



Department
for Environment,
Food & Rural Affairs

Socio-cultural mapping of fishing grounds in English waters

September 2025

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Contents

Socio-cultural mapping of fishing grounds in English waters.....	1
Executive summary.....	7
1. Introduction	9
Background.....	9
Aims and objectives	10
Structure of this report	11
2. Methodology	12
Establish Working Group and Steering Group	12
Co-design.....	13
Co-design research framework and methodology for socio-cultural mapping pilot	14
3. Framework for socio-cultural mapping of fishing grounds.....	17
Type of data	17
Process for collecting data	21
Governance	26
Data access	28
Communications Strategy	38
4. Recommendations for regional pilot and future roll out	40
Pre-pilot testing	41
Full pilot.....	42
Next steps for pilot roll out.....	45
Communications plan	46
5. References	52
Annex 1: Working Group Terms of Reference.....	53
Annex 2: Summary of workshop discussions and outputs	59

Annex 3: Draft value questions.....	64
Annex 4: Draft participation and consent form	66
Annex 5: Example of prefilled maps to aid data collection and mapping process	69
Annex 6: Process for digitising maps	71
Annex 7: Communications strategy	74

Abbreviations and Acronyms

ABPmer	ABP Marine Environmental Research Ltd
AIFCA	Association of Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities
AIS	Automatic Identification System
ALBs	Arm's Length Bodies
Cefas	Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science
CFPO	Cornish Fish Producers' Organisation
CMYK	Cyan, magenta, yellow, key/black
EU	European Union
FAQ	Frequently Asked Questions
FISS	Fishing Industry Social Survey
FITF	Fishing into the Future
FMP	Fisheries Management Plan
FOI	Freedom of Information
FPO	Fish Producers' Organisation
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
GIS	Geographic Information System
GSR	Government Social Research
HPMA	Highly Protected Marine Area
ICES	International Council for the Exploration of the Sea
ICF	ICF, the global consulting firm
ID	Identification
IFCA	Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority
IPA	Inshore Potting Agreement
iVMS	Inshore-Vessel Monitoring System
JNCC	Joint Nature Conservation Committee

JPEG	Joint Photographic Experts Group (a picture file format)
MCZ	Marine Conservation Zone
MMO	Marine Management Organisation
MPA	Marine Protected Area
NFFO	National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations
NM	Nautical Mile
OWF	Offshore Windfarm
PFS	Participatory Fisheries Science
PNG	Portable Network Graphics (a picture file format)
PO	Producers' Organisation
QR	Quick response (refers to QR codes)
RGB	Red, green, blue
SD&CS	South Devon and Channel Shellfishermen's Association
SG	Steering Group
SWFPO	South West Fish Producers' Organisation
TCE	The Crown Estate
ToRs	Terms of Reference
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America
VAT	Value Added Tax
VMS	Vessel Monitoring System
WG	Working Group

Executive summary

Social sustainability is a prerequisite for sustainable fisheries governance, yet it has often been overlooked in favour of environmental and economic considerations in research and policy development. The Fisheries Act (2020) and Joint Fisheries Statement (2022) set out new obligations for Defra and other Government bodies to consider and collect data in relation to the social and cultural aspects of fisheries. With increasing concerns around marine space and access to fishing grounds, particularly due to competition with offshore windfarm (OWF) development and Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), it is increasingly important to recognise and integrate socio-cultural values into decision-making processes.

This project sought to collaborate with fisheries stakeholders to design a practical approach to collecting spatial data and to co-design a framework to identify and map the socio-cultural values of English fishing grounds. From the outset, the intention was for this to be a co-design project, with significant focus and value attributed to the experience and contributions of active fishermen (the term “fishermen” is used throughout this report to refer to anyone, man or woman, active or retired, participating in commercial fishing, in line with the preferences of the people in the industry with whom we work, as advised by the project Working Group). A Working Group, comprised of ten fishermen, representing different fishing sectors and regions, co-developed a framework with the project team and Defra for a participatory approach to identify and map the socio-cultural values of marine spaces important to fishing fleets. Two workshops were held with the Working Group to design the framework and methodology for collecting socio-cultural data on fishing grounds. A communications package and recommendations for a regional pilot and national roll out of the participatory mapping approach were also co-developed.

The Working Group made significant progress in agreeing on the details of the framework. However, several aspects will need further refinement during the pilot phase once data have been gathered and are available for analysis.

The socio-cultural participatory mapping framework comprises five aspects:

1. Type of data (what)

Socio-cultural values refer to the beliefs, practices, traditions, social relationships, and cultural significance that local communities place on fishing activities and the marine environment. During the workshops, the Working Group agreed on the information that this project should collect. This includes mapping four key areas: core grounds, back up grounds, lost/historic grounds, and transit routes, and the associated socio-cultural values that are attributed to these areas. Prompt questions and value categories were developed to help participants with the mapping process.

2. Process of collecting data (how)

Discussion during both workshops highlighted the need for a flexible, hybrid approach to data collection, based on the preferences of fishermen in each region and the dynamics of the community. The process for collecting data on socio-cultural values through

participatory mapping has been split into five stages, which are elaborated on in this report:

- preparation;
- data collection;
- data analysis and visualisation;
- data validation and feedback;
- data use.

3. Governance

The Working Group and Steering Group will continue to meet during the pilot phase to advise a Project Implementation Team, review progress and discuss how best to address any issues with the framework. In the short term, Defra should identify potential funding for a pilot roll out (discussed in 'Full pilot' section) and explore governance options – such as working through a non-government body – that can provide fishermen with sufficient confidence around data confidentiality. Longer term governance arrangements will need to be agreed on as part of the pilot phase.

As this is a co-design project, the main steer and input will come from the Working Group. The Working Group, Steering Group, and Project Implementation Team will act collectively to deliver a successful pilot and national roll out.

4. Data access (use)

Concerns were raised during the workshops related to data access and who holds or owns the data. The Working Group indicated that fishermen are cautious about sharing information that might be used against them and highlighted the importance of data being held by a trusted party. This report outlines the potential data holders that could be used for the national roll out of this project, as well as the options for data access and data aggregation levels based on discussions with the Working Group and Steering Group.

5. Communications strategy

The Communications Strategy is designed to guide effective communications to raise awareness of the project and intended outcomes and encourage engagement from the fishing industry in future regional and national roll out of the mapping project. Several outputs have been developed based on the strategy and will be amended as needed to incorporate learning from the regional pilots.

Recommendations for a regional pilot are set out, including details of the framework that will need to be refined during the pilot phase. The Working Group agreed to a 'pre-pilot' phase with a small group of fishermen to test the methodology on a manageable scale, with the aim of gathering feedback on the approach from participants prior to rolling out the full pilot. This would be followed by the roll out of a full pilot in two regions suggested by the Working Group: Whitby and Brixham. Next steps to initiate the pilot, along with a regionally specific communications plan, have been provided.

1. Introduction

Background

Social sustainability is a prerequisite for sustainable fisheries governance but has not been prioritised in research and policy development compared to environmental and economic dimensions (Gilek et al., 2021). The Fisheries Act (2020) and Joint Fisheries Statement (2022) set out new obligations for Defra and other Government bodies to consider and collect data in relation to social and cultural aspect of fisheries. However, how data on social and cultural aspects can be used meaningfully to inform policy is less well understood and as a result, it has not yet been fully integrated (Defra, 2025). It has been noted that social and cultural data are often missing from marine planning and that knowledge of various stakeholders' uses and values of marine space should be included in a spatially explicit way (Gilek et al., 2021).

The social and cultural dimensions of the marine environment are numerous and multifaceted. Human interactions with the marine environment shape people's sense of place, personal identity and a broad array of leisure, recreation, and work opportunities (Acott & Urquhart, 2014; McKinley et al., 2019). These relationships are underpinned by a broad array of religious, aesthetic, economic and place-based values. The term 'socio-cultural values' serves as an encompassing concept that incorporates these different facets of human society including attitudes, values, and behaviours as well as the structures that frame social organisations and actions including social assets, heritage and wellbeing, place relations, social conflicts, and vulnerabilities (McKinley et al., 2019). Using the term 'socio-cultural' acknowledges the role of context and culture in determining the value placed on the environment, or other domains such as community (Bullock et al., 2018).

The increasing concerns around marine space and access to fishing grounds in competition with offshore wind development and Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) has increased the need to understand where areas may have socio-cultural values that should be factored into decision making. The Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (Cefas) produced a report on 'Socio-cultural mapping of fishing grounds in English waters', which included a research design framework and suggested approaches to embed social and cultural aspects of sustainability in fisheries governance and marine spatial planning (Cefas, 2025). The report suggested the use of participatory 'socio-cultural mapping' approaches. Such an approach is argued to provide a wider range and better quality of information for marine resource decision-making and to generate knowledge in ways that are spatially situated and embraces the co-design approach. This approach was tested with fishermen in the co-design process to ensure that it is the most feasible and appropriate approach to gathering the information required by Defra.

Defra lack data on the social and cultural values associated with fishing grounds, which means these values may be missed or excluded from decisions relating to the spatial use of marine areas. This project sought to co-design with fisheries stakeholders a practical approach to collect such spatial data. The co-designed framework will be used to identify and map socio-cultural values of English fishing grounds. The outputs of the mapping will support the understanding of the social impacts of marine planning and activities carried out under the Fisheries Act (2020) and the Marine and Coastal Access Act (2009) and support the preparation for future mapping and monitoring of socio-cultural values of fishing grounds and marine areas.

Specifically, this project is the first phase in understanding the socio-cultural values attached to fishing grounds in English waters, and to support this objective, a co-design Working Group including active fishermen was formed alongside an advisory project Steering Group. These groups co-developed a framework with the Project Implementation Team and Defra for a participatory mapping approach to identify and map the socio-cultural values of marine spaces important to fishing fleets. A communications package and recommendations for a regional pilot and national roll out of the participatory mapping approach were also co-developed.

It is anticipated that the outputs of this research will have several uses for policy and will be relevant to work related to MPA selection, marine spatial planning, offshore wind development and Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs). The use of a co-design approach helps address the challenges associated with gathering fishing data, including fishermen's reluctance to share fishing locations and their concerns over how the data might be used. The co-designed approach also enabled the identification of values important to fishermen, shaping the framework and informing future mapping activities.

Aims and objectives

The overall aim of this project was to co-design a framework to identify and map socio-cultural values of English fishing grounds to support the future mapping and monitoring of socio-cultural values of fishing grounds and marine areas. The project is a follow-on project from a literature review, ethical framework and initial research framework developed by Cefas (2025). This project builds on these outputs to:

1. Establish a co-design Working Group, including active fishermen and fishing representatives, and an advisory project Steering Group of regulators and government representatives;
2. Design a communications package outlining the purpose and importance of the project and provide example data visualisation of the mapping outputs;
3. Co-design a research and monitoring framework and participatory mapping approach to identify and map the socio-cultural values of marine space in relation to fishing fleets;
4. Provide recommendations for regional pilot(s) and national roll-out.

Structure of this report

The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

- Section 2: Methodology: This section outlines the key tasks and approaches used in the project. It includes the establishment of the Working Group and Steering Group, the co-design of the framework and methodology for socio-cultural mapping, and the development of the communications package.
- Section 3: Framework for socio-cultural mapping of fishing grounds: This section details the socio-cultural participatory mapping framework, which comprises five aspects: type of data, process of collecting data, governance, data access, and communications strategy. The framework also outlines the process for collecting data, which involves preparation, data collection, data analysis and visualisation, data validation and feedback, and data use.
- Section 4: Recommendations for regional pilot: This section provides recommendations for the regional pilot, including the aspects of the framework that need further refinement during the pilot phase.

2. Methodology

ABPmer led a core Project Implementation Team that was responsible for delivering this project. The team comprised of ICF (framework coordinator), Countryside and Community Research Institute (socio-cultural expertise), Fishing into the Future (stakeholder expertise), and Mindfully Wired (communications expertise).

The project methodology was made up of several key tasks:

- establishing the Working Group and Steering Group
- co-designing the framework and methodology for socio-cultural mapping
- developing the communications package.

The term “fishermen” is used throughout this report to refer to anyone, man or woman, active or retired, participating in commercial fishing, in line with the preferences of the people in the industry with whom we work, as advised by the project Working Group.

Establish Working Group and Steering Group

The project prioritised a co-design approach to develop a framework and methodology for gathering spatial data on the socio-cultural values of fishing grounds. Support and input from active fishermen that are representative of the scope of the English fleet were considered crucial to the success of the project.

Working Group

A Working Group was set up comprising active fishermen and fisheries representatives, Defra, and socio-cultural mapping specialists including academics and consultants. The role of the Working Group was to proactively participate in co-design workshops and help identify the best methodology for collecting spatial data on the socio-cultural values of English fishing grounds, including data collection and sampling, what issues and questions to include, how to visualise data, access to data/data sharing, and how to communicate the project to other fishermen. For this phase of the project, the Working Group was chaired by ABPmer.

To identify and recruit participants for the Working Group, an engagement pack and Terms of Reference (Annex 1: Working Group Terms of Reference) were drafted, outlining:

- Project Background and Objectives;
- Requirements for Working Group Members;
- Benefits of Participation;
- Workshop Dates and Locations;
- Budget Support;
- Defra Travel Policy; and
- Contact Information.

