

## **Eastbourne - Low Impact workshop – #1 (3<sup>rd</sup> Feb 2020)**

Commercial fishermen, charter skippers and anglers from the Essex / Thames through to Dorset/ Weymouth attended the meeting in Eastbourne.

Fishermen and anglers from Weymouth, Chichester, Selsey, Shoreham, Newhaven, Eastbourne, Hastings, Bexhill and Southend were represented.

Stakeholder / Attendees – 26.

### **Breakdown**

- Under10s - 10
- Over10s – 8
- Wholesaler – 1
- Anglers – 5
- Charter – 1
- Other – 1

### **Comments made by attendees when introducing themselves**

- “Would like the lads to come together.”
- “Want to have a voice on management.”
- “Keen for a better definition of ‘low impact fishing’”
- “Want to see British produce promoted in the South and across our country, with less exports.”
- “Want to see common sense with positive PR on local sustainability.”
- “A stronger voice for the under 10s.”
- “Anglers want to support under 10s over other sectors.”
- “Let’s co-manage fishing! Defra, all fishing sectors, MMO...”
- “Want to control quota ourselves a bit more.”

After brief introductions, attendees were asked to talk about what they hoped to get out of the workshop:

- A useable definition of low impact fishing
- Something less arbitrary than the over or under 10m split
- An opportunity to start working together
- A way to reward good behaviour
- An opportunity for the future
- Want to understand how low impact definition will affect under 10s
- How is this going to shape the transition to low impact fishing
- Needs to change quota management
- Improve understanding

Defra then introduced their rationale for the project – to be able to manage/ regulate based on environmental impact; to better manage quota, and to move from top-down policy making towards co-management and collaborative working with the fishing industry. The importance of being mindful of unintended consequences and maintaining flexibility were stressed.

Ground rules were set for the discussions – to be respectful, listen and that everyone’s opinion is equally valid.

## **NOTES FROM TABLES: 1<sup>st</sup> session IMPACT TYPES**

Discuss in table groups:

- *What are the environmental impacts of fishing / angling independent of fishing type?*
- *How do environmental impacts vary across different scales (e.g. local inshore waters, regional, global)?*

### Group 1 - CW

Impacts identified:

- Impact on stock / mortality of target species
- Impact on stock of non target species
- Unintended mortality
- Ghost fishing / gear loss
- Impacts on endangered species
- Pollution (fuel / emissions, plastic, bilge water, ..)
- Food chain disruption / impact of discards
- Damage to ecosystem
- Damage to breeding grounds
- Pulse trawling ban a success (so will reduce further ecosystem damage);
- Using actual (local) knowledge important;
- Smaller boats limited by weather;
- Frequency of trips, quantity of activity;
- Damage to seabed;
- Stock removal – species targeting, discarding;
- Bycatch;

Scale of impact – global or local, or both?

- Climate change;
- Other marine developments – marine aggregate dredging, offshore windfarms

Other points:

- Fishing is physics: effort x method x time
- Priorities listed includes stock and pollution
- Cumulative impacts of fishing
- Impact of super trawlers on stock
- Weather = effort limit
- Impacts of climate change
- Impacts of nomadic fleet
- Problems resulting from quota management

### Group 2 - EHO

*General comments on exercise*

- It's interesting that it is just being put down to environmental, rather than including other fishery dimensions.

*Impact listing – post-its*

Lost gear (ghost gear – including from gear parking)
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*Litter and plastic reduction when removed from sea (e.g. fishing for litter)
*Power generation (retrieved nets burned in power stations)
Landfill (as result of landing obligation)
Seabed contact - degradation
*Seabed contact – regenerating (e.g. when trawling improves conditions for nephrops, etc.)
CO2 emissions (from transport of catch)
CO2 + other pollutant emissions (from fuel usage)
CO2 emissions (from enforcement activities; vessels, etc.)
CO2 emissions (from increased land transit due to landings obligation)
CO2 emissions and other impacts associated with vessel construction, new engines, etc.
National policy in territorial waters (i.e. unnecessary damage by foreign vessels)
Removal of natural resource (i.e. fish)
^Damage to food web (altering ecosystems) as result of single species management (e.g. removal of excessive pelagic species that bass rely on as food)
Habitat damage (e.g. from interactions with parked gear)
^Habitat damage - damage to virgin ground (from shifted effort due to regulation)
Loss of food for species that rely on discards for their diet, like gulls (after implementation of landings obligation).
Overfishing (as people buy pots to reach pot limits)

\*Positive impacts listed in green, ^Most severe impacts listed in red

#### Comments around listing and prioritisation

- At the highest level, impact is removal of species.
- All fishing has an impact, not just one sector/type/etc.
- Loss of gear leads to ghost gear and litter.
- Fuel usage results in air pollution.
- The altering of ecosystems is a major impact, when food web is impacted.
- When you fish for scallops it can act like ploughing the ground, which is a good impact. It makes the ground more productive. You get more scallops.
- You need to consider transportation of fish. Can be global. Air pollution also associated with transport of discards.
- Impact of discards is not always bad. It's 100% dead anyway, so why send to landfill when it can be food for some marine species once discarded. It's not just negative.
- Anytime man-made materials are introduced there is an environmental impact associated with their manufacture.
- Removing pelagic food source of target species has negative impact on target species. Bass feed on pelagics. Bass are regulated, but the pelagics they eat aren't regulated with this in mind. Lack of an ecosystem approach has this impact. A result of single species management. Lack of overview.
- Pot limits are designed to reduce fishing effort, but have often become a target. People have bought more pots to reach the limit, when otherwise they would have made do with less pots.
- Gear parking is an increasing issue. There's no space for the gear on land and it's getting parked at sea where it's getting lost and scouring seabed. Crab pots are the main issue. MCZs have become gear parks, as have wind farms.
- Pot tags are littering the sea.
- There can be a difficult trade-off between impact on stocks and high fuel consumption.
- Some policies move fishing effort to areas that haven't been fished much before, so can lead to more virgin ground being impacted. If an area has been fished for over 50

years, it's likely not too much impact is being had. Hard to see some of these grounds changing to a different state if fishing ceased on them.

- Some gears are more damaging for some demersal species (e.g. for pink sea fans).
- You can have a good fishing area, but use the wrong gear type in it in terms of low impact. A definition of low impact could be built around right gear in right area. For instance, hook and line might still be okay in some virgin areas – would cause no damage to ground.
- The landing obligation is causing a new impact in the form of landfill. The discard also has to be transported.
- There are a number of positive impacts associated with plastic removal. Some plastic is burned for energy, some is made into other products.
- If boats all used geo-fencing, this would make things lower impact. They'd see not to go into protected areas by mistake.
- Quota should be used as efficiently as possible.
- IFCA operations could be improved to support low impact fishing. Not currently great for supporting such moves. The regional differences makes a unified approach and reaching long-term goals for low impact hard.

