes)

Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
<b>Provisional 2025 totals</b>	6,709	11,022t	15,565	22,783
<b>Final 2024 totals</b>	5,766	9,494	13,337	19,723