The Project Implementation Team drew on a network of fisheries contacts to identify potential fishermen and fishing representatives to participate in the Working Group. The ten fishermen represent inshore and offshore vessels, static and mobile gear types and fish a variety of species, and operate across the following five English regions and ICES management areas:

- **North East (ICES division 4b):** This division encompasses the central North Sea, extending from Berwick to Cleethorpes/Grimsby Port.
- **North West (ICES division 7a):** Known as the Irish Sea, this area lies between western Great Britain and Ireland.
- **South East (ICES division 4c):** This division covers the southern North Sea, south from the Humber estuary including coastal waters off eastern England.
- **South (ICES division 7d):** Referred to as the eastern English Channel, this region stretches from Dungeness to Swanage.
- **South West (ICES divisions 7e, 7f, 7g):** These divisions include the western English Channel (7e), the Bristol Channel (7f), and the northern Celtic Sea (7g), encompassing waters off the south-western coast of the UK.

To facilitate the rapid set-up of the Working Group and ensure a diverse representation of fisheries across different regions, the Project Implementation Team identified and invited fishermen to participate.

It should be noted that working with fishermen representing English regions will mean the study will be identifying the socio-cultural importance of fishing grounds to English fishermen, rather than the socio-cultural importance of fishing grounds in English waters (as it will be excluding vessels from Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland or elsewhere that fish in English waters). Values identified by the Working Group will serve as a starting point, and the pilot phase and mapping process will allow for other values to be captured.

Steering Group

A Steering Group was set up through invitation, and comprises members from Defra policy and evidence teams, Marine Management Organisation, Cefas, other Arm's Length Bodies (ALBs), and other relevant industry representatives. The role of the Steering Group is to provide expert advice, give direction and provide feedback on the work.

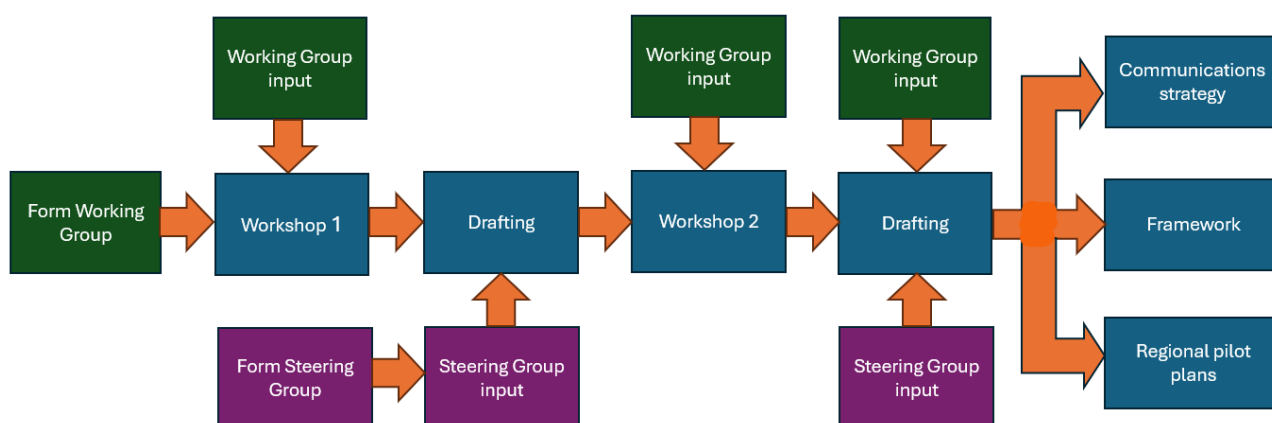
The Steering Group met twice during this phase of the project: once in February 2025, after the first workshop, to discuss next steps, and again in March 2025 after the second workshop to review the outputs. For this phase of the project, the Working Group was chaired by ABPmer.

Co-design

From the outset, the intention was for this to be a co-designed project, with significant focus and value attributed to the experience and contributions of active fishermen. Contact with fishermen was made through email and WhatsApp, including WhatsApp polls to

identify the most appropriate time to meet. Flexibility was crucial and built good will by working on this project during the colder months when fishing activity is more restricted, and planning meetings in the evening to support the Working Group's availability around fishing. The project was led by decisions made by the Working Group. The Steering Group acted to provide advice but were not able to overrule decisions made by the Working Group unless they were not possible to implement. The Project Implementation Team acted as a conduit to collect and summarise the decisions of the Working Group. Framework progress was presented back to the Working Group for their sign off, and calls were set up to review reports rather than expecting Working Group members to read multiple drafts (Figure 1).

Figure 1 Co-design process to develop the socio-cultural mapping framework



Co-design research framework and methodology for socio-cultural mapping pilot

Preparation

Existing approaches to participatory mapping of fishing grounds in other country contexts were reviewed to identify potential methodologies, and the opportunities and barriers to this approach. These included examples from the USA (Martin and Hall-Arber, 2008), Canada (Klain and Chan, 2012) and the UK (MMO, 2021; MMO, 2024), using methodologies ranging from hand drawn maps, digital interactive maps, prefilled maps and the use of tokens to attribute importance to mapped areas. This information was used to initiate discussions during the workshops.

Two workshops were held with the Working Group to design the framework and methodology for collecting socio-cultural data on fishing grounds. The first workshop was held in person at the end of January 2025 and the second was online in mid-February 2025. Annex 2: Summary of workshop discussions and outputs, provides a summary of the discussion held in each workshop.

Workshop 1

The first workshop set out the aims of the project, identified approaches that might practically be used to gather the required data and assessed the feasibility of different types of mapping approaches. The first workshop was designed to:

- **Identify Barriers and Opportunities:** Discuss the barriers and opportunities of previous participatory mapping projects and their applicability in English waters;
- **Alternative Approaches:** Identify other approaches to collecting socio-cultural data of fishing grounds, if necessary;
- **Socio-Cultural Values:** Identify and agree on a core set of socio-cultural values to be considered and the aspects/questions to include in the identification and mapping of these values;
- **Methodology Experimentation:** Experiment with possible approaches to methods, data collection, and sampling.

Upon completion of Workshop 1, the core Project Implementation Team used the information provided by fishermen to develop an initial framework for a socio-cultural mapping pilot and began working with a GIS expert to develop a mapped example.

Workshop 2

Utilising the insights gained from the first workshop, the Project Implementation Team designed a draft methodology which was reviewed by the Working Group in the second workshop. Key activities during this meeting included:

- **Framework and Methodology Review:** Review, refine, and agree on the framework and methodology for the regional pilot;
- **Communication Strategies:** Discuss potential communication strategies to engage fishermen in the regional pilot and in any national roll out;
- **Pilot Locations:** Consider pilot locations, with significant support indicated for the South-West as per Cefas (2025);
- **Participant Recruitment Strategy:** Develop the strategy for recruiting participants;
- **Data Presentation and Sharing:** Develop the approach for presenting and visualising data, as well as access to and sharing of data.

The discussions recorded during Workshop 2 were used to refine the draft framework and methodology. Additional questions or clarifications for the Working Group were followed up through emails and/or phone calls.

Communications package

Using the information provided in the co-design workshops and building on Cefas (2025) and individual communications expertise, a communications package was developed that outlines the purpose and importance of the project. This package is inclusive of both an overarching strategy and a suite of template materials, and a high-level plan for implementing the strategy in the two pilot regions.

The Communications Strategy will be used to guide engagement during the future regional and national roll out. The strategy will inform how to best connect with and engage key audiences, outlining key messages, tools and approaches, and how to tailor these to different audience segments (e.g., to different sectors and geographies), as appropriate. Drawing on the expertise of the Project Implementation Team, and learnings from the workshops, the Communications Strategy will set the tone for all project communications, ensuring clear, consistent and engaging messaging throughout the project, and beyond.

3. Framework for socio-cultural mapping of fishing grounds

Significant progress was made by the Working Group to agree details of the framework, however several aspects will need to be refined further during the pilot phase once data have been gathered and are available for analysis. This section of the report outlines the current agreed approach, and areas for refinement will be discussed in Section 4.

The socio-cultural participatory mapping framework comprises five aspects:

1. type of data (what);
2. process of collecting data (how);
3. governance (who);
4. data access (use);
5. communications strategy.

Type of data

Social and cultural values refer to the beliefs, practices, traditions, social relationships, and cultural significance that local communities place on fishing activities and the marine environment. These values can vary widely across regions, but they are deeply intertwined with local identity, heritage, and community life (Cefas, 2025). These have been discussed in more detail in the Cefas (2025) report that was used as a base for the current phase of the project. During the workshops the Working Group agreed the type of information that this project should collect, which is set out below.

Key areas for fishermen to map

It was agreed that four key types of area should be mapped on an individual level:

1. core fishing grounds;
2. back-up fishing grounds;
3. lost or historic grounds;
4. transit routes.

A set of draft value questions to explore and prompt thinking on areas of socio-cultural importance have been included in Annex 3: Draft value questions. These questions have been created to collect information about these four key areas that the Working Group prioritised for mapping (listed above).

The draft questions include follow-up questions for each area fishermen identify on the map. For core and back-up fishing grounds, these questions have been designed to collect information on:

1. the gear fishermen use in an area (this was preferred over asking fishermen to identify the fish they target in an area);
2. how long they've fished in an area;
3. why the area is important to them;
4. the common, local name for the area and its origins.

Identifying socio-cultural values

Question 3 above aims to collect information on the socio-cultural values of fishing grounds. During the first workshop, the Working Group identified potential socio-cultural values of fishing grounds in English waters. These were refined during the second workshop and are included in Table 1. The socio-cultural values identified by the Working Group were then categorised into overarching themes (e.g., seasonal value and heritage value), and a practical explanation of the value category was drafted (Table 1).

Table 1 provides an initial list of socio-cultural values relevant to English fishing grounds that could be used within the pilot study as prompts to help fishermen think about some of the socio-cultural values of areas at sea and further developed with results from the pilot study.

Local names of fishing grounds

Fishermen will also be asked if the core and back-up fishing grounds they have identified have a local name, and will be asked to provide the name and to explain the history/origin of the name where possible. This idea of describing fishing grounds with their local names was strongly supported by the Working Group to highlight the culturally important stories embedded within fishing grounds. The Working Group also indicated that most fishermen would be comfortable sharing this information. Where different parts of the community have different names for the same fishing ground, all names will be recorded.

Lost grounds

An extra set of questions has been included in the draft questions for any lost or historic grounds identified by fishermen. These questions are designed to collect information about why they can no longer fish in an area, when they stopped fishing there, the impact that losing it had, and the challenges they faced finding and moving to alternative grounds. These questions were approved by the Working Group in Workshop 2.

Transit routes

A separate set of follow-up questions are included in the draft questions to gather information about the transit routes identified by fishermen. These questions are designed to understand fishermen's dependence on these routes to safely access their fishing ground.

Changes and future threats

Example questions are also included which could be used to gather information about changes and future threats to fishing grounds and transit routes. This includes open-ended questions about the changes fishermen have witnessed in these areas, including ecological or physical changes, but also changes related to fishing activities or other activities; and any challenges fishermen foresee in using these grounds or transit routes in the future. These dynamics were discussed as important factors to consider within this study during Workshop 1 and the questions were approved by the Working Group in Workshop 2. These questions are expected to prompt discussion around issues related to gear conflict, offshore wind farm development, declines in catches, habitat destruction, MPAs, displacement and pollution for example.

However, it was noted that there may be differences in the values and approaches needed based on region and size of vessel, as well as if they are fishing inshore or offshore. Given the diversity of fleet structure and the value of landed fish geographically, there is likely to be variation in social and economic structures in the industry. Participants will be given the opportunity to answer all questions, but can choose not to answer certain questions if they wish.