### Group 3 - JU

5 x commercial fishermen – mostly mixed gear including static and towed gear

*What are the environmental impacts of fishing and how do they vary across different scales?*

- Damage to sea bed – can be caused by all gear types (local/regional scale but likely a global issue)
  - However, need to remember that some disturbance to the sea bed can be beneficial in terms of managing the habitat and sustaining stocks. Thus, not all sea bed disturbance is damaging – they compared it to farming – a certain amount of management/disturbance is needed to maintain a grassland for instance.
- Pollution (at all scales)
  - General rubbish that is thrown overboard
  - Diesel pollution & other pollutants from vessels
  - Ghost gear
  - Discharge from bilges
  - Plastic
- By catch
  - Other fish species
  - Other marine wildlife
- Size of vessels
  - Generally smaller boats will have a smaller environmental footprint

Most fishers present fish either out of Eastbourne or Newhaven. These are both mixed fisheries which use different gear and activity. Eastbourne has more static gear activity than Newhaven. The fleet mostly sells to Belgium.

*What are the environmental impacts of fishing and how do they vary across different scales?*

- **Pollution**- fuel, plastic, litter individual fishing vessels, ghost gear, bilge discharge.
- **Seabed damage**- dredging and silt pumping. Silt dumping is the most damaging but isn't a fishing related activity.
- **Spawning**. For certain vessels and methods they can't be selective or avoid bycatch

- **Bycatch.**
- **Displacement and pressure on fisheries.** They want a job for life and are not aiming to empty the sea. They see the need for protection but it has to be done logically and not cause displacement.

Other discussion points:

- Displacement of fishing activity due to close grounds, MCZs (e.g with ban on towed gear), windfarms, silt pumping from harbours etc. put pressures on other grounds and can cause more intensive fishing in those areas. It can also mean changes in gear, e.g. potting to trawling, again putting increased pressure on those fisheries.
- Farmed fishing holds the prices down so it can be difficult for wild caught fish to compete.
- Fishers saw a market benefit to themselves if they could market their fish as low impact.
- Need to improve the speed at which data on fish stocks is incorporated into management decisions – fishers would be keen to engage in this and co-design approaches to do this.
- Issue of how to monitor landing size – it was mentioned that there is often shrinkage between catching and landing.
- Need to improve the public perception of fishing and create a demand for fresh, local fish.

*Other points raised*

Felt that they couldn't discuss a lot of the contentious topics in that workshop because of the diversity of fishers in the room. They don't want to blame each other and identify specific types of gear as being the cause of problems. These are multi-purpose fisheries.

Wild fishing is more sustainable as the fish that are used to feed farmed fish come out the sea.

Agreement that smaller boats have a smaller carbon footprint. Additionally, the bigger boat, the more expenses there are to pay and more expensive problems to fix. However, super U10s have increased power and fishing capacity but also increased pollution.

Complaints that they are encouraged to diversify and invest in new gear then are restricted from it. They want consistency from management and longer term stability.

Outdated data used for TAC and informing decisions. Leads to a paradox where they can't target a species when it's in abundance or if a stock is in danger the TAC gets lowered when it's already too late. Agreement that fishers should have a role in providing data.

Management and targeting of area was compared to farming. The ground adjusts to the activity if it is at a constant level and needs it for maintaining its use (like grazing).

Perception that IFCA proposals are a done deal before meetings and consultation. E.g. Shoreham closure. Those on the board don't understand different gear types and the ability to be selective. Instead they resort to a blanket ban.

Group 4 - HO [potting focus]

All netters and potters with the exception of one processor. One key point raised was that they are all "*fear reprisals [from regulators etc] due to misconceptions based on snapshots of data*".

**Key impacts identified.**

Top three:

1. Poor practice leading to low survival rates in bycatch;
2. Fuels use (pollution); and
3. Lost or abandoned fishing gear.

Others impacts:

- Plastic / metal pollution;
- Intended catch;
- Perception of cruelty to animals; and
- Depletion of baitfish;

Misc notes to be taken into account:

- Increase in seals;
- Aggregate dredging making it impossible to fish some areas (displacement); and
- Poor communication/demand resulting in product being transported large distances.

Impacts identified: (Underline = identified as priority)

- Fuel usage
- Lost/abandoned gear
- Littering/waste dropped in sea
- Seabed/habitat interference
- Lack of use of local fish results in more fuel being used for transportation
- Overfishing
- Bycatch (specifically how it is returned)
- Sustainability of artificial bait
- Removing fish from the sea
- Animal cruelty (perception of)

Other points:

- Participants shared **concerns about bringing attention to the environmental impacts of fishing** because they:
  - Don't want to cause division between fishers from different sectors
  - Don't want authorities (government/IFCAs) to 'run away with it' i.e. if attention is brought to environmental impacts, then industry will be blamed and policy will be put in place to restrict fishers.
- Belief that **some poor treatment of fish is unavoidable** (e.g. container size), yet fishers are still accused of animal cruelty by environmentalists, especially online, but also with activists coming down to their boats in attempt to stop them from fishing. Fish will always be killed.
- Participants expressed a **desire to reduce their fuel usage**, however feel that **realistically they are limited in their ability to do this by high fuel prices and a lack of current technology**. Discussion centred on electric boats, which were seen as currently unavailable, and a technology for the future.
- There was a **desire for the fishery to be more flexible**, with frustrations at perceived poor management of IFCAs.
- They agreed that generally accepted principles of low-impact fishing (e.g. less fuel usage, fewer discards, less bycatch etc.) actually often align with the ideas that fishers have about running an efficient business, however external barriers limit them in doing this.

- Bycatch was listed as an impact, yet was blamed on restaurants not wanting certain species.
- It was acknowledged that the current u10/o10 system is arbitrary and ineffective.
- Participants argued that fishers need to be more aware of where other fishers are working. For example, if a fisher is known to frequent a certain area and has fished most of the stock, then other fishers need to acknowledge that and avoid that area so the stock is not entirely depleted/overfished.
- Belief that enforcement on high impact behaviour is not strict enough.
- Other environmental impacts were listed, such as seals and climate change causing an increase in water temperature.

#### Group 5 - RA

Impacts identified:

- Fuel
- Sea bed impacts
- Bait fish removals
- Bycatch (cetaceans, birds)
- Non selective fishing
- Plastic disposal
- Lost fishing gear
- Excessive soak time and tow length

Other points:

- Some issues are common to other sectors, e.g. sea bed impacts
- Displacement of fishing by other sectors can concentrate fishing
- Dealing with unwanted/unintended catches on land rather than discarding may have negative impacts on marine ecosystem

#### Group 6 TMc [Angling]

Impacts identified:

- Impact on stock / mortality of target species
- Impact on stock of non target species
- Unintended mortality as a result of catch and release
- Impact on localised stocks (wrecks)
- Impact on spawning fish
- Breeding season disturbance
- Tackle / gear loss (pollution)
- Ecosystem impacts (eg high concentration of local activity) eg bait collection
- Changes to habitat are not well understood – but can be damaging eg anchoring
- Impacts on endangered species
- Pollution
  - Water (fuel / emissions, plastic / single use for bait containers,..)
  - Noise pollution

Other points:

- Technical creep and efficiency of angling has grown a lot

## NOTES FROM TABLES: 2<sup>nd</sup> session IMPACT REDUCTION

Discuss in table groups:

- *What impacts could be reduced?*
- *What criteria should be used to define low impact fishing / angling (referring to identified impacts from Discussion 1)?*

