



Invitation to Tender

**Tender for: Co-designing the principles for
defining low impact fishing**

Research & Development

Tender Reference: project_27484

Background

In the recent Fisheries White Paper¹, the UK Government outlines a desire for an efficient but sustainable fishing industry. With technological advances having driven greater efficiency, such as where modern smaller boats have been able to catch more fish than they have previously, existing approaches to considering sustainability may no longer have their original utility. As the UK leaves the European Union and takes back control of its waters in a new era of fisheries governance, there is distinct opportunity to consider new criteria for defining 'low impact fishing', and to replace current definitions used for fishing vessels, such as the 'under 10 metre' categorisation, while considering what low impact fishing means across the commercial fleet and recreational sector.

The opportunity to reconsider how low impact fisheries are defined also brings challenges. These include, but are not restricted to, identifying issues facing inshore fleets and other relevant groups/sectors, determining what we mean by terms like 'sustainable fishing' and 'marine stewardship' (are these the same as or different to low impact fishing?), and determining whether it is appropriate to use criteria in assessing what low impact fishing is, and if so, how such criteria should be used in fisheries governance and management decisions. Regardless of the nature of how the UK exits the European Union, there is recognition that such challenges need to be taken on. A majority of active fishers appear to identify the defined divide between 'under 10 metre' and 'over 10 metre' vessels as inappropriate², supporting arguments that fishing vessels should be differentiated through measures other than length. Other issues identified as requiring attention also include bringing recreational fisheries in-line with commercial ones³, and being able to identify to what extent these are low impact is also important for effective fisheries governance and management.

Despite the interest and focus on low impact fisheries, however, there remains a lack of evidence and consensus on what 'low impact fishing' means, and even over whether 'low impact fishing' is the correct term for describing fishing that is sustainable. Previous focus has been on the technical elements of fishing (e.g. vessel length, engine size) and has ignored wider social and economic factors (e.g. attitudes to sustainability, efficiency, education) which equally result in low impact behaviour. Technical elements that may also align with low impact behaviour (e.g. reduced vessel CO2 emissions) have also been omitted from previous definitions. Current definitions are arguably crude and inflexible, leading to a sense of unfairness, gaming and inability to reflect changing fishing practices.

A different approach is required if we are to develop a definition of low impact fishing that is accepted across the fishing sectors, among regulators and by the English public, and that is fit for purpose across the whole commercial fleet, considers recreational angling, and is resilient to change or can be easily adapted. This project will utilise a co-design approach to identify and agree principles and processes with stakeholders that can be used to define low-impact fishing, and low impact fishers and anglers.

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https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/722074/fisheries-wp-consult-document.pdf

² <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0308597X1830068X>

³ <https://www.pnas.org/content/116/12/5209>

Project scope & aims

This invitation to tender is for an original piece of work to develop a framework of principles for low impact fishing, and to agree the processes for applying them. The specific aims of the project are to:

[1] Review, collate, and summarise relevant literature and policy documents on defining 'low impact fishing', 'sustainable fishing', 'marine stewardship', etc. This should include describing existing UK and international initiatives on defining low impact fishing and noting any role co-design or participatory approaches play in these.

[2] Bring stakeholders and researchers together to holistically explore and document social, economic, environmental and technological factors that contribute to environmentally low impact fishing behaviour.

[3] Improve our shared understanding of the drivers of behaviour – and by extension behaviour change – including who is best placed to influence these (e.g. greater industry responsibility for changing social norms) in relation to the impacts of fishing and angling.

[4] Recognise and document the availability of current data that can be used to identify low impact fishers and anglers, especially in relation to technical variables, and identify how these may vary or interact in different ways depending on the fishing context.

[5] Also document variables where no or limited data is currently available and provide recommendations as to how to improve data going forward.

[6] Forge agreement on the factors/variables that need to be included in any definition of low impact fishing, as opposed to agreeing specific measures/cut-off values (e.g. vessel length would be a variable, 'under 10 metre' would be a measure).

[7] Identify language to label different categories of fishing impact, that recognise that identifying some people as 'low impact' could have negative implications if other people are perceived as 'high impact'.