Table 1 Summary of socio-cultural value categories and associated descriptions agreed by the Working Group

Value category	Workshop examples	Value description
Business value	N/A – economic values were not discussed in this exercise	I value these areas because they contribute to the resilience of my business/livelihood, or because my business depends on income generated from this area
Favourable distance to port/market	Cost of fuel Time at Sea Expected catch	I value these areas because they are close/or easy to access/or I need to be back by a certain time
Physical/Geographical /Ecological value	Favourable physical conditions/features for fishing, including tide, availability of species, wrecks that attract fish and weather	I value these areas because there is a good availability of species/ because there are features such as wrecks that attract fish/ because I can fish for X when the tide is high/ because the seabed is suitable for fishing X or using X gear
Seasonal value	Supports year-round fishing Seasonal areas that make a difference to viability	I value these areas because they support me to fish all-year round/ because I can fish there during the winter months
Safety value	Safety and access of navigation/transit routes Areas in lee or shallows for bad weather/poor weather grounds Sheltered	I value these areas because they are safe/sheltered during bad weather/because they allow me to safely access my grounds.
Heritage value	Familial history/ tradition/ ties – “My family have always fished there” Inherited knowledge Generations build relationships with places, features and grounds	I value these areas because my family/father used to fish there I value this ground because my family has fished here for x generations.
Sentimental value	Can see home / The place holds memories / I grew up in these places	I value these areas because I can see home/port when I’m fishing/ because they hold important memories
Aesthetic value	I like watching the sun come up here	I value these areas for their attractive scenery

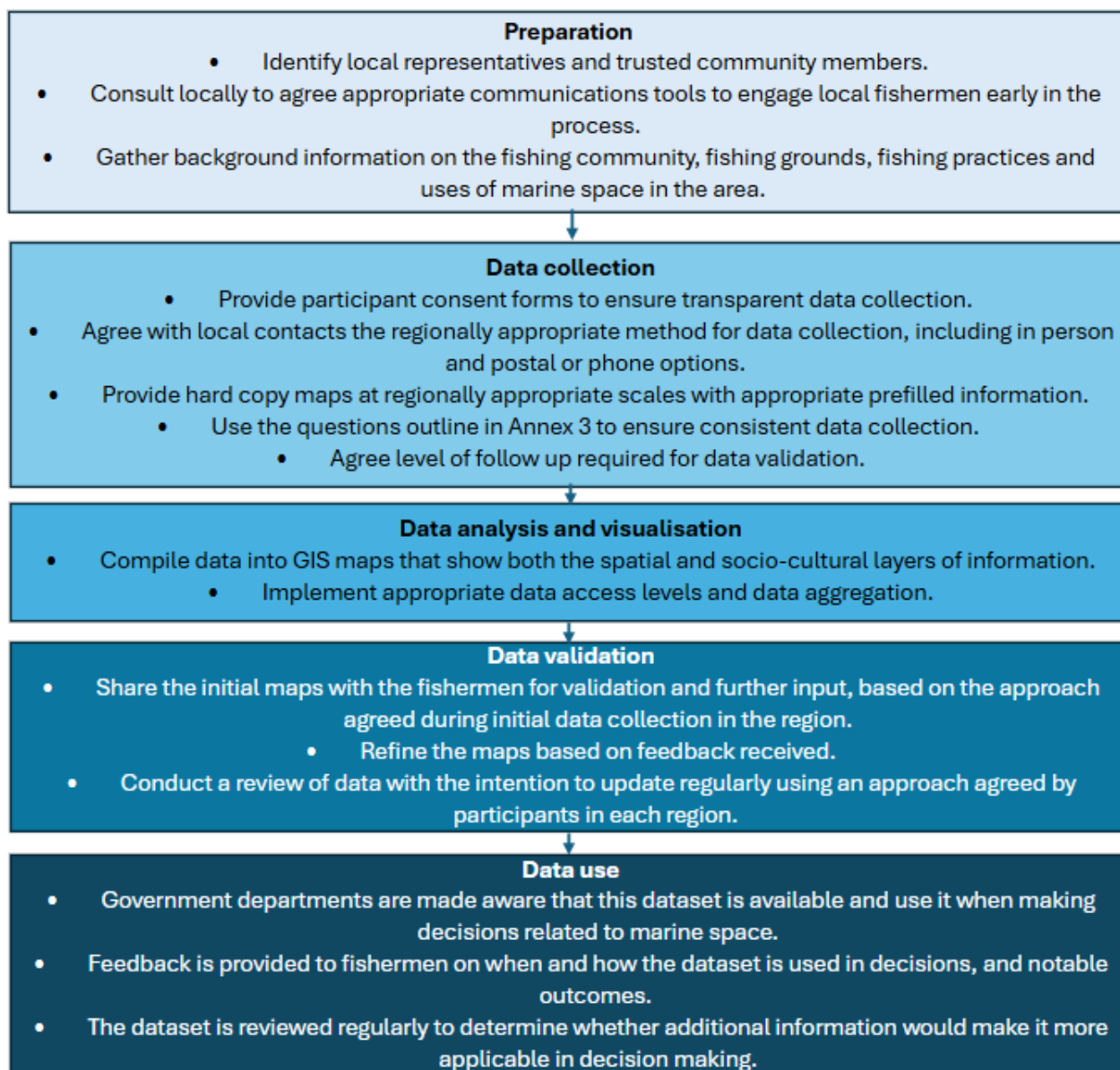
Value category	Workshop examples	Value description
Community value	Coastal community dependence 'Cultural property'- only you know it, only your community knows it.	I value these areas because they are important to the community
Learning and innovation value	Areas important for training new entrants Curiosity	I value these areas because they are important for learning and teaching future generations of fishermen I value these areas because they provide an area to test new gear/techniques

Process for collecting data

Discussion during both workshops highlighted the need for a flexible, hybrid approach to data collection, based on the preferences and working patterns of fishermen in each region and the dynamics of the community. The process for collecting data on socio-cultural values through participatory mapping has been split into five stages (Figure 2):

- preparation;
- data collection;
- data analysis and visualisation;
- data validation and feedback;
- data use.

Figure 2 Process for collecting and mapping data on socio-cultural values



Preparation

The preparation phase requires the identification of local representatives and trusted community members. The Working Group members represent the five English fishing regions (North East 4b, North West 7a, South East 4c, South – 7d, South West 7efg), and will act as the first point of contact in identifying other local representatives and organisations. This includes entities such as Producer Organisations and fishing associations, but also trusted individuals who are known and respected by fishermen in the area. The intention is to engage with all fishermen, not just those represented through membership organisations, and so it will be important that these local representatives help determine regionally appropriate communication tools to engage all fishermen early in the process. Local representatives will also contribute knowledge of the background information required to develop the best data collection strategy for the region (e.g., one to one or in a group) and regionally relevant maps (e.g., are wind farms a concern, are there other existing features that should be included on basemaps).

During the workshops, the Working Group agreed that primary data collection should take place in a venue local to the harbour that fishermen will feel comfortable attending. In some cases, there may be a benefit to hosting an initial group session to help fishermen develop ideas around socio-cultural values, but this was regionally sensitive where some communities may be less willing to share their fishing preferences with others in the region.

Awareness of the project will be raised through implementation of the Communications Strategy, with the intention of engaging as many fishermen as possible. As part of the Communications Strategy, trusted community members will spread information of the project through word of mouth on the quayside. This may include training community members in basic mapping skills and discussing the importance of the mapping project. This approach should contribute to spreading information more widely than just to those fishermen who are members of the various fishing associations. The opportunity to participate in the project will be open to all active and retired fishermen regardless of location or affiliation, not just a random sample of invited participants. Demographic data will be collected during the mapping process to provide clarity on any groups that may be missing.

Collection

The specific approach to data collection will be agreed with local representatives to ensure it meets the needs of the fishing community in the region. The Working Group envisaged that it would primarily take place in-person, through a local drop-in session to account for fishermen's working hours and allow them to provide input at a one-to-one level (although it was noted that in some areas a group approach may be preferable, or that fishermen may like to discuss ideas in a group setting before providing their data individually). This should allow enough time and flexibility that fishermen can contribute to the project without impacting their fishing activity. For those who are unable to attend in person a postal option will be available, in which case paper copies of maps and layers will be provided to fishermen. They will also be offered the opportunity to speak with a member of the Project Implementation Team to help guide them through the questions and mapping approach. The prompt questions outlined in Annex 3: Draft value questions will be used to ensure consistent data collection. The Working Group agreed that the socio-cultural value categories in Table 1 should be provided to project participants to guide them in understanding the types of values they could capture through this project. While the ideal approach would be for participants to provide data without being pre-influenced, the complexity of this topic, and the requirements for digitisation, means a level of categorisation needs to be followed. These values can be reviewed and updated based on learnings from the pilot.

The Working Group agreed that it would be helpful to provide fishermen with maps pre-filled with existing fishing data, including AIS activity and over 12 m VMS activity that they can amend or add to. Using pre-filled maps is expected to reduce any apprehension

fishermen may feel about providing data on their fishing grounds (and is explained further in the summary of Workshop 1).

To assign the values to the mapped fishing ground, each area needs to be numbered, and the corresponding information documented. This can be done by hand or through an Excel table such as the example in Figure 3. This process will ensure the correct values are included in the digital maps when they are produced.

Figure 3 Example information log to support the collection of socio-cultural information associated with the mapped fishing grounds

Stakeholder number: 100							
Mapped area	Category	Common name	Value category	Gear used	Years fish	Season fished	Other important information
1	<i>e.g. core, back up</i>	<i>e.g. Middle Ground</i>	<i>e.g. heritage value</i>	<i>e.g. Pots</i>	<i>e.g. 12</i>	<i>e.g. Winter</i>	<i>e.g. this area has been mentioned in the Magna Carta</i>
2							
3							
4							
5							
6							
7							
8							

Hard copy maps will be provided, including prefilled data based on advice from local representatives. These are likely to require multiple data layers, including:

- chart background;
- VMS data of high levels of activity specific to gear type;
- AIS tracks;
- MPAs;
- aggregates, windfarms, other marine special features.

Examples of these can be seen in Annex 5: Example of prefilled maps to aid data collection and mapping process.

In line with Government ethical requirements for social research (Government Social Research, 2021) and to ensure transparency prior to any data collection, a participant consent form will be provided to the participant, outlining the purpose of the project, how the data will be used and stored, and who will have access to it. An example of this can be found in Annex 4: Draft participation and consent form. The consent form also provides an opportunity for participants to agree to the level of access they are comfortable with their data being available at and determine the most appropriate approach to following up to verify and update the data in future. Participants will have to option to withdraw their data at any time.

Analysis and visualisation

Once participants have added their contributions to the hard copy maps, the information will be compiled into a GIS data viewer to show the distribution of socio-cultural values. The hand drawn maps will be collected at a central point where they can be scanned onto a computer and transposed into GIS software using latitude and longitude points for reference. Where necessary, data will be aggregated for use in decision making and appropriate data access levels and sharing agreements will be adhered to.

Individual contributions will only be available in raw format to the data processors and will be aggregated together. Only data that represent three or more participants having identified the same area will be made available, based on similar practice for other data aggregations. Examples of output maps and access levels are outlined later in the report, and will be refined during the pilot phase as real data is collected. Current options include:

- individual level data, available only to the data processor and the participant upon request;
- processed and aggregated data, available to government bodies for decision making but not attributable to individual vessels;
- high-level maps including the common names of fishing grounds and stories related to the names, which can be accessed by interested stakeholders who sign up to a website (to allow tracking of who is accessing the information).

Validation

Once all data have been collected, they will be digitised and shared for review and feedback from participants who express an interest in continued engagement and refinement. The approach to this will vary by region (online, posted, in person), and will be agreed with each fisherman during the data collection process. There was no agreement during the workshops on whether each participant should only have access to review their own individual contribution or whether the aggregated maps should be made available as well. It was suggested that contact details and appropriate permissions should be sought during the data collection phase, and only those willing to share their own data will be able to review aggregated activity. This will help future proof the project by ensuring fishermen can also be contacted at the next review period in one or two years. Concern was expressed that some fishermen would not want others knowing where they fish, but other participants thought grounds might be missed if there was not an opportunity to review the aggregated maps. This aggregated approach would ensure that the maps accurately represent local knowledge and reflect community input, although does introduce the risk that they may be shared more widely.

If no feedback is received within a stated time period, it will be assumed that the maps are considered correct. Participants can submit updates at any point (e.g., if a ground has been closed), and any updates will be reviewed and digitised quarterly. The intention is that funding will be identified and secured to undertake a full review of the current data

every one to two years to ensure the maps remain up to date, using the same approach as in the initial review opportunity. At this point fishermen will be provided with their initial digitised maps to update with any changes. These could be printed and posted out if participants prefer to review hard copies. This is also an opportunity to request additional information identified during the review and evaluation of the first phase of the project.

Working Group members highlighted the difficulty of engaging with fishermen, and reiterated that some will not participate regardless of the request. The multi-year review process combined with the alternative postal input allows additional opportunity for these fishermen to contribute to the project if they miss the initial data collection phase and decide later on that they are interested in participating.

Use and feedback

The intention is for the data collected through this project to be used by government organisations to aid in marine spatial decision making. Government departments should be made aware that this dataset is available and use it when making decisions that may impact fishing activity.

Working Group participants raised concerns that the information may be used against fishermen, and this highlights the importance of both using this project as an opportunity to build trust with the fishing community as well as the need for Defra to set out a transparent code of conduct regarding data access and use. Working Group members suggested that one step to building trust will be for Defra to feedback to all participants on when and how the dataset is used in decisions, and notable outcomes. This could be included as part of the 1-2 year data update cycle.

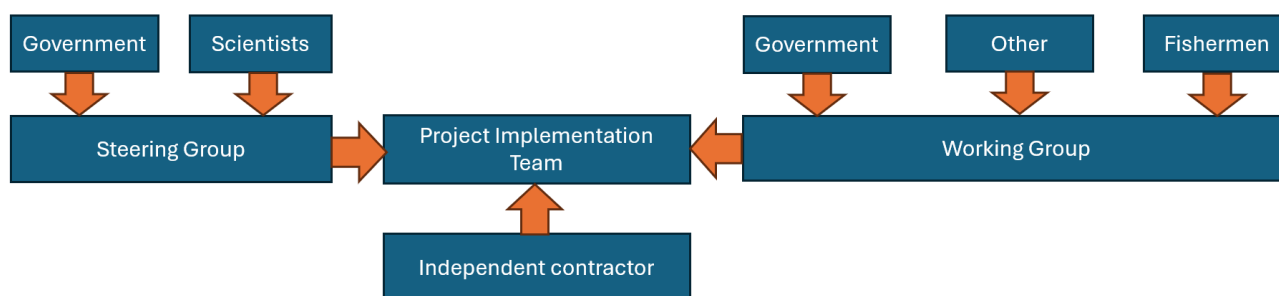
The dataset should be reviewed regularly to determine whether additional information would make it more relevant for decision making.