### Group 1 - CW

- Stock impacts could be reduced through changes to quota management; more efficient; annual (or quarterly) not monthly to account for seasonality
- Managing quota at higher level, non-sectoral and ensuring common rules
- Lost gear – gear parking and gear conflict need to be tackled as these are root causes of ghost gear. Should require reporting. Marking gear should be requirement.
- Pollution – aim to reduce fuel use; focus on clean tech; diesel-electric hybrid engines are used in France; cost implications – how can this be incentivised. Requires nudges to shift behaviour.
- Infrastructure – fishing for litter would be more effective if infrastructure was in place and not a burden on individuals; should be consistent / same for each port; gear is currently recycled in Denmark (no facility in UK); used oil should be collected (needs port authority, fishermen and local authority to work together- a shared group exists in Weymouth that others can learn from).
- Technical measures / gear design – has evolved a lot – covers a wide range: lobster escape hatches, whelk holes, mesh sizes, gear closure (spatial / temporal restrictions); the impacts of the gear vary by habitat type – technology now makes it possible to avoid sensitive features
- Regulations can drive bycatches – wastage at small scale (i.e. 5-6m vessels which should keep everything they catch as only a few Kgs per trip total).
- Restricting nomadic fishing / displacement
- Landing obligation: from the sea to landfill. Moves problem out of food chain. Doesn't feed anything in landfill.
- Education: limits of certain gears in certain weather / darkness; soak times; codes of conduct (eg netting); ban of recreational netting.

### Group 2 – EHO/JB

Impacts that could be reduced:

- Waste (litter, single-use plastics)
- Pollution
- Abandoned gear
- Bycatch (using selective gears to reduce bycatch)
- Damage to habitat/nursery grounds (not using destructive gears e.g. dredges)

Impacts that are harder to reduce:

- Fuel usage (engine can be used in an intelligent way, but barriers in some engines)
- Behaviour change is hard to achieve due to perceived 'greedy nature' of fishers – most fishers will try to catch as much fish as possible regardless of deterrents

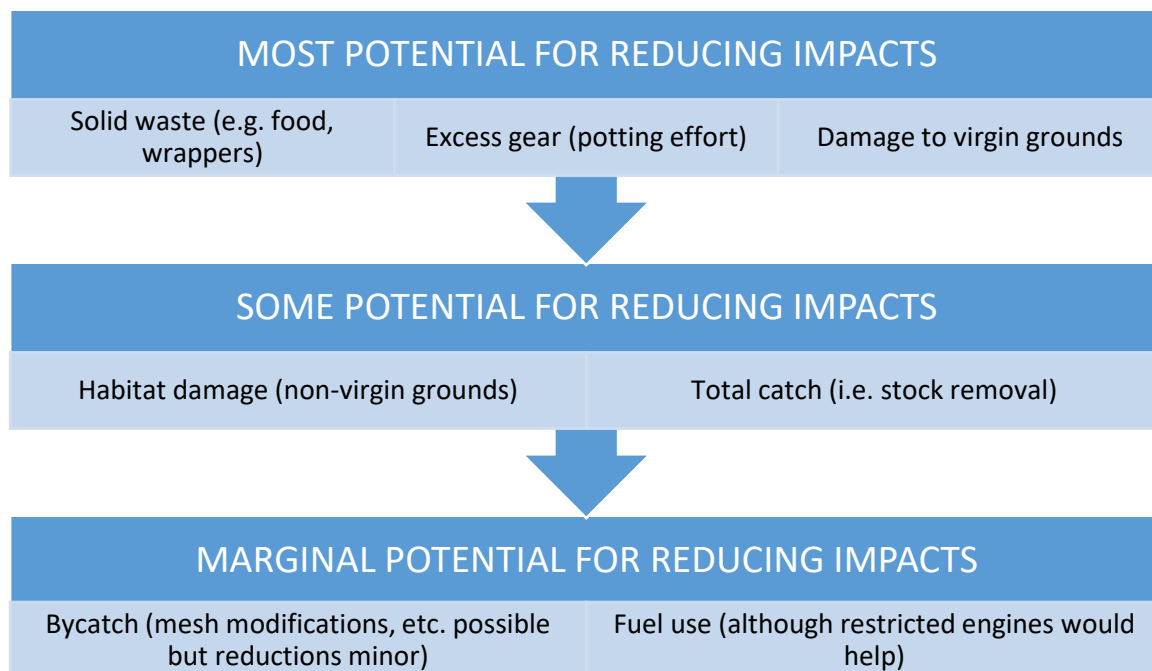


Criteria for defining/rewarding low-impact fishers:

- Suggested 'points system' where fishers could be scored and provided with points based on whether they have met certain low-impact criteria. These include:
  - Most popular idea was horsepower of boat (lower = more points)
  - Lifespan of engine (not applicable to gear, as other boats can destroy gear etc.)
  - Weight/capacity of boat
  - Proof that waste/litter and old gear is being recycled
- Concerns were raised around the following being used as criteria:
  - Days at sea (concern = restriction of fishing access)
  - Fishing within local grounds (c = how to define 'local', restricting access)
  - Fewer discards (c = oversimplification, and how to enforce this)
- Agreed that the criteria should be defined by what high-impact fishers are NOT doing.
- Whatever criteria decided, it must be realistic and enforceable.

Other:

- Fishers are forced into catching certain species because of their price, so it would be unfair to sanction certain gears that are used for these species.
- If a fishing group has been historically fished by trawlers, it's not being damaged. Fish stocks replenish and the seabed is untouched.
- In winter, the fishery is self-policing because no-one is using their quota anyway.
- Claims that o10m boats are discarding their bycatch in the 6 mile zone, which makes the u10m fleet appear to be high impact.



Participants noted that these impacts could mostly be realised through BEHAVIOUR CHANGE.

### *Criteria for measuring impacts*

- An overarching points system/index could be used to measure what is low impact.
- Points could potentially be attached to (1) weight of boat, (2) \*restricted horsepower, (3) \*\*days at sea measured in hours, (4) lifespan of engine, (5) returned waste (could weigh waste being brought back to shore and not dumped in sea).

\* It's better on fuel efficiency (and CO2 emissions) to have a larger engine that is restricted, than a smaller engine running at full power. As long as spot checks were made of engines, this would be progress on EU policy that only looked at total horsepower of engines.

\*\* If measured in days, people could fish up to 24 hours, or do multiples of tows. Not measurable.

- Whatever the criteria they are they need to be enforceable.
- Discards too complicated to include as a simple measure.

### Group 3 - JU [potting]

*What impacts should be reduced and what criteria could be used to assess low impact?*

- Stock – target
  - Technical measures such as size limits, e.g. have a standard, agreed size and design for whelk riddles
- Stock – non-target
  - Returning alive
  - Finding other uses for discards
  - Makes sense to look after non-target species as they may become target species in the future
- Pollution
  - Picking up litter
  - Recyclable plastic and availability of recycling facilities for plastic
  - Don't pump out bilge water
  - Improved boat design to reduce pollutant leakage & more efficient
  - Would like to see a scheme to help upgrade gear & engines
- Spawning
  - Would like to see subsidies for closed seasons, and recognition that fishers are providing a public good
- Seabed damage
  - Difficult to quantify for potters as they try to minimise the impact of pots hitting seabed as this damages the pots and therefore costs them
- Animal welfare
  - Best practice in looking after product after catch to ensure it is in the best condition – better quality catch = higher prices
  - Returning by catch undamaged

4 x commercial fishermen (all potters) and one merchant

*What impacts should be reduced and what criteria could be used to assess low impact?*

- **Seabed damage.** Potters feel this is difficult to quantify because they don't think they cause much of an impact and they actively try to avoid causing damage.