[8] To publish a stakeholder-agreed framework of principles for low impact fishing, and to provide advice on the processes for applying and updating them.

The scope of this work extends only to England for operational reasons, but it is recognised the outputs may be of interest at a UK-wide scale and beyond.

While this is an original piece of work, it is expected it will build on previous work looking at defining low impact fishing within England. This includes work being done within the North Devon Marine Pioneer, a site being used to test innovative ideas for governance of the environment set out in the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan. Successful tenderers will have a chance to engage with those working with the North Devon Pioneer during a project scoping phase.

Sample to be considered

Tenderers should set out an appropriate approach to sampling and/or stakeholder analysis that recognises the diverse range of stakeholders in UK fishing. Groups enrolled in a co-design process should include (but not be limited to):

- Commercial fishers, including recent and new entrants
- Fishing organisations (e.g. representative organisations, charities)
- The seafood sector (processing, marketing & retail organisations)
- Recreational anglers
- Institutions involved in fisheries governance, management, and science (e.g. government departments, government executive agencies, non-departmental public bodies)
- Inshore Fisheries Conservation Authorities (IFCAs), Fisheries Local Action Groups (FLAGs), and Coastal Partnerships
- Environmental organisations (e.g. NGOs)
- Academia and wider research community
- Coastal community representatives/inhabitants, especially those from fishing communities
- The public, especially youth

Proposed methods & analysis

Tenderers are invited to propose specific, and potentially innovative, research and co-design approaches for meeting this brief. Tenderers should justify any specific methods and analyses chosen and should set out an appropriate sampling framework, where appropriate. Consideration should be given to ethical and data protection requirements and processes.

At least two stages are anticipated for this work:

Stage 1: A brief scoping phase will comprise a desk-based review of existing literature on approaches to considering and/or defining low impact fisheries. It will also comprise holding workshops with Defra policy staff to understand issues with current approaches to considering/defining low impact fisheries, as well as to identify stakeholders to take part in Stage 2's co-design process. A short scoping report of no more than 5 pages setting out a finalised approach to Stage 2 (and any other stages) will need to be provided to the project steering group for sign-off before further stages proceed.

Stage 2: This main project phase will be where the conducting of the co-design process, analysis of outputs from the co-design process, and reporting will be carried out. The stage will involve a series of workshops and potentially other engagement methods to co-design principles that can be used to define low-impact fishing. Strong facilitation skills will be required and significant groundwork will be needed to build trust and relationships. The first workshop will need to agree a terms of reference.

Expertise required & project management

Applicants should have extensive experience of delivering co-designed or similar approaches. Previous experience of working within the marine sector is not essential, but applications are welcome from organisations with such experience.

Consortium bids are welcome, especially where these are formed to provide transdisciplinary, cross-sectoral, and boundary spanning elements.

There are various boundary spanning/boundary organisations that may be valued collaborators in delivering a co-design process with the fishing industry. These may be commercial and recreational fishing NGOs or similar organisations.

External facilitation would be required as a neutral actor between regulatory authorities and some stakeholders, as there is not a current strong culture of collaboration between certain groups. A facilitation organisation could partner with a research organisation as part of delivery to ensure the co-design approach were state-of-the-art.

Considering the scope of the work, effective project management will be needed. Applicants should set out how the research will be managed. A project steering group will be established by Defra, and is expected to meet monthly. Regular catch-ups (at least fortnightly) will also take place with the Defra project manager.

Proposed timelines

Project completion is required by the end of March, 2020. Tenderers should set out a detailed timeline, broken down by stage. Essential deliverable completion dates are listed below, but tenderers are invited to put forward additional deliverables as appropriate.

	Details	Date
Deliverable 1	Scoping stage report	Week beginning 30/09/19
Deliverable 2	Conducting of workshops and other engagement methods	Week beginning 30/12/19
Deliverable 3	Draft project report, including creation of a framework of principles for low impact fishing	Week beginning 24/02/20
Deliverable 4	Final project report and presentation	Week beginning 23/03/20

Please note that the proposed timelines are subject to change.