Governance

The Working Group and Steering Group will continue to meet during the pilot phase to advise the Project Implementation Team, review progress and discuss how best to address any issues with the framework (

Figure 4). In the short term, Defra should identify potential funding for a pilot roll out (discussed in Full pilot) and explore governance options – such as working through a non-government body – that can provide fishermen with sufficient confidence around data confidentiality. Longer term governance arrangements will need to be agreed on as part of the pilot phase.

Figure 4 Suggested governance structure for the pilot phase of the project



Project Implementation Team

A Project Implementation Team will be responsible for coordinating data collection and analysing and aggregating the data for government use. Responsibilities include:

- plan and host Steering Group and Working Group meetings, and provide direction and support to the project in an effective, efficient and proactive manner to support the co-design approach;
- collaborate with the Working Group and Steering Group to finalise plans for the pilot phase, undertake data collection for the pilot phase, digitise and aggregate data collected and provide mapped outputs;
- keep an updated record of all Steering Group and Working Group member organisations and contacts, compliant with GDPR requirements;
- provide information and guidance on how fishermen can engage in the project;
- act as the main point of contact for any queries in relation to the project and coordinate appropriate responses;
- review and refine the socio-cultural mapping framework after the pilot, incorporating lessons learnt ready for a national roll out.

Working Group

The Working Group comprising active fishermen and fishing representatives was set up through the co-design process in this phase of the project and has agreed to continue participating during the pilot phase. The Working Group comprises fishing stakeholders, Defra, and others such as socio-cultural mapping specialists. The Working Group will proactively participate in planning workshops, with the intention to support the engagement of fishermen in the pilot areas, support the data collection process, and help problem solve any issues that are identified during the pilot. This group will work together to implement the lessons learnt from the pilot and ensure a successful national roll out.

Significant focus areas will be around data access, communications plans, and how to visualise data.

Steering Group

The Steering Group will be responsible for providing expert advice, giving direction and providing feedback on the work. The following will be invited to form the Steering Group:

- Defra policy and evidence teams;
- MMO;
- Cefas;
- Natural England;
- Association of Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities (AIFCA);
- JNCC;
- relevant fishing industry representatives.

During the pilot phase the Steering Group will support the engagement of fishermen in the pilot areas, support the data collection process, provide guidance on data collection and aggregation, and help problem solve any issues that are identified during the pilot by providing information, expertise and other support that is identified and needed to ensure the project is successful.

Project decision-making

As this is a co-design project, the main steer and input will come from the Working Group. The Working Group, Steering Group, and Project Implementation Team will act collectively to deliver a successful pilot and national roll out. There is a presumption in favour of decisions being made through consensus. Where there is no consensus, items will be resolved by a vote, where each Working Group member will have one vote. Wherever possible, the Working Group will proactively determine a way forward that is suitable to all members.

Contributions gathered through the co-design process will be prioritised as much as possible. The Defra team will be responsible for ensuring that the project outputs are in line with the UK Government approach to fisheries management and compatible with other Government spatial tools.

Data access

Concerns were raised during the workshops related to data access and who holds or owns the data. The Working Group indicated that fishermen are cautious about sharing information that might be used against them and highlighted the importance of data being held by a trusted party. Table 2 outlines some of the potential data holders and owners, and the pros and cons of each.

Table 2 Pros and cons for potential holders of data for the national roll

Organisation	Pros	Cons
Defra	• Data are readily available to policymakers for decision making • Existing capacity to manage the data • Does not require external funding to support data management • Already have social science team in place	• Are subject to Freedom of Information (FOI) requests • Lack fishermen's trust
MMO	• Data are readily available to policymakers for decision making • Existing capacity to manage the data • Does not require external funding to support data management • Already have social science team in place	• Are subject to FOI requests • Lack fishermen's trust
Cefas	• Data are readily available to policymakers for decision making • Existing capacity to manage the data • Already have social science team in place	• Are subject to FOI requests
Seafish	• More trusted by the fishing industry	• Are subject to FOI requests • Requires external funding to support data management • No social science team in place
Fisheries organisation (e.g., NFFO or CFPO)	• Trusted by the fishing industry • Fishing industry is empowered to manage their own data	• Some may be subject to FOI requests • Not all vessels are members of these groups and may not be willing to share data with them • Requires external funding to support data management • Differing internal capacities to manage the data • Data are less readily available to government policymakers
Independent/non-governmental organisation (e.g., ABPmer)	• Less likely to be subject to an FOI request • Seen as independent	• Requires external funding to support data management • Fishermen may have less knowledge of this organisation and could therefore be suspicious • Data are less readily available to government policymakers

In the short term the Working Group agreed that an independent party (not government affiliated) could hold the data during the pilot phase, while the project processes were still being tested and refined. This provides more time for the Defra team to discuss internally what their legal and financial requirements and responsibilities to the project are.

In the longer term, Defra will need to develop a solution that will allow fishermen to contribute to the project without fear of their information being misused. The Participant Consent Form and the Communications Strategy will be key to ensuring there is transparency on how data might be used, especially if there is a risk that aggregated data held by a public body could be subject to a Freedom of Information request.

Although no agreement was reached by the Working Group, there were discussions on the level of data access that could inform the future approach. Figure 5 outlines potential levels of data accessibility. Initially data will be collected at an individual level, with access granted only to the few members of the Project Implementation Team required to upload, process and aggregate the data. Aggregated maps will be available to government bodies to support decision making and a high-level map containing limited information such as common names of fishing grounds can be made publicly available on a website for interested stakeholders to sign up to access. This level of data would be widely available.

The Working Group also discussed the approach to areas that might only be mapped by one individual. By aggregating and only publishing data that represents three or more participants, some areas may not be considered even though the information has been provided. The Working Group suggested there should be a provision for requesting permission to include these data, which would not be associated with any individual identifiers, so it can still be considered in any decision making. This approach would need to be agreed upon with each participant through the consent form, and can be refined further during the pilot.

Permission will be sought during the data collection stage, using the Participant Consent Form to determine preference for the level of data sharing and details on how participants can withdraw their information if they no longer wish to participate in the project. All participants can request access to their own individual data but only those who have agreed to share their data can see the aggregated maps and information, specific to the region they fish in. Participants can also confirm the sharing of their individual input with their representative organisations and associations, so they have access to it when needed for consultations.

Data collected during the pilot will enable GIS maps to be developed that demonstrate the possible final outputs of the project. These maps will help the Project Implementation Team and the Working Group to determine the level of access and information that they consider acceptable to share.

The process for digitising the hand drawn maps can be found in Annex 6: Process for digitising maps.

Images have been provided of mapped examples, and correlate with the data access levels discussed above. However, the maps included here are taken from an online data viewer which provides the user with the ability to zoom into a region and interrogate the reason for an area having been added to the map e.g., historic ground with sentimental

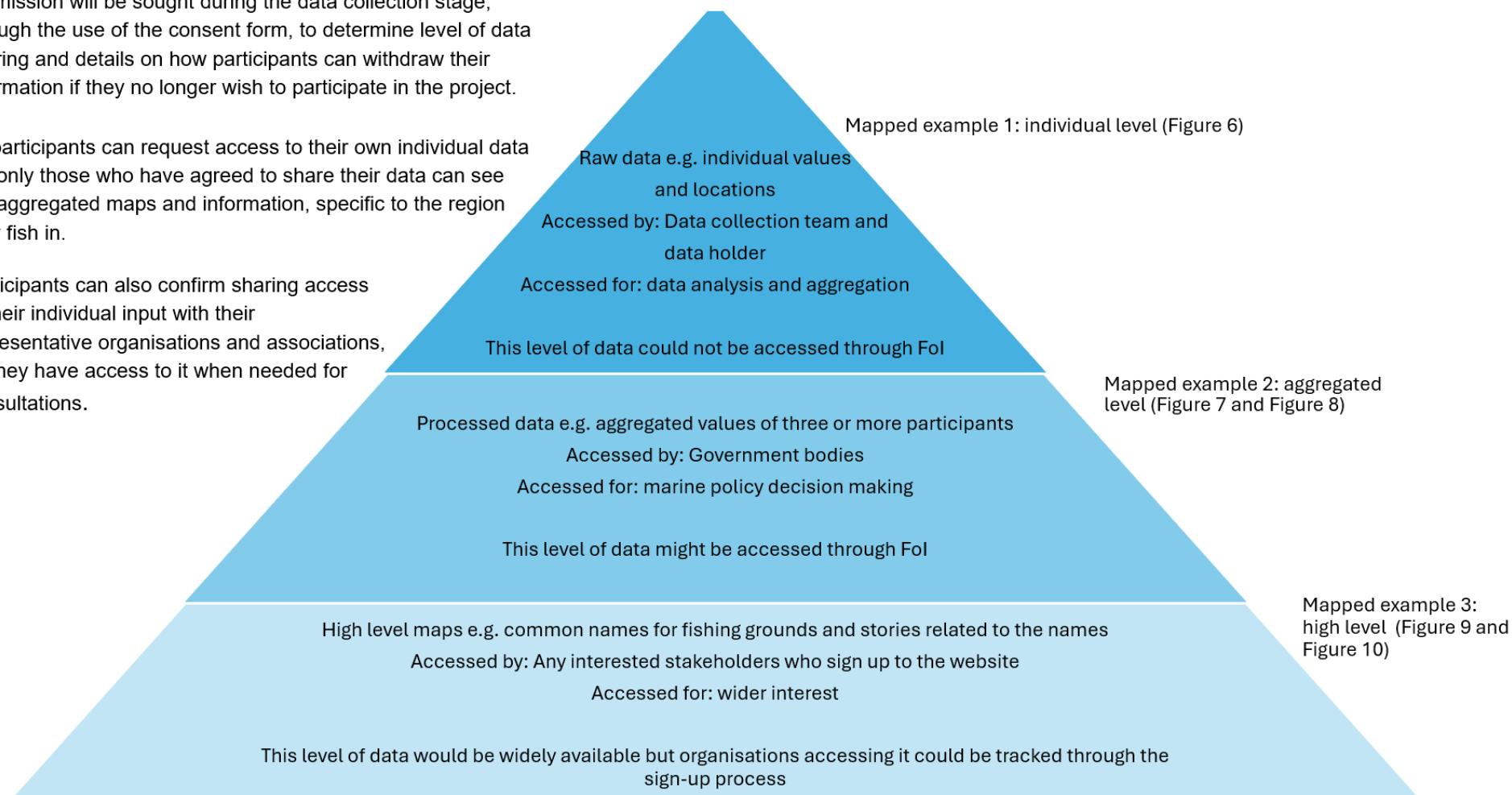
value. These images are examples of what could be produced, but until the pilot has taken place to collect actual participant data, a final example cannot be produced.

Figure 5 Example structure for data access and aggregation

Permission will be sought during the data collection stage, through the use of the consent form, to determine level of data sharing and details on how participants can withdraw their information if they no longer wish to participate in the project.

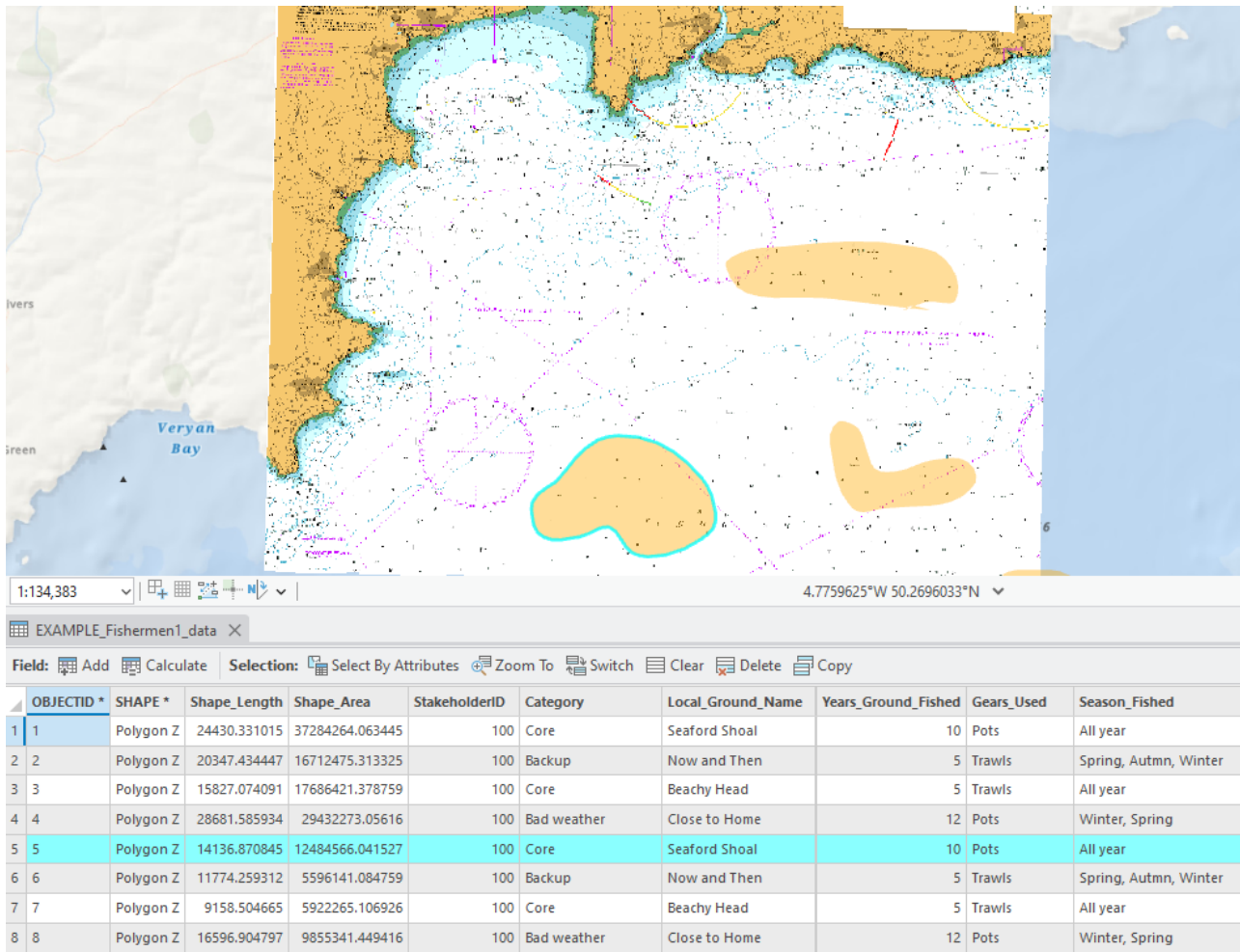
All participants can request access to their own individual data but only those who have agreed to share their data can see the aggregated maps and information, specific to the region they fish in.