- **Target species.** Technical measures are in place but IFCA's can't/ won't enforce them. Should have an agreed size and design of gear e.g. riddle for whelks, no current limits.
- **Stocks.** When pressure on a stock is alleviated there is an initial bounce back then it plateaus. Data is needed to allow and validate their fishing activity. Citizen science. There is definitely a role for fishers in data collection. Scientists need to design what they want then approach fishers with a list of goals/ requests.
- **Pollution.** Boat design can keep fuel leaks on board. Could incentivise/ promote certain boat designs.
- **Spawning-** moved away from MLS since the Landing Obligation. Potters have high viability of being able to return undersized catch to the sea. Demand for compensation from Government (not current policy). Need to subsidise a closed season for providing public good (similar to agriculture).
- **Bycatch.** They strive to return bycatch to the sea undamaged or find other uses for it e.g. bait.
- **Non-target species.** Recognise the need to protect non-target stocks as well which includes returning to the sea with viability. They don't want to unintentionally kill anything, upset eco-system or do anything that could affect the target species.

Other discussion points:

- Recognise that enforcement is an issue – perhaps have a system of peer policing
- Should be about changing bad practice, rather than punishment
- Role for fishers in citizen science – on board data collection & design of approaches that would work practically on a fishing vessel
- Need to create a market for 'low impact fishing' products – would need to include education and awareness raising of the sustainability (low impact, less food miles etc) of fresh, locally caught products which is of high quality. Recognition that MSC is a bit of a 'club', with many small fishermen not being able to afford the cost of accreditation – there needs to be another means of recognising sustainable, local fish that all fishers could sign up to.
- Role for buyers/merchants as a way of enforcement – if they demand quality, traceability and sustainable products. This needs better links between merchants and fishers.
- As well as criteria for assessing low impact fishing, also need to encourage best practice.
- Need to improve communication between different fishers/gear & work better together.

*Other discussion points*

Current management is not fit for purpose. Management measures come down to best practice. In theory, you shouldn't have bad practice with good management measures. Good management is about education and enforcement/ policing. Punishment doesn't work, they need a reward or incentive for fishing sustainably/ with best practice.

The only reward/ incentive can be monetary as this is tangible and efficient. They are businesses in a market driven sector.

Communication between boats has got better but maybe they need a forum/ communal area to flag gear positions however they recognise there could be drawbacks to that. They actually operate better with foreign boats. They have a WhatsApp group with French fishers which have over 50+ members. However, signal when out at sea is unachievable for small boats so the communication isn't real time.

Transport destroys the quality of products and adds to the carbon footprint. Brexit is an opportunity for promoting British fish. MSC is not practical as it is an expensive, closed club. We should just be promoting local produce/ locally sourced products. We need to look at the supply chain and create a better link between fishers and merchants.

Need to focus on marketing. The 25-45 year age group care about welfare and source of food- local fish should be in their focus.

Traceability- creates a story of the food. Increases demand and value e.g. French specifically seek out British caught shellfish because they know the source. There should be greater demand from merchant/ buyer for traceability. This could also provide a tool for monitoring/ enforcement.

Fishers would make the best inspectors. Idea of peer policing (wouldn't be very popular but may be effective).

#### Group 4 - PM

- Fisher-science partnerships to understand mortality and seabed / ecosystem impacts
- Science vs politics
- Local management that is regionally tailored as reality is different – impacts are often local and they vary hugely.
- What is 'good' or 'sustainable' – views are different but needs common understanding
- Infrastructure – need to work with local authorities and costs money.
- Stock management must be based on science, not politics - need fishers input, must be more accurate for better sense of mortality/removal;
- More time to consider science/impacts – less knee-jerk responding;
- More localised management – is not in inshore interests to not look after environment (impacts on opportunities, incomes etc.) so regional management (rather than a blanket approach) more sustainable;
- Design gear that better targets specific species – best catch for least effort;
- IFCA's focused on conservation – do people have same view of 'good', 'sustainable'?
- Share best practice;
- Incentivise litter/gear removal – better infrastructure, different materials in gear
- Control seal population.

#### Group 5 - HO [angling]

All anglers on this table.

Impacts that cannot be reduced:

- Bycatch – does this exist in angling as they are happy to catch any fish;
- Seabed impacts – the impact is negligible except weights and anchors, which will not change without technological improvement.
  - o Later they decided bait digging might be an impact that could be reduced.
- GHG pollution was thought not possible to reduce without improvements in engine technology.

All others could be reduced through a combination of:

- Management measures (codes of conduct);
- Bag and size limits (mentioned slot limits – i.e., min and max size);

- Education on fish welfare (handling to reduce post release mortality);
- Better use of appropriate tackle (barbless hooks, circle hooks, thicker line, stone weights etc);
- Reduction in Bait digging – habitat damage;
- Single use plastic reduction (e.g., line recycling, clearing litter, etc);
- Technological developments (e.g., release weights, electronics, fuel efficiency, etc); and
- Contributing to science and research (e.g., tagging etc).

#### Additional notes

- Stock – codes of conduct; bag limits and size limits could all be effective.
- Bycatch is very difficult as its unpredictable and often too late by the time its hooked
- Education – for fish welfare & handling, to reduce other impacts; to use correct tackle, hookds and follow best practise eg circle hooks requires outreach work
- Habitat impacts – mainly through bait digging
- Pollution – offer places to dispose of single use plastic; but prevention is also needed
- Fuel use – hard to do but tech change possible
- Research on release weights

#### Group 6 – RA – impact priorities

##### Reducing plastic pollution and lost fishing gear

- Providing facilities for the recycling and removal of waste landed and old equipment would help reduce this impact

##### Bycatch

- Quite a lot done and some bycatch may be unavoidable
- What happens with it after is important
- Also regulations help create the problem with strict rules about what can be caught when and what gears can be carried on board.
- Increased flexibility and responsiveness in regulations would help – working with fishers

##### Target stocks

- Change in economic conditions and demand can add pressure to certain stocks, e.g. increase in whelk fishing

##### Other issues:

- Absence of markets for some species can cause problems. Lack of market for small spider crabs means no incentive to target them but they are around in large number and cause problems for many fishers as bycatch.

## Eastbourne low impact workshop #2 (19th Feb 2020)

### Notes

#### Pre-workshop

- Mention of post seen on Facebook reporting that France will define any inshore boats as low impact.
- Concern over lack of offshore/010m at these workshops.
- Perception that there hasn't been great awareness of the workshops from fishers.
- Questions from fishers about the need for anglers to be in attendance.

The meeting began with a summary of the project objectives and work to date, alongside an explanation of the interaction between politics (the FWP) and policy making and the difficulty that can entail. Defra re-stated their commitment to developing policy through co-design with the fishing industry. This included an explanation of 3 key points:

1. That <10>m definition had not worked and this was an opportunity to revise how the industry is viewed and segments within it are distinguished by their impact, rather than length.
2. That a collaborative approach to policy development is both necessary and more effective to deal with complex areas such as fisheries
3. That there are a myriad of other issues, both historic and current which make any work with stakeholders difficult.