Participants can also confirm sharing access of their individual input with their representative organisations and associations, so they have access to it when needed for consultations.



Mapped example 1: individual level

Figure 6 Example of how an individual participants contribution could look once digitised. Access to this level of information would be restricted to the data processor and the individual participant upon request



Mapped example 2: Aggregated level

Figure 7 Example of how multiple participants contribution could look once digitised. Access to this level of information would be restricted to the data processor and the individual participants upon request

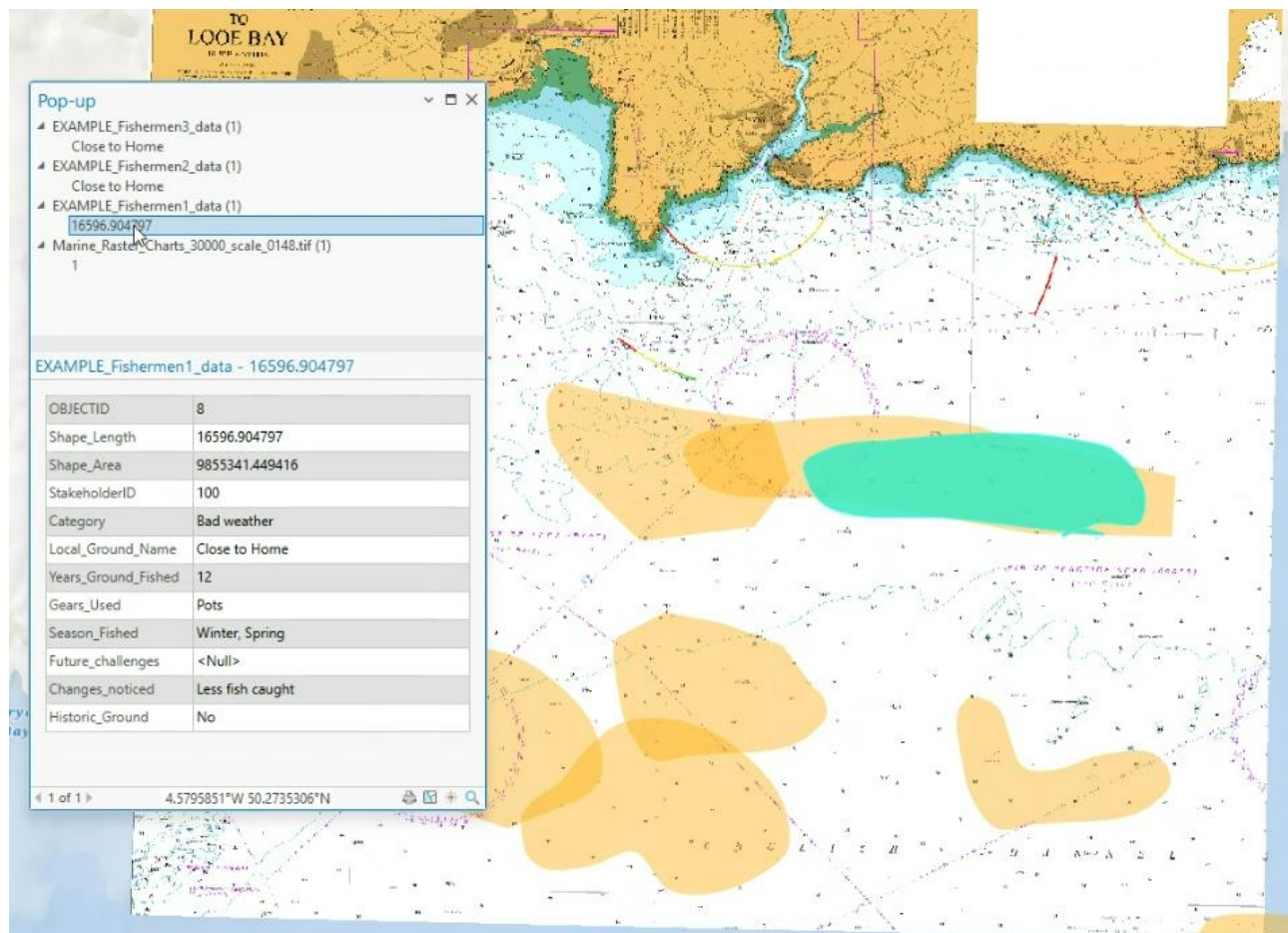
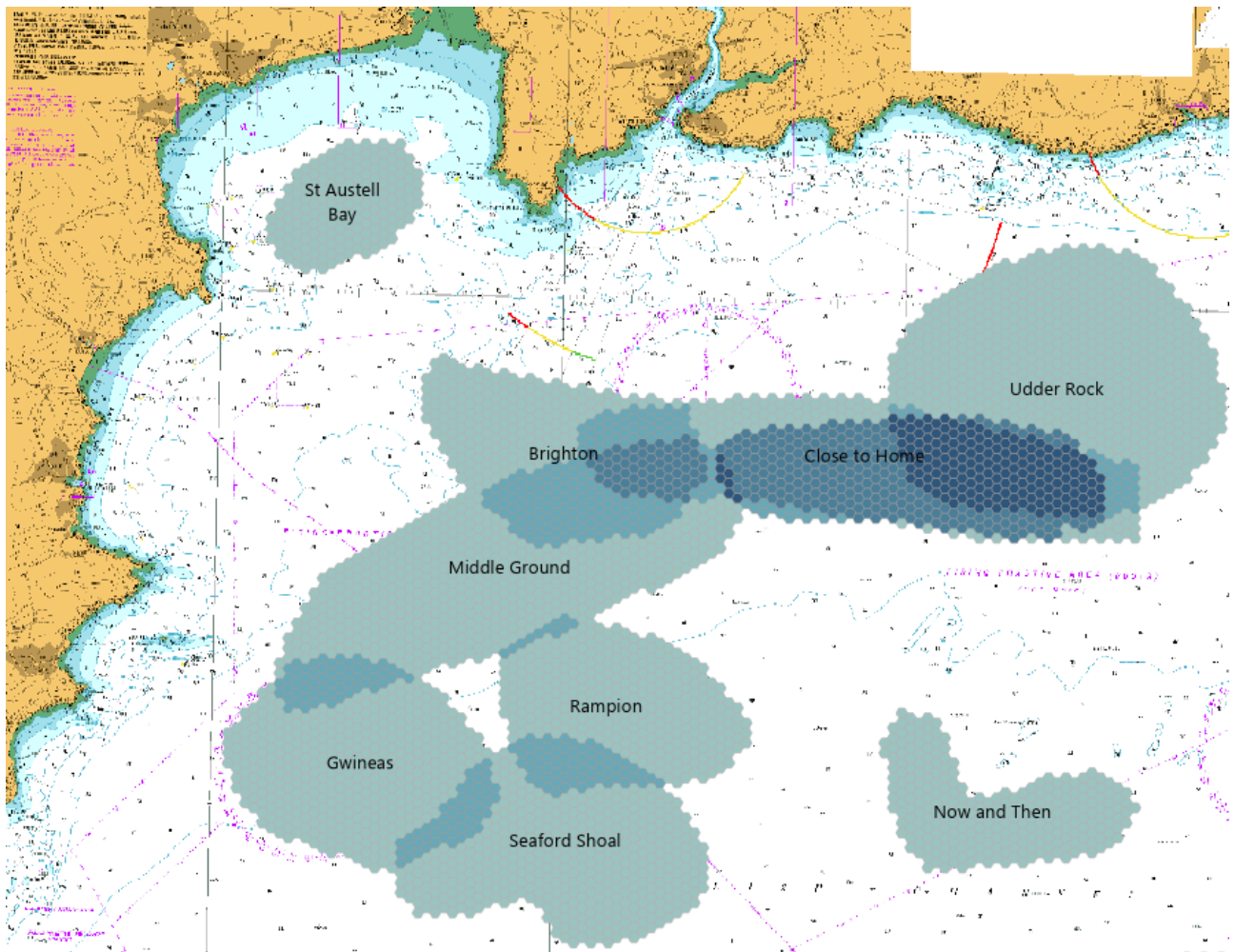


Figure 8 Example of how multiple participants' contributions could look once digitised as a heat map. Using the heatmap approach provides insight into how many participants mapped each area, but not any detail on the reason. Access to this layer of information would be restricted to the data processor and the individual participants upon request



Mapped example 3: High level

Figure 9 Example of how multiple participants' contributions could look once digitised. Access to this layer of information could be for wider stakeholders, requiring sign up to access so that users can be tracked.

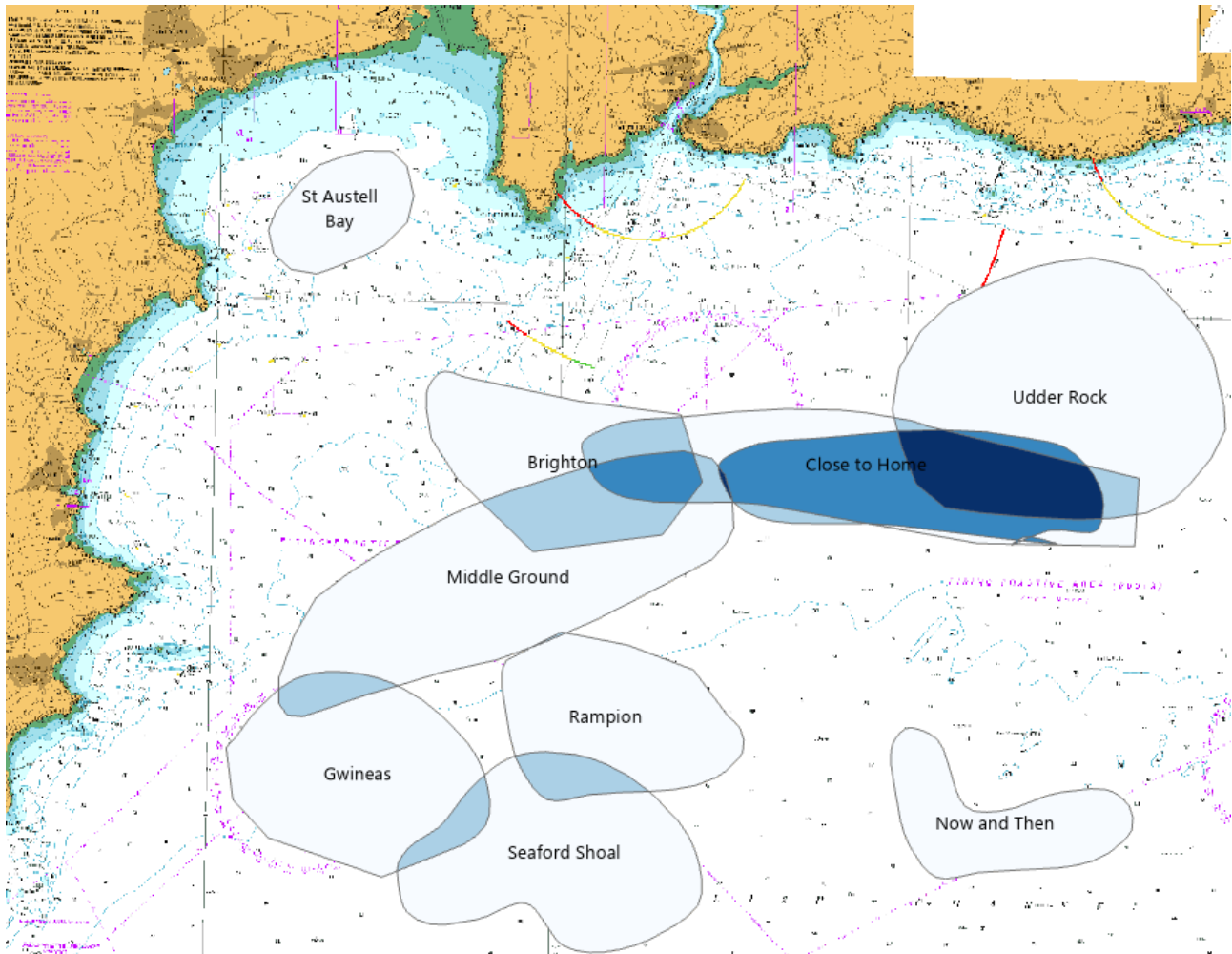
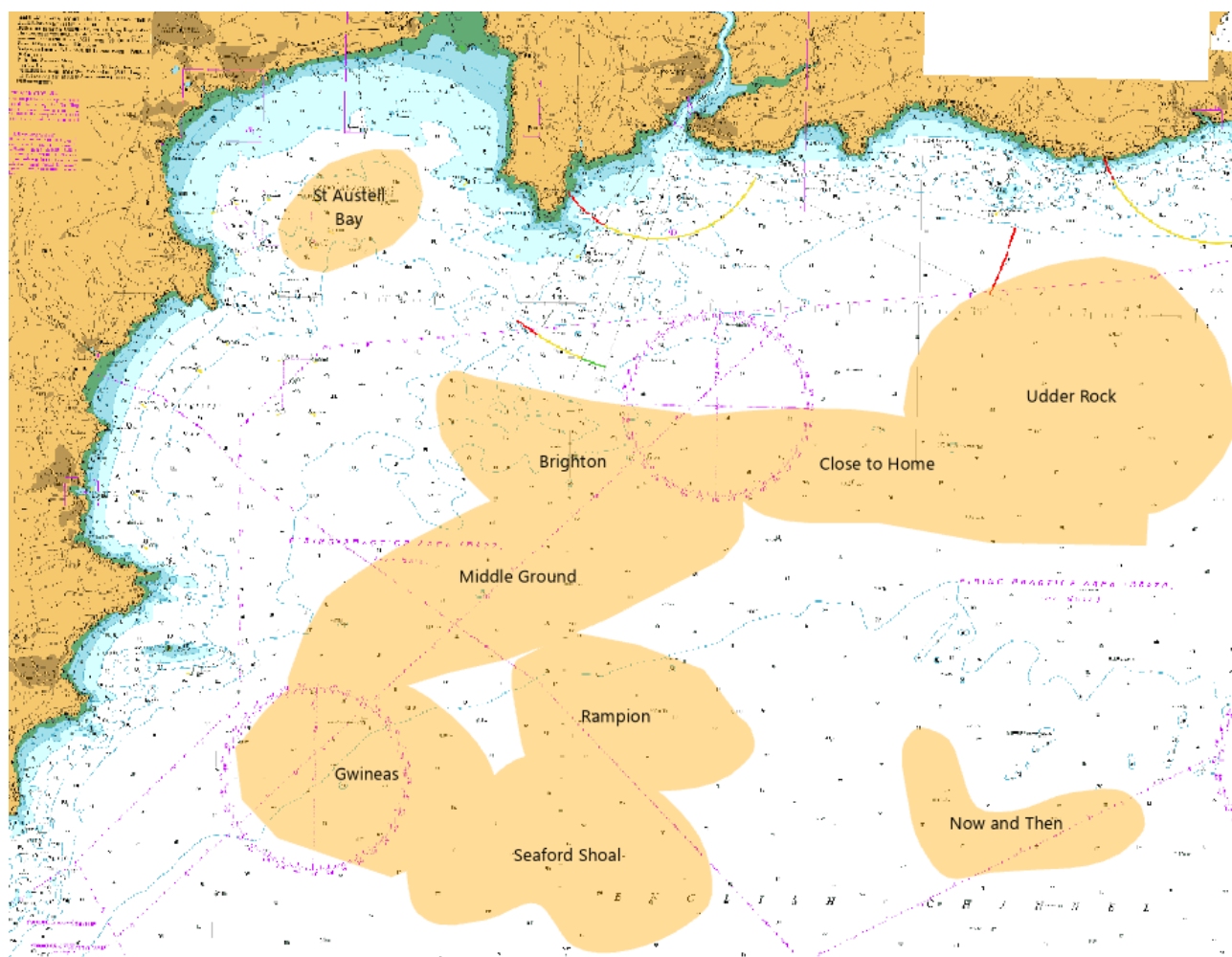


Figure 10 Example of how multiple participants' contributions could look once digitised and flattened. Access to this layer of information could be for wider stakeholders, requiring sign up to access so that users can be tracked.



Risks associated with data access

The concerns voiced by the Working Group over who has access to and ownership of the data need to be seriously considered during the pilot and national roll out of this project. However, as the purpose of the project is to use the information gathered to inform decision making there does need to be a level of access available for decision makers. Once the information is used by a public body it may become subject to a Freedom of Information request, and end up in the public domain. If the eventual decision on data access and ownership mean this is likely to happen, participants should be notified prior to providing any information to ensure full transparency. Table 3 sets out the risks associated with public access to data collected.

Table 3 Risks associated with public and private levels of data access

Publicly accessible data	Privately/independently held data
Loss of trust from fishermen	May not be accessible for marine decisions that are not made by government e.g., The Crown Estate
Data used for purposes not originally intended	
Expansion and interest in mapped areas from other fishermen preventing normal access to fishing grounds	May not be accessible for fishing industry organisations to use themselves in response to consultations
Business impacts from sharing business critical information that could be exploited	May not be able to prevent sharing under an FOI if the data have been used in a government decision
Stock impacts if other vessels change fishing locations	

During Workshop 2, the Defra team suggested that it might be useful in the next phase of the project to 'role-play' the worst-case scenario regarding data publication. During Steering Group meeting 2, one of the members explained that based on experience there will always be vocal opponents to sharing information publicly, but that does not prevent many others from participating and prioritising having their information considered in decision making processes.

Communications Strategy

The Communications Strategy is designed to guide effective communications and fishing engagement for the future regional and national roll out of the mapping project. Outputs developed based on the strategy will have two main purposes: to raise awareness of the project and intended outcomes, and to drive engagement with the fishing industry (the project's key audience). The Communications Strategy will be amended as needed to incorporate learning from the regional pilots.

The Communications Strategy outlines:

- key messages which act as signals for the content, language, and tone of all communications;
- segments of the fishing industry and considerations in relation to their engagement;
- communication tools which the project may use in different regions and at different points during the project to engage with a range of fishermen;
- other audiences important to the project (e.g., policymakers) and the key message themes that should be prioritised in any communications to these;
- guidelines for developing accessible communication materials;
- sign-off procedures for communication materials;
- communication risks and how these can be mitigated.

The Communications Strategy is contained in Annex 7: Communications strategy.

Branding guidelines and a suite of communication materials have been created to provide examples and templates (screenshots of a selection of these are given in Figure A7.1 to Figure A7.3) for use in the pilots and the national roll out. The materials include:

- flyer (one-sided, for digital use)
- flyer (two-sided, for print use)
- social media graphics:
 - Facebook graphic
 - X graphic (note, graphics for X and Instagram should use the same dimensions, so the X and Instagram graphics supplied for this project can be used interchangeably)
 - Instagram graphic
- short PowerPoint presentation deck, including template slides and slides with pre-filled information about the project.

The above materials, branding guidelines, and visual assets are provided in an accompanying zip folder. The zip folder also contains a 'Read me' Word document providing links to editable versions of the flyers and social media graphics, and instructions for future purchase of licenses for the icons used in the project branding. Mindfully Wired will be available to respond to any future queries regarding the use of the communication materials or purchase of the icons.

Proposed project name and tagline

The Working Group discussed options for the project name and tag line, and highlighted the importance of getting this right. The name and tagline were selected from a shortlist which was voted on by the Working Group and reviewed by the Steering Group. Both groups showed a clear preference for “Mapping what Matters” as the project name.

The Working Group preferred the tagline “Safeguarding fishing grounds for the future” (8 votes), with the next most popular tagline being “Capturing the importance of English fishing grounds” (4 votes). The latter is strongly recommended, as the use of the term “safeguarding” risks creating undue expectations among fishermen about the potential future impacts of the project, which ultimately risks undermining the fishing industry’s goodwill towards and engagement with the project and any future similar work by project partners. This risk is further detailed in Annex 7: Communications strategy.

The Communications Strategy also details guidelines for how and when the project name and tagline should be used in project communications.

4. Recommendations for regional pilot and future roll out

Significant progress was made by the Working Group during this phase of the project to determine an overarching framework to gather information on socio-cultural values. This framework will be tested and refined during the pilot phase:

Data collection approach – the pilot will provide an opportunity to test the methodology outlined for collecting the data, and determine the feasibility of organising and running drop in sessions at a regional level.

Communication strategy – the pilot will enable the approaches in the Communication Strategy to be tested with the target audience and participants, with learnings used to refine the strategy in advance of a wider roll out as needed.

Values identified – the Working Group indicated a preference for examples of socio-cultural values to be provided during the pilot, and a list of these values was gathered during the first workshop. The pilot will enable the Project Implementation Team to identify additional values that may have been missed during the process so far.

Appropriate value questions – the success of the project will depend on the clear and appropriate wording of the value questions designed to prompt participants to identify fishing areas and the associated socio-cultural values. Using these questions during the pilot will quickly show whether they are supporting socio-cultural mapping processes, or need to be updated to ensure future success.

Data access – the pilot will provide an opportunity to understand if there are concerns over data access levels from a wider group of fishermen, whether they have suggested solutions, and afford time for the Defra team to discuss and resolve internal data access questions. The Working Group will contribute to developing and agreeing an approach to data access and sharing that broadly suits the fishing industry and the government.

Mapped outputs – Examples of potential mapped outputs have been included in this report, but these are currently theoretical and so it will be important to test the process based on real data gathered through the pilot one-to-one sessions. This will help identify any additional information needed to ensure efficient and accurate conversion of the hand drawn maps into the data viewer, and to determine the best approach to aggregating the data. Understanding how these maps will look and the information they will convey may help resolve fishermen's concerns about how the data might be used.

Cefas (2025) recommended a pilot study focused on the south-west. This was discussed in Workshop 2 and resulted in the following recommendations:

- refining the 'south-west' to a smaller area of the south-west (Brixham), but also running a second pilot elsewhere in England (Whitby) to gather multiple perspectives on the approach and how it may need to vary regionally. These

regions were selected by the Working Group based on members volunteering their local knowledge and experience of fishing in these harbours to support the first steps of the trial in these areas;

- use of Working Group members in the first instance to start the engagement process in the identified areas and to provide advice on regionally appropriate approaches to data collection, values and prefilled maps;
- early engagement with local representatives to determine the scale and content of the maps provided to aid the mapping process, as well as to highlight the types of values that might be present in the area;
- review of fishing activity prior to meetings with fishermen to determine local fishing practices, cultural heritage, seasonal variations, socio-economic impacts, landings and activity data in the area to indicate the scope of how many participants could be involved;
- the importance of encouraging involvement from all fishermen, including retired fishermen, and ensuring the opportunity is communicated widely rather than only to members of certain organisations. This needs to include larger offshore vessels which may be harder to contact;
- the Working Group indicated the importance of recognising the value of the information provided by participants and considering ways to support fishermen to participate in the project, including the suggestion from the Working Group that those involved in the pilots could be compensated for the time taken to contribute to this project;
- while Defra needs to determine the appropriate approach to data storage and access, information collected through the pilot will be held by an independent organisation so fishermen feel reassured about who can access their data;
- consent forms must be provided, including details on data governance, data sharing, withdrawal process, and contact and feedback preferences.

Pre-pilot testing

We propose a pre-pilot testing phase with a small group of fishermen to allow us to test the above on a manageable scale, with the aim of gathering feedback on the approach from participants prior to rolling out the full pilot. This would be followed by the roll out of a full pilot in two regions: Whitby and Brixham.

Pre-pilot data collection

The concerns raised by the Working Group about data access and data sharing demonstrates the need for a preliminary data collection exercise so that the final output maps can be created and shared with participants for reassurance about the type and level of information that will be available. After discussions in Workshop 2, this pre-pilot testing can be set up through South Devon and Channel Shellfishermen's Association (SD&CS).

SD&CS have over 50 vessels in their fleet, with a mix of gears and vessel sizes (<6 m to >20 m). The majority pot for crab and lobster, but there are also members in rod and line

fishing, hand diving, hand haul scalloping, very small-scale mid-water trawling (beach boats mainly), potting for scallops, fyke netting and static netting. The majority of the membership fish inshore in the Inshore Potting Agreement (IPA) area, but some members fish in the Western and Mid Channel and waters around the UK and into EU waters.

As the organisation was formed in 1968, many of the membership's core fishing grounds are already known and communicated publicly on the SD&CS website (IPA/Mid Channel and Lyme Bay). The organisation has already completed some work on their fishing heritage during a lottery-funded project called "Guardians of the Reef", (including collecting the names of fishing marks and grounds that were used in the past and continue to be used today) so the expectation is that the membership will be receptive for a pre-pilot to test methodology.