Questions were asked by participants about definitions and their significance, on whether terms such as 'inshore' could even be defined, and about how the project had engaged with people to maximise input and attendance. It was felt that attendance was lower than it could have been and that in future a larger group of fishermen should attend. Questions were asked about why anglers were attending the workshop and it was explained that anglers were specifically to be included in the Defra tender.

Further comments from the room included that there should be a focus on management, and that the socio-economic impacts of fishing need to be considered alongside any environmental impact, as the absolute lowest impact possible would also mean very little income and an inability to support any jobs.

A further question was asked about what type of environmental impact should be the focus of the questions and an example was given of creel fishing for nephrops in Scotland, where the cumulative impacts of static gear (creels) in terms of stock impacts were thought to be higher than that through mobile gear.

The question of what defined a fishery was also raised, as it is wider than just a specific gear and target species and reflects the total effort of humans to catch fish.

The wider impacts on the marine environment were cited, with the impacts of plastics on fisheries, and the negative impacts of pollution, alongside the natural impacts from storms which have (eg storms removing kelp off West Sussex in 1987) altered marine and coastal habitats more than any fishing effort could. The example of cadmium levels in UK crab (resulting in a Chinese import ban) was also cited as an issue of concern.

The entire process of consultation was addressed as problematic and not the appropriate engagement tool to reach and involve fishermen. The opinion was also voiced that many fear sharing information as they feel it will be used against them.

Defra re-stated that the purpose of this project is not to be used as a 'stick' to beat with, but to seek a better way of understanding and expressing what is going on and could result in less (rather than more) regulation, or quota incentives but that if the industry felt that 'do nothing' was a better option, that that should also be put forward.

It was made clear that no fisherman wants to cause damage. It is not in their interest. A consideration of different mindsets for those who enter opportunistically rather than being raised into it was mentioned.

The impact of inshore fishing is always weather dependent and many in the room had fished for less than a week since 2020 began.

Criticisms were made of the process leading up to (and including) the workshop and the opportunity to develop an approach that works needs to be made the most of.

It was said that a definition of sustainable fishing is the inshore fleet. Sometimes inshore fisheries which need to be able to diversify and adapt through the seasons are limited by top down management and this can cause negative impacts on both fishers and mortality (eg bass) which is of no benefit to anyone.

### **First session (open discussion); Key points:**

- Why aren't there representatives of the larger vessels present?
  - Responded that there is a greater composition of u10m vessels in this area, which will change with the workshop in Brixham.
- Any review of this topic should include social and economic criteria.
- It would be welcomed if Defra or equivalent would look into the environmental impact of other activities. For example:
  - Tip runoff;
  - Plastic pollution;
  - Cadmium levels in crabs; and
  - Aggregate dredging.
- The impact to the seabed from fishing is much lower than from storms.

- There is always a concern that the information they provide will later be used against them.
  - Another backed this up “are we giving you a stick to beat us with”.
    - Phil McBride: No, if we wanted a stick we would use a top down approach rather than co-design;
    - We are coming here so that you can have a say; and
    - If you do not value this type of process then let us know, this would be a major finding.
- It might be better to look at methods of how to reduce fishing impact.
- The process so far has felt contrived, as if there is an effort to funnel the conversation to produce predetermined outputs.
- Will we get a debrief of what was said in the other workshops?
  - Chris W and Phil McBride: Yes, at the final symposium if not before.

**Action: Chris W to provide his mobile number on email correspondence**

The point was also made that the title of the project led to expectations that the workshops would be focusing on defining low impact as an alternative to under 10/over 10 definition. If about lowering impact overall then misleading.

Conversation kept returning to definition, thresholds and suspicion that there was already a definition and that the aim was to identify good and bad to regulate. Also concerns about the implications of definitions of ‘inshore’ as well as ‘low impact’, particularly in relation to possible regulation. Idea that ‘consultations mean information will be used against you’.

**Discussion 1**

- Concern that participants won’t report their own fishery as being high impact.
- Questions raised over whether people should talk about their own individual experience, or about the fishery as a whole.
- Highlighted lack of discussion around social and economic sustainability.
- Use of word ‘fishery’ is too broad.
- Belief that there are larger environmental issues than the activity of u10m boats that Defra should be focusing on.
- Worry that the results of previous consultation processes have been used to disadvantage fishers in the past – “Used as a stick to beat us with”.
- Potentially important to differentiate between low impact and lowering impact (threshold?).
- Perception that the co-design process is actually leading towards a predetermined outcome, in which participants will be led towards so that the conclusion appears natural – suspicion that their views won’t really be considered.

Due to the amount of time listening to participants, the first session (which was meant to be an introduction to the concept of scales of impact) was removed from the workshop plan and a



focus instead on what the priorities for management are for the industry, opportunities to lower impacts and the incentives and barriers to doing so were agreed as a more productive next step. These issues were discussed in relation to the criteria / issues identified in workshop 1.

These were:

- Impact on stock / mortality of target species
- Impact on stock of non target species
- Ghost fishing / gear
- Impacts on endangered species / Bycatch of birds or cetaceans
- Pollution (plastic, bilge water, ..)
- Fuel / emissions,
- Food chain disruption / impact of discards
- Damage to ecosystem
- Damage to breeding grounds / spawning
- Damage to seabed
- animal welfare / handling

## **TABLES:**

### **Phil, Jack, Chris**

- TARGET STOCK / NON TARGET Technical measures e.g. changes from 80mm/100mm cod end resulted in mesh-mesh interaction which closes the mesh so the conservation measure is actually counterproductive as it decreases the mesh size
- GHOST FISHING larger vessels offshore towing gear (incl EU vessels) can result in ghost gear; nobody is trying to lose gear its expansive and time consuming; poor marking can be an issue; pot quality and recycling was raised as an issue; the quality range for whelk pots ranges with price £6-£25) and the cheaper option are considered 'throw away' by comparison; for mobile gear attempts at recovery are always made; the infrastructure is lacking to deal with net / pot recycling regionally; a fishing for litter scheme should be rolled out and funded nationally; currently these efforts are at fishermens own expense so there needs to be an incentive to increase it; problems with fishing gear for landfill and incineration were noted.
- BYCATCH eg relating to a bass allowance in mobile gears are unavoidable even if set at 0 they will still be caught; impact of pelagic factory trawlers on bycatch seen as more significant;
- POLLUTION - PLASTICS plastic litter at sea (from land) is widespread; SEWAGE discharge impacts witnessed 5km out to sea; bilge oil to be siphoned off and canned, soakers can be used
- EMISSIONS there is a trade of between fuel emissions and fuel use (eg between older and newer engines); hybrid engines not viable as too expensive and often not compatible; H-Cells can lead to better efficiency but wear the engine out faster so faster

replacement; shipping kites for fuel reduction have been trialled but hard to imagine for fisheries

- FOOD CHAIN IMPACTS impact of factory trawlers in the channel on food chain must be immense;
- ENDANGERED SPECIES undulate rays are caught in isolation as territorial; no dolphins or spurdog caught;
- ECOSYSTEM fly shooters in Channel (FR/NL) have major impacts on variety of stocks and fish methodically in squares and that ground is then totally depleted so they move on - extremely high impact and efficiency - its not possible that these are non-quota fisheries as the fishery is mixed sometimes up to 36 species in a day.
- SEABED storms have a bigger impact than fishing; seabed is still productive despite fishing and people dont change their grounds or methods; Kingmere MCZ is permitting aggregate extraction although trawling is not permitted - this was seen as ridiculous