The group are used to working together and meeting centrally at Stokenham Village Hall. Starting off with one industry group allows for a degree of control over the level of participation which will support this initial test. The SD&CS Vice Chairman and Executive Officer are able to target their communications to engage SD&CS members as well as non-member fishermen based in the area so that participation is not perceived to be restrictive or suffering from favouritism.

Once data have been collected, digitised and aggregated, the maps produced can be used to demonstrate final outputs to future participants. Gathering data through one initial group will allow us to test the value assumptions, data collection methodology and the viability of the final mapping outputs as well as receiving feedback from participants on their experience with the process to build robustness ahead of the full pilot.

Full pilot

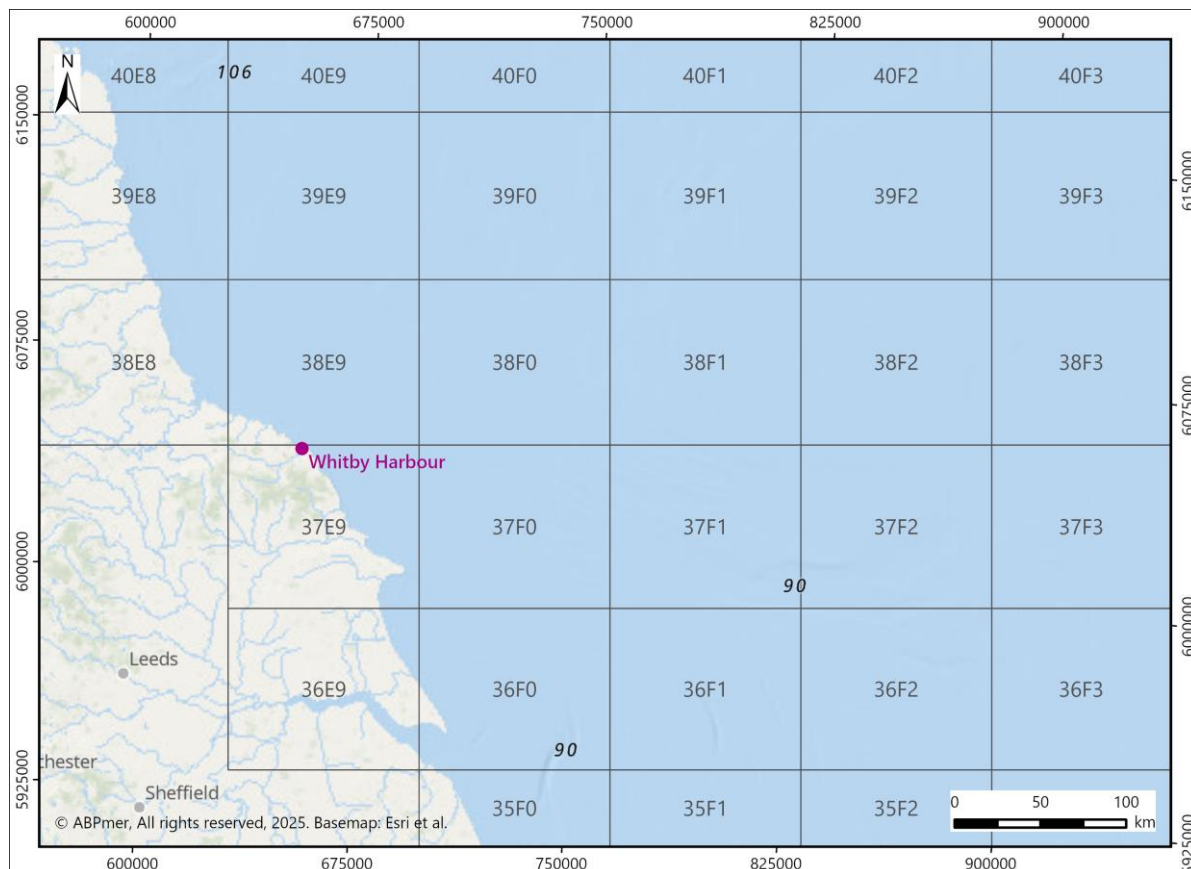
The Working Group agreed that the pilot locations should be in an area where one of the Working Group members can lead on engagement. This was considered particularly important as it would be difficult to reach the right people and levels of engagement without a trusted individual advocating for the project at the local level. It was concluded that Whitby would make an interesting pilot location from the East Coast, that has experienced a lot of changes from trawling to potting for example, and a Working Group member agreed to help facilitate a pilot in this area. Another Working Group member volunteered to facilitate a pilot in the South West (Brixham).

Whitby

The Whitby pilot area will focus on vessels with a listed home port of Whitby. The MMO vessel lists currently indicate there are 28 under-10 m vessels and 5 over-10 m vessels registered to Whitby. Of these vessels, 26 are non-sector, four are members of the Eastern England Fish Producers' Organisation (FPO), two are members of the Anglo-Scottish PO, and one is a member of the North Sea FPO. Conversations with local representatives will determine whether this trial should focus solely on Whitby, or whether it would benefit from including an additional harbour in the North East to ensure sufficient engagement.

Local representatives will determine the extent of the maps provided, but it is noted that landings into Whitby are sourced from 17 ICES Rectangles, with most fishing activity in this area attributed to ICES Rectangles 38E9, 37F0, 36F0 and 37E9. 62% of landings into Whitby are from dredge gear and 29% from potting (MMO, 2023).

Figure 11 Location of Whitby harbour



The pilot will require contact with the stakeholders set out in the communications plan specific to the region, based on the approaches set out in the Communications Strategy (Annex 7: Communications strategy). Caution was advised by the Working Group when considering approaching the Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (IFCA) or the MMO at this early project stage as the level of trust in these organisations may impact fishermen's perception of the project. However, the responsibilities of these organisations may need to be reassessed over the medium and long term, depending on the evolving trust dynamics between the industry and regulators. It is anticipated that layers required will include:

- processed VMS data to produce polygons of areas of high activity (in particular for pot and trawl gears);
- AIS;
- offshore wind farms;
- aggregate areas;
- MPAs.

Brixham

The Brixham pilot area will focus on vessels with a listed home port of Brixham. The MMO vessel lists currently indicate there are 69 under-10 m vessels and 54 over-10 m vessels registered at this home port. Of these vessels, 84 are non-sector, 23 are members of the Western FPO, 12 are members of the South Western FPO, three are members of the Cornish FPO, and one is a member of the North Sea FPO. There are also vessels fishing in this area that are registered to home ports further afield.

Local representatives will determine the extent of the maps provided, but it is noted that landings into Brixham are sourced from 31 ICES Rectangles, with most fishing activity in this area attributed to ICES Rectangles 29E6, 28E6 and 29E7. 61% of landings into Brixham are from beam trawl gear, 22% from dredging, and 13% from demersal trawling (MMO, 2023).

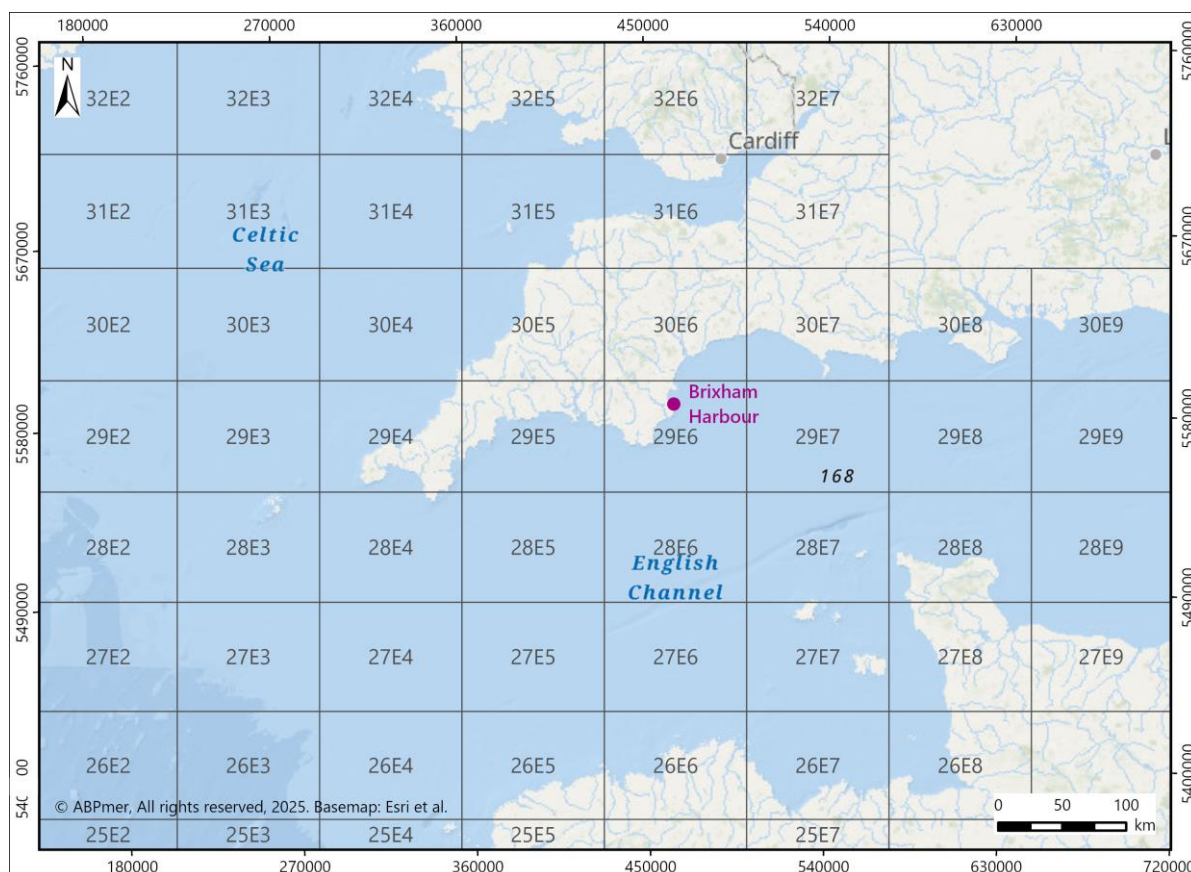
Having already identified this region for the pre-pilot, there will be an opportunity to reach out to some stakeholders in person while the data collection test is underway. The pilot will require contact with the stakeholders set out in the communications plan specific to the region, based on the approaches set out in the Communications Strategy. Caution was advised by the Working Group when considering approaching the IFCA or the MMO at this stage as the level of trust in these organisations in some area may impact fishermen's perception of the project.

It is anticipated that layers required will include:

- processed VMS data to produce polygons of areas of high activity (in particular for pot, trawl and dredge gears);
- AIS;
- fisheries management areas (e.g. IPA area);
- offshore wind farms;
- aggregate areas;
- MPAs.

The scale of maps will need to cover the local area as well as the wider ICES Rectangles where fishing activity has been identified for landings into Brixham. This should be confirmed with local contacts prior to the pilot.

Figure 12 Location of Brixham harbour



Next steps for pilot roll out

The Working Group and Steering Group will remain in place for this pilot phase, to allow the project team to refine the methodology and review the data collected as part of an iterative, co-design approach.

1. Agree an interim data holder and data governance approach for the pilot phase.
2. Initiate pre-pilot testing with targeted group to test data collection and digitisation methods.
3. Process data from the pre-pilot and work with the Working Group to agree any adjustments to data aggregation and presentation, lessons learned from pre-pilot testing to be fed into implementation of full pilot.
4. Confirm with Working Group representatives for the full pilot region:
 - local fishing organisations, associations, and trusted representatives to work with;
 - assumptions on local fishing activities;
 - scale and content of prefilled maps;
 - appropriate regional methodology for data collection;
 - any local sensitivities or conflicts that the Project Implementation Team should be aware of.

5. Agree and implement regional communications plan.
6. Identify appropriate dates, times and locations to gather fishermen's contributions.

Communications plan

The following communications plan has been developed to the extent possible, in advance of all details of the pilots (e.g. start and end dates, and budget) being determined. The plan is broadly the same for both Whitby and Brixham, with information specific to either region also included. Actions are numbered for ease of referencing rather than to indicate time of implementation.

High-level Gantt of actions

A high-level Gantt chart of actions for each of the two pilots is given in Figure 13 below. Note that although the timeline in Figure 13 runs until Week 8 (W8), the communications actions should continue – as appropriate and practical – until the end of the drop-in period. If one pilot is scheduled to happen before the other, the timing of Actions 1, 4, and 6 should be tied to the earlier pilot (as these relate to both pilots). The timing of other actions can be separated by pilot.

Most actions should occur from around four weeks before the first drop-in, to avoid the risk of fishermen becoming fatigued with project messaging and communications. However, the recommended timing is based on the assumption that the drop-ins will be held near to the harbourside where fishermen work, will be open for at least two hours, and will happen on at least two different days. If this will not be the case for the pilots, actions currently set to begin from four weeks before the drop-in should instead begin from five or from six weeks before the drop-in (for the respective pilot regions) so that fishermen receive enough notice to plan their attendance.

Figure 13: High-level Gantt chart, with the main communications “launch” happening during Week 4 (W4), and the first drop-in happening during Week 8 (W8).