## HOW CAN POLICY CONTRIBUTE TO IMPACTS ?

- Cuttlefish - impact of washing traps rather than letting eggs develop
- Discards eg bass; having to land species that would otherwise go back into the food chain (and are no going to landfill); 2 hour tow exemption due to survivability but some some species eg lemon sole this means you cant target them as a 2 hour tow is too little time as they can outswim the trawl
- Perception that industry are seen as being liars is also based on historic track records being faked
- Problems caused by giving quota market value and allowing it to be traded out of the country
- Any investments made are often met by quota cuts which decreases value of that investment
- Brexit is too slow and UK govt too weak - demand for 12nM limits to be exclusive to UK fleet
- DAS means intl swap used but doesn't remove effort, just swaps and keep fishing (eg NL - Scotland)
- Inshore fleet are low impact as weather dependent; cumulative impact in last 2 weeks is 0 (=no impact); low impact is set for the future as limits by license.
- Wind Farms, aggregates, EU vessels and pelagic factory trawlers / fly shooters are the main impact to address
- Ground (12nM limit) is seen as more important than quota

## Discussion 2

(\* = this area is believed to have been negatively impacted by policy measures)

- Impact on stock \*
  - Intention is there, but application doesn't work
  - Nets/size of holes in nets
- Impact on stock of non-target species \*

- Ghost fishing/gear \*
  - This is unavoidable/can't be helped
  - Poorly marked gear and low quality of gear means that it often breaks, however participants felt that they couldn't afford higher quality, yet expensive, gear
  - Some fishers will dump gear that's broken instead of bringing it to shore, potentially need to provide incentives to bring in old gear.
  - Lack of infrastructure to help fishers retrieve and dispose of gear – need for improved recycling and waste facilities.
- Impact on endangered species
  - Catching some species is unavoidable
  - Birds aren't caught by trawlers – confusion over how they could be caught?
  - Fishers aren't catching endangered species e.g. dolphins
- Pollution
  - Binbags are carried on board, fishers do their best to reduce ocean littering
  - Participants claimed that they don't see plastic in the sea often, other than plastic which has been left by pedestrians on beaches (e.g. dog refuse bags)
  - Fishers instructed to siphon oil out of water – this is difficult, but not impossible.
- Fuel/emissions
  - Older engines don't always have higher emissions.
  - Some engines might have low emissions but high fuel consumption.
  - No participants were aware of/had seen any hybrid (electric) boats. They didn't see this as a possibility due to high prices and incompatibility with their current boats.
  - Fishers want to be as efficient as possible for economic reasons, it's not in their interest to use high levels of fuel.
- Food chain disruption
  - Large impact on this from o10m vessels catching large quantities of species, however not much impact from u10m vessels.
- Damage to ecosystem
  - Industrial (o10m) fishing boats do great damage, not u10m boats.
  - Fly-shooting has a high impact, acknowledgement that this is a highly efficient method which u10m fishers cannot afford. High impact because it manages to remove large quantities of fish very quickly.
  - Focus on non-quota species, mixed fisheries.
- Damage to breeding/spawning grounds
  - Don't believe they've had any impact – fish keep coming back in same quantity.
  - Don't know where these grounds are.
- Damage to seabed
  - Fish are still there – how can they measure?
  - Storms do more damage to the seabed than fishers do.
  - Dredgers will do more damage than trawlers – nowhere to run aground.
- Animal welfare
  - No comments.

## Other

- Fishers are being forced to lie as they feel backed into a corner by government.
- Criticism of the foundation of original the quota system
- One fisher claimed to have had 40tn of cod quota in 1995, and now only has 2tn. Belief that quota has been reduced drastically and without having lied they would have none left.
- Government has forced fishers to either buy more quota (expensive) or sell their own on.
- Belief that days-at-sea/effort based regimes do not work.
- Impact of external agents are harder to manage (foreign vessels, aquaculture).
- Because u10m are restricted by their boat licences from buying bigger boats, they must be low impact compared to those who aren't restricted in doing this.
- Biggest change to make should be protecting the 6-12m area from large/EU vessels.
- Fishers are lying about recording their bycatch/simply not recording it at all.
- Ever-changing nature of the mixed fishery makes it hard to maintain standard behaviours.
- Want to be presented with policy examples/scenarios in these workshops. They feel they don't understand what Defra wants out of this, and the workshops are too abstract to come up with a new idea – they want to be given options to feed back on.

Importance placed on defining 'inshore' as well as 'low impact'. Next steps

- Fishermen would want to see policy options presented to them before they talk through impacts, need to have something to respond to; consultation doesn't work; don't want different fishing methods pitched against each other; need scenarios to understand what the effects could be; want a level playing field,
- Want feedback to group and an opportunity to input through another meeting or interviews.
- Suggest planning all future events on neap tides to encourage participation
- Further regional focus groups in Weymouth / Poole and the East coast were suggested as was a wider survey of the fishing community
- It was also suggested that the timing of this piece of work on low impact was not good - as there is so much uncertainty around Brexit, issues with the MMO, issues with Sussex IFCA and the trawling and netting byelaws and that possibly shifting the timing to later in the year or 2021 when its clear what is happening with the fishing industry, access, trade etc might be more productive.

## Rob, Alice

Regulations need to be fair across industries and sectors – need to look at the relative impact of fishing vs other industries/activities as well.

Consider displacement effects of conservation measures and what is being protected vs impacted.

Issue with creating a divide between low and high impact as will create goodies and baddies.

Generally, fishers want to move towards better practice but this should have some sort of financial reward. Needs to be some sort of benefit associated with improving environmental performance.

### **Target stocks**

Any consideration of impact must include the effect of fishing on target stocks, e.g. dive caught scallops highly selective and can have big impact on stock compared with dredge that may have only 5% efficiency (but other impacts).

### **Sea bed impact**

Consider overall impacts e.g. trawler with 10m wide track fishing same sandy area vs whelk pots spread over wide area. This also includes considerations of the cumulative effect of fishing.

### **Fuel use/plastics**

Opportunities to support better technologies, e.g. more efficient/lower impact trawl doors and biodegradable gear that could be opportunities for collaboration between fishers, scientists and manufacturers. Funded through research?

Unintended consequences: IFCA regulation to create maximum number of pots may have unintentionally created a new target... Other IFCA regulations also can have unintended environmental consequences, e.g. tagging of whelk pots with plastic tags that break off.

### **Cross-cutting**

Given the idea of a threshold in relation to 'low impact' the idea of *de-minimis* suggested – identify vessels that are not worth managing (cf. French 'artisanal'), e.g. 18 ft open boat with outboard that will only ever have limited impact because of capacity and little scope to generate large earnings. Maintain a limited pool of these. All other vessels should be regulated/incentivised to lower impact.

Fishers are involved in science and paying for it through levy and are keen to support the fishery long-term.

Providing additional quotas to u10s as an incentive unlikely to work. Issue with quota is also the timing and the ability to catch. 40% of 2019 quota not utilised. Need improved method for distributing quota in u10s.

One way to achieve benefits across the inshore fleet would be to decentralise the management of the u10 pool. Not in the form of the coastal PO (scepticism about this as a direction). Alternative might be to create a network of local quota management units and national association (similar to PO national association) that would report to MMO (enforcement) and

Defra (policy). This would be more locally embedded and allow fishers to be more flexible ensuring that they can adjust when they fish – catch better, earn better, fish better. Quota may be available at the right time, so can be safer, reduce emissions - benefits across several of the impact categories identified. POs should be retained for the over 10s. One-way valve should go so that quota can be more freely traded with POs.

IFCAs not popular. Accountability of the IFCAs is an issue. Fact that only one works and because of the individual highlights that there is a structural problem. Issues include too many councillors and not necessarily full representation of fishers. Decision making may not be by consensus and decisions lack accountability. Opportunity should be taken to review.

There is a need to overcome assumptions about fishing. View appears to exist that if making money then this is because having a negative impact.

**Harry, Lydia**

### **Second session (table discussion): key identified impacts and means to reduce these.**

#### **Target stock population:**

- Barbless hooks (angling)
- Respect spawning seasons;
  - This is hard to achieve because, for example, some slower vessels will not have the range to travel outside the required area closures during certain spawning seasons.
    - This could be overcome with subsidies for vessel and engine upgrades.
  - Might just displace pressure.
    - Would require a finer scale, improved and more reactive local management system.

#### **Bycatch of non-target species:**

- Often bycatch is only non-target because of prohibitions, and these do not always make sense in a local context (e.g., undulate rays) which are very common in certain areas, often accounting for over 50% of the fish caught.
  - A finer scale, improved and more reactive local management system should be able to allow species in this situation to be landed and thereby reduce the impact on non-target species.
    - Smaller management areas with more fishers on the board (especially those that are paid for their time, to ensure that they are there for the right reasons and not out of boredom or to push their own agenda).

#### **Ghost gear:**

- All pots and nets tagged and recorded at the beginning of the year, then ticked off at the end and penalties for all of those that have been lost;

- Create facilities at all ports for old gear disposal that is cost free or even incentivized; and
- Reapply the 200nm limit – this would stop foreign towed gear vessels towing over their gear.

#### **Bycatch other marine life:**

- Shoot gear in the evening and haul in the morning, to avoid birds;
- Codes of conduct and fast adaptive closures when high volumes of birds are about; and
- Larger vessels generally need to address this area.

#### **Plastic pollution:**

- More options for buying recycled plastic gear; and
- Need R&D into other options for dollies and as trawl protection (to stop them wearing out).

#### **Fuel use / GHG emissions:**

- Subsidies for more efficient engines and more efficient hull designs.

#### **Food chain impacts:**

- Cannot identify anything here.

#### **Spawning impacts (ground / seasons):**

- Consider closing spawning grounds; and
- Local management at a finer scale that can close areas quickly (adaptive).

#### **Seabed impacts:**

- Drift netting was banned and this meant more effort displaced into bottom impacting gears (got worse)
  - Needs a finer scale, improved and more reactive local management system.

#### **Animal welfare:**

- Limited time out of the water (recreational / charter); and
- Controls on how fish are handled.
  - Could require training.

#### **Other comments:**

- A finer scale, improved and more reactive local management system needs to be a two way information feedback system;
- Changed to non-carcinogenic silicone lures;

- They only get more quota when the species is not there to catch; and
- Need to take account of the weather and tides when organizing meetings.

### *Intro session*

Impact of nature- Storms Ciara and Dennis. Affected the mood in the room and is the biggest impact on their fishing activity.

Concern about giving information to consultation which will be used against industry. There should be a system of rewarding good behaviour.

### *Discussion*

#### **Target stock population:**

- Landing Obligation makes them land live fish which is killing their future by damaging the stocks.
- Their biggest impact is wastage. They could sell everything they catch but need to throw some of it back.
- They believe that the U10s are apportioned so little share of the target stock that they aren't making much of an impact.
- Big ships are disproportionate for the areas they're allowed to fish. Areas like the Channel should have a maximum size of vessel. **(Also applies to pollution).**

#### **Bycatch of non-target species:**

- Local management could more appropriately account for stocks in specific fisheries which are considered bycatch but should be allowed e.g. rays.
- Finding other uses for bycatch e.g. spider crabs as bait. They make a conscious effort to avoid spider crabs when they are prolific as they can damage gear. When fishing is unviable they will avoid it.
- Gear can be adjusted to avoid species they don't want e.g. different mesh sizes

#### **Pollution:**

- Low emission certificate on licensed O10m vessel. Charter boats don't require that.
- Southampton- boats get tugged in by lower emission vessels.
- UK is the most polluted area for diesel in Europe [no source or certainty behind this claim].
- Plastic pollution is rife from trawlers.
- Charter boats have changed to zinc heads instead of lead to reduce pollution. However, zinc breaks down faster than lead. Lures have also been changed to non-carcinogenic silicone.

#### **Non- marine bycatch:**



- Not a huge problem for the inshore fleet. Their gear is too small and this is more of a concern with super trawlers.
- Suggestion that they could shoot gear at night and haul in the morning to avoid seabird bycatch. However, this would limit their activity.
- There are Cornish bylaws for minimising the threat to seabirds. Other suggestions for a code of practice/ conduct which would be self-regulatory.

#### **Ghost gear:**

- MPAs help reduce gear conflict by removing the towed gear which in turn reduces the ghost gear and impact of gear pollution.
- Getting the EEZ back would help reduce conflict with French trawlers.

#### **Seabed impact:**

- They can't reduce their seabed impact anymore.
- They may increase their damage on the seabed by diversifying into drift fishing.

#### **Animal welfare:**

- Disproportionate pressure from outside. Idea that animal welfare is given the upper hand over industries involving animals.
- Factors that recreational anglers try to control: time out of water (catch and release), handling of the fish for photos.

#### **Food chain:**

- Anglers' waste from filleting goes directly back to the inshore crab stocks, contributing to the food chain.
- Pelagics are the main vessels affecting the food chain- they remove all of the bait/ food source for other fish. Big boats should be removed as their effort is disproportionate.
- It makes no sense for them to remove the bottom of the food chain if it leaves no pelagic bait.

#### *Other points*

- Believe that the use of net gear in this fishery is as good as it gets for being low impact.
- Need for a better balance of fishers on IFCA committees. Committees are currently not representative as they require an investment of personal time and effort. Many believe that the only people willing to do that are using it for their own gain i.e. large boats and anglers. There should be a paid position- that's how to attract fishermen with the knowledge.
- IFCA's should serve as a two-way feedback, acting as a portal for information between industry and MMO/ Defra. Communication from IFCA's is key. Discussion on these boards/ committees need to be shared and made publically available.

- Lots of support for local management; this should be promoted by IFCA's who in turn need to be more reactive and quicker.
- There was a feeling that whatever is defined as low impact could be overridden by IFCA regulations which would be more restrictive.

**Julie, Kat** (participants on table including 1 x angling rep, 1 x commercial trawl fisher + his wife, 1 x local councillor involved in EU policy reform, incl. CFP)

There was agreement that anything could be high impact if there are too many vessels fishing a fishery, or if effort is too high. Conversely, anything could be low impact if managed well. There was reluctance to say one type of gear is lower impact than another, as there are many variables, and even what might be considered the most high impact gear (e.g. pulse trawling) could be low impact if only used selectively e.g. for 2 weeks just before Christmas when sole prices are high and they are thick. The point being that determining low impact on the basis of gear is not likely to be effective. It was suggested that an approach to ensure sustainable fishing should be based on Time-Effort-Method, determined by science. It was felt that fishers should be involved in the science that is used to determine management measures - they could work with scientists to design monitoring/recording equipment that could easily be used on vessels. Cameras on board and VMS could be used to monitor and record catch and fishing effort.

There was a suggestion that interaction and involvement in co-management and science participation should be mandatory, as is safety at sea training.

A focus on lower impact was preferred, rather than low impact. There could potentially be a points based system, where fishers get points for activities that are deemed to be lower impact, such as collecting litter. They could be rewarded for higher points - this would incentivise behaviours. This could be determined by a Code of Conduct for different fisheries.

### **Target stock population**

Monthly quota doesn't work. If you can't fish for 2 months, you lose that quota. Annual, or rolling quota, would be fairer.

### **By-catch of non-target species**

By-catch of endangered species is notifiable - this may put people off reporting as if they do the areas can get shut.

### **Ghost gear**

### **Plastic / pollution**

Dealing with plastic was considered something that could be achieved. Fishermen are willing to collect plastic waste but currently do not have anywhere to dispose of it. The barge that was provided in the Thames for fishers to dump plastic waste was very successful - fishers collected

plastic when they were fishing and easily discarded in the barge, which was then taken away. If all ports/harbours could have a facility for plastic waste, fishers are likely to be happy to collect plastic waste when at sea for free. In order for this to work, there should be no charge to the fishers. Fishers could get points for collecting plastic litter.

There is a line recycling scheme where gear is recycling and money goes back into the community. This is very successful. There is also the Global Ghost Initiative. Recycling used gear needs to be economical - may need a subsidy. Need government funding for industry to recycle gear.

The impact of plastic on fisheries themselves should also be considered.

### **Fuel use / GHG emissions**

Fuel use needs to be addressed urgently, given its contribution to climate change. It would be quite easy to change - all engines could be fitted with hydrogen generator cells - a grant is available for this. The inshore fleet is not fit for purpose - vessels are inefficient and need to be updated and modernised. A scrappage scheme could help with this.

### **Food chain impacts**

If spawning is looked after this will have a positive impact on food chain impacts.

### **Spawning impacts (grounds / season)**

It was felt that locals look after spawning grounds as it ensures healthy stocks going forwards. However, they can't control other vessels (from other UK ports or EU) coming in and fishing those areas. Suggested bringing regulations regarding who can fish in waters out to 200 NM, including banning trawling inside 12 NM.

### **Seabed impacts**

Most of the damage to the seabed is perceived to come from extreme weather rather than fishing activity. It will depend on sea bed type. Fishing does very little damage on fine ground, such as sand, as the ocean moves these seabeds anyway. Different on reefs. Need to be fishing in the right place with the right gear. Propaganda about this can be damaging to the industry. Damage to the seabed can be controlled by effort control.

### **Animal welfare**

Anglers can attend to this easier than commercial fishers, such as trawlers.

### Initial comments

"Inshore" – no one knows what this is exactly. No understood definition and this relates to the definition of under10/ low impact fisheries too

Different challenges between anglers and commercial fishermen could cause tensions but overall, it impacts everyone and we need to understand these different challenges

Feedback on general co-management – important to define what you are asking of the exercise – what specifically are you trying to understand. Phrasing of the ask – lowering/reducing impact rather than the threshold of ‘low impact fisheries’ (automatically puts some in high impact and they worry about the repercussions of that)

Lack of trust in the process. Fear that anything that is said will be used against them “giving you a stick to beat us with” Feels like the “process is contrived”

### Opportunities / barriers for low impact fishing

Overall, the conversations led to the concept of having a ‘points based system’ where positive practices score you points towards lowering your impact / being defined as a ‘low impact fishing’ and then there could be incentives associated with that.

Good fisheries management is the key low impact fishing. Management makes the type of fishing high/low impact and so applies differently to different gear types.

Time + effort + method = good management (Venn diagram)

Social and economic factors cannot be separated out from environmental when considering ‘low impact’

Importance of safety at sea. They shouldn’t be criminalised if they accidentally enter and MPA in order to not endanger the crew. Life most important.

Quota management for the year rather than monthly or the ability to ‘roll over’ allowances or carry over a certain amount. This would make it easier for them to manage because when its periods of bad weather they have not used their quota then it is lost!

### PLASTIC POLLUTION AND GHOST GEAR

Fishers are already collecting plastic pollution out of the ocean and there should be an easy way for them to recycling this (a collection point at every port etc.)

Previously in the Thames the PLA had provided a barge to collect all the plastic but they stopped this after a couple of years (assuming due to lack of council funding).

The key thing is that it should be free and easy and not council specific, England wise. This also connects with lack of plastic recycling facilities in the country.

Handing in plastic pollution for recycling/ appropriately recycling gear/ reporting lost gear could get you points to lower your impact.

### FUEL / EMISSIONS – big problem, but easy to fix!

Big problem because water acidity rising will eventually affect the stocks

Feeling that the inshore

fleet is not sufficiently modernized or ‘fit for purpose’.

Need for electric/hydro powered boats or buying a 'hydrogen generation cell' to fit to motor.

The barrier for this is funding as fishers do not have the money to upgrade their boats. There could be a government scrappage and replacement scheme

#### DAMAGE TO BREEDING GROUNDS / SPAWNING – hard to tackle problem

Typically the local fishers know the times and locations of the spawning grounds and so avoid in order to allow the fish to breed. They know to fish appropriately for spawning seasons. Fishers coming from outside either don't know or deliberately go there!

Suggestion that if the 12nm zone was restricted to UK fishers this might prevent this problem

Fisheries sciences is lagging behind by at least 2 years. Fishermen see the changes sooner and this knowledge should be used.

Fishermen could be trained on basic fisheries science and then used as data collectors. Funded and also perhaps receive low impact points if they are collecting scientific data (not just catch recording but wider information).

Trust between fishermen and science industry is currently lacking 'they view us as stupid'. And how could we ensure robust data collection? VMS, if fishermen are doing the right thing they shouldn't mind

Anglers should only take certain sized species but how could this be policed?

#### IMPACTS ON ENDANGERED SPECIES / BYCATCH OF BIRDS OR CETACEANS/ ANIMAL WELFARE / HANDLING

Netsmen's defence (to be able to kill a seal) should be scrapped

Bycatch of endangered

species need to be reported to MMO but this causes fisheries to be shut down so

likely that things can go unreported

Considers that some Anglers could improve in their animal welfare standards as not all follow this code of practice. Seabirds more impacted by Anglers / long line than trawler fishers.

Led poisoning also linking to animal welfare.

Old school fishermen had high views of animal welfare but this "was lost in the introduction of the quota system"

#### DAMAGE TO SEABED

The weather can have worse impacts on sand/fine group sea bed than fishing/trawling. But accepts that fishing does impact the reefs.

Need to "end propaganda"

about damaging effects and let science lead. Science should be the key for

co-management to work as you can't argue with it

### NEXT STEPS

Wants to continue being included and kept up to date about the feedback from other workshops.  
Communication is key!

- Emilys link <https://cor.europa.eu/et/news/Pages/European-Parliament-votes-in-favour-of-the-request-from-EU-regions-to-outlaw-electric-pulse-fishing.aspx>