Action no.	Action	M1				M2			
		W1	W2	W3	W4	W5	W6	W7	W8
1	<i>Splash page development</i>								
	<i>Splash page launch</i>								
	Webpage development								
	Webpage launch								
2	Brief trusted local representatives								
	Engage fishermen via trusted local representatives								
3	Encourage word-of-mouth among fishermen								
4	Publication in trade media outlets								
5	Social media - fishermen								
	Social media - trusted local representatives								
	Social media - project partners								
6	Newsletters								
7	Flyers and posters distributed								
	Flyers and posters displayed/handed out								

Action 1: Creation of splash page or webpage

Timing: Publish before issuing any public-facing communications

Detail: If the project budget and timeframe allow, a “splash page” (i.e. a website formed of a single page) will be created. Note that a splash page will need slightly more lead-in time to develop; a web developer can create a splash page in a day, but time for review and sign-off processes for copy and visual design will need to be built in. If a splash page is not opted for, a new webpage will need to be created on the website of one of the project partners, with review and sign-off of the copy.

The page will include the following content, which can be updated as needed:

- overview of the pilot and overall project;
- step-by-step process of how participation by fishermen will work;
- FAQ (see suggested questions for this in the Communications Strategy);
- contact details for enquiries.

All other public-facing communications will signpost to this page with the use of hyperlinks and QR codes.

Action 2: Engage fishermen via trusted local representatives

Timing: Brief and equip trusted local representatives to enable them to begin contacting fishermen from four weeks before the first drop-in.

Detail: Trusted local representatives will be given the choice of which communication methods they use to engage with fishermen based on their expertise and experience. Such methods could include any of the following:

- direct email or phone;
- WhatsApp and other social media platforms, including publicly visible and/or private group-based spaces (see Action 6);
- newsletters (see Action 7);
- handing out flyers and/or displaying posters (see Action 8).

Trusted local representatives asked to engage with fishermen will receive a comprehensive briefing pack containing:

- boilerplate messaging and graphics for disseminating via methods such as social media and newsletters (see Actions 6 and 7);
- key information on timing and location of drop-ins, the postal option, review of aggregated information, benefits of involvement for fishermen, any compensation offered, how fishermen’s information will be stored, and any other useful information.

Note that trusted local representatives should be asked to contact fishermen no earlier than four weeks before the first drop-in – if possible – to avoid the risk of fatigue with project messaging and communications. Examples of trusted local representatives for the pilots are provided below. Additional trusted representatives may become known to the team and can be added.

Whitby trusted local representatives

- Whitby Commercial Fishing Association;
- Eastern England FPO;
- Anglo-Scottish FPO;
- North Sea FPO;
- NFFO (North East Regional Committee);
- Fishing Collective.

Brixham trusted local representatives

- South Devon and Channel Shellfishermen's Association (SD&CS);
- South West FPO;
- Western FPO;
- Cornish FPO;
- Torquay fishermen's association;
- NFFO (South West Committee and non-sector representative for the NFFO under-10s);
- Seafish (regional representative);
- Fishermen's Mission – Area Officer;
- Waterdance;
- Brixham Fish Market.

Action 3: Encourage word-of-mouth among fishermen

Timing: Any time.

Detail: This action primarily rests on fishermen or fishing representatives and members of the project team, Working Group, and Steering Group. A comprehensive briefing will be provided, which will include information on:

- the process for participation (location, timing and process of drop-ins, the alternative postal option, and the opportunity to review the aggregated/digitised information)
- benefits of involvement for fishermen
- any compensation offered
- how fishermen's information will be stored and accessed.

This action can be implemented at “any time” because discussion about the project will likely come up organically in fishermen's conversations with each other, and it would be unreasonable to ask fishermen not to talk about the project until a certain date. It is

important to avoid curtailing organic enthusiasm and discourse around the drop-ins, as the inherent trust between fishermen will be one of the most powerful tools in encouraging participation.

For **Brixham** specifically, members of the South Devon and Channel Shellfishermen's Association (SD&CS) who have taken part in the pre-pilot will be encouraged to spread word about the pilot.

Action 4: Publication in trade media outlets

Timing: Ideally four weeks before the first drop-in.

Detail: A press release will be prepared which covers the pilots in both Whitby and Brixham and includes the following content:

- key project messaging (benefits to fishermen, how their information will be used, and any other useful information)
- information about the mapping process and how fishermen can take part
- quotes from relevant WG members
- quote from Defra or other appropriate high-level official contact details and splash page/webpage link for further information
- images (relevant subjects, e.g. Brixham/Whitby harbour, and photos taken of the pre-pilot).

The press release will be sent to the trade media outlets listed below at a time that will mean the article is published approximately two weeks before the first drop-in, or otherwise embargoed until such time:

- Fishing News (note: press releases need to be received by 4 pm on Thursday to be included in the following week's print run);
- Fish Focus;
- The Fishing Daily;
- The Skipper.

Fishing News has the highest print readership out of the above outlets, so if this outlet chooses not to publish the press release, the project team should consider placing a small paid-for advertisement which includes a graphic similar to the example social media ones.

Targeting local non-trade media is not recommended for the Brixham and Whitby pilots, on the basis of advice from Working Group representatives.

Action 5: Social media

Timing: Provide graphics and suggested text in time for these to be shared, ideally from four weeks before the first drop-in. The number of posts (across project partners, trusted local representatives, and (other) fishermen) should ideally increase in the last week or so before the first drop-in.

Detail: Trusted local representatives and (other) fishermen will be encouraged to spread word of the pilot(s) on any social media platforms they judge appropriate. This might include platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, X, Threads, LinkedIn, and Bluesky. The following materials will be provided for posts:

- a selection of pre-made graphics (PNG file format) of suitable dimensions for popular social media platforms (e.g. two to three different graphics, each provided in Instagram/X dimensions and Facebook dimensions)
- suggested text, which can be edited if needed before posting (with the key message themes provided as a reference material).

While the above materials should be shared in time for four weeks before the first drop-in, fishermen wanting to engage in word-of-mouth (see Action 3) may talk about the pilot(s) earlier than this if they wish to. They will be encouraged to use the pre-made graphics and suggested text, but would also be welcome to post their own content, e.g. reels/short videos of themselves talking to a camera about the pilot(s).

Project partners should receive a separate set of pre-made graphics and text to post on organisational social media accounts, and should aim to begin publishing the posts from four weeks before the first drop-in. However, they should also – if organisational policy allows – repost any posts by trusted local representatives and (other) fishermen, to amplify the reach of posts most likely to have impact. This will be especially useful in the last two weeks before the drop-ins.

Action 6: Newsletters

Timing: Provide graphics and suggested text in time for these to be shared, ideally from four weeks before the first drop-in – although this timeframe is flexible, given that different organisations' newsletters may be infrequent.

Detail: Trusted local representatives will be encouraged to circulate information about the pilot(s) via their print and/or online newsletter if they have either. The following materials will be provided:

- a pre-made graphic (PNG file format)
- suggested text, which can be edited before posting (with the key message themes provided as a reference material).

Project partners should use the same text provided to trusted local representatives for newsletters issued by their organisations.

Action 7: Flyers and posters

Timing: Print flyers and posters in time for these to be posted to recipients and displayed or handed out from around four weeks before the first drop-in.

Detail: Posters and/or flyers should be displayed in appropriate spaces in both pilot areas.

The project team will liaise with trusted local representatives to check if they have a suitable space in which they can display a poster and/or flyers. Trusted local reps may also be able to advise of other places which would be appropriate to display the poster and/or flyers.

Following this, posters and/or flyers will be printed and posted to the list of recipients.

Whitby: Suggested places for displaying posters and/or flyers

- Fish Quay
- Harbour Office.

Brixham: Suggested places for displaying posters and/or flyers

- Brixham Trawler Agents (Brixham Fish Market)
- Harbour Office
- MMO Office
- IFCA Office
- The Sprat and Mackerel (pub)
- SWFPO Office
- Waterdance Office.

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Annex 1: Working Group Terms of Reference

Summary

This project ‘Socio-cultural mapping of fishing grounds in English waters’ provides an important opportunity to contribute to government decision-making processes by improving understanding of the social and cultural importance of different fishing grounds.

The Fisheries Act (2020) and Joint Fisheries Statement (2022) set out new obligations for Defra and other Government bodies to consider and collect data in relation to social and cultural aspects of fisheries. The increasing concerns around marine space and access to fishing grounds in competition with offshore wind development and MPAs, has increased the need to understand areas which may have importance for fisheries, beyond the value of catch, that should be factored into decision making.

Working in partnership with the fishing industry, this project will design a methodology for gathering spatial data on fishermen’s socio-cultural values of fishing grounds. To ensure the success of this project, it is crucial to have support and input from active fishermen that are representative of the scope of the English fleet, as well as stakeholder engagement with the fishing industry, policy makers and regulators.

This phase of the project will involve setting up a Steering Group and Working Group, delivering two workshops to design a methodology to collect socio-cultural data, and a developing a communications plan for wider roll-out of the project in the future.

Working Group members will need to:

- commit to being part of the Working Group by 10 January 2025;
- attend a one day in-person workshop (likely in London the week of 27 January);
- attend a half day online workshop (likely the week of 14 February);
- provide ad hoc contributions to the framework (e.g. review and commenting on drafts) as it is developed.

Time and travel expenses for Working Group members will be reimbursed at Defra’s standard rate.

This document will act as the Terms of Reference for members of the Working Group, and contains:

- an introduction to the project;
- an outline of the input needed from stakeholders;
- details on the benefits of participation;
- ways of working;
- Defra’s travel policy;
- GDPR considerations;
- contract information.

Introduction to the project

The Fisheries Act (2020) and Joint Fisheries Statement (2022) set out new obligations for Defra and other Government bodies to consider and collect data in relation to social and cultural aspects of fisheries. The increasing concerns around marine space and access to fishing grounds in competition with offshore wind development and Marine Protected Areas, has increased the need to understand where areas may have social and cultural values that should be factored into decision making.

Defra lack information on the social and cultural values associated with fishing grounds, which means these values may be missed or excluded from decisions relating to the spatial use of marine areas. This project will seek to design with fisheries stakeholders a practical approach to collecting such spatial data to identify and map social and cultural values of English fishing grounds.

The use of participatory 'socio-cultural mapping' will support the understanding of social impacts of marine planning and activities carried out under the Fisheries Act and support the preparation for future mapping and monitoring of socio-cultural values of fishing grounds and marine areas.

Specifically, this phase of the project will seek to:

- Form a project Steering Group and co-design Working Group comprised of active fishermen;
- Co-develop a framework for using a participatory mapping approach that could be used to identify and map socio-cultural values of marine space in relation to fishing fleets;
- Develop a communications package and recommendations for a regional pilot and national roll out of the participatory mapping approach.

This document will act as the Terms of Reference for members of the Working Group, and sets out the project background and roles and responsibilities for stakeholders engaged in the Steering Group or Working Group.

Stakeholder contribution to the project

The study will adopt a co-design approach to developing a methodology for gathering spatial data on fishermen's socio-cultural values of fishing grounds through participatory mapping and to inform the strategy for future roll-out. It will be crucial to have support and input from active fishermen that are representative of the scope of the English fleet. Ideally, these should represent inshore and offshore vessels, static and mobile gear types and a variety of species, through a total of 10 fishermen, across the five English regions (North East 4b, North West 7a, South East 4c, South – 7d, South West 7efg).

Working Group

The Working Group will take a proactive role in the co-design workshops and help identify the best methodology for collecting spatial data on fishermen's socio-cultural values, data

collection and sampling, what issues and questions to include, how to visualise data, access to data/data sharing, and how to communicate the project to other fishermen.

Taking a co-design approach, the Working Group will:

- commit to being part of the Working Group by 10 January 2025;
- attend a one day in-person workshop (likely in London the week of 27 January);
- attend a half day online workshop (likely the week of 24 February);
- provide ad hoc contributions to the framework (e.g. review and commenting on drafts) as it is developed.

All Working Group participants will be expected to commit to the Terms of Reference, outlining ways of working, reimbursements and group objectives. Recruitment of stakeholders to the Working Group will take place in December 2024, including distribution of the project Terms of Reference and one-to-one calls where required to discuss the project, requirements and address any questions. Final membership will be confirmed in early January 2025.

Workshops

Two workshops will be held with the Working Group to design the methodology for collecting socio-cultural data of fishing grounds. The intention is for the first workshop to be in person and the second to be held online.

Workshop #1

The first workshop (in person) will be exploratory, setting out the main questions Defra hopes to answer with this type of socio-cultural data, identifying what sort of approaches might practically be used to gather the required data and assessing the feasibility of different types of mapping (or other) approaches.

During this workshop, the group will:

- **Identify Barriers and Opportunities:** Discuss the barriers and opportunities of previous participatory mapping projects and their applicability in English waters;
- **Alternative Approaches:** Identify other approaches to collecting socio-cultural data of fishing grounds, if necessary;
- **Socio-Cultural Values:** Explore and agree on the socio-cultural values to be considered and the aspects/questions to include in the identification and mapping of these values;
- **Ethical Considerations:** Identify ethical considerations and approaches to address them;
- **Methodology Experimentation:** Experiment with possible approaches to methods, data collection, and sampling;
- **Challenges and Solutions:** Identify potential challenges and how to overcome them.

Workshop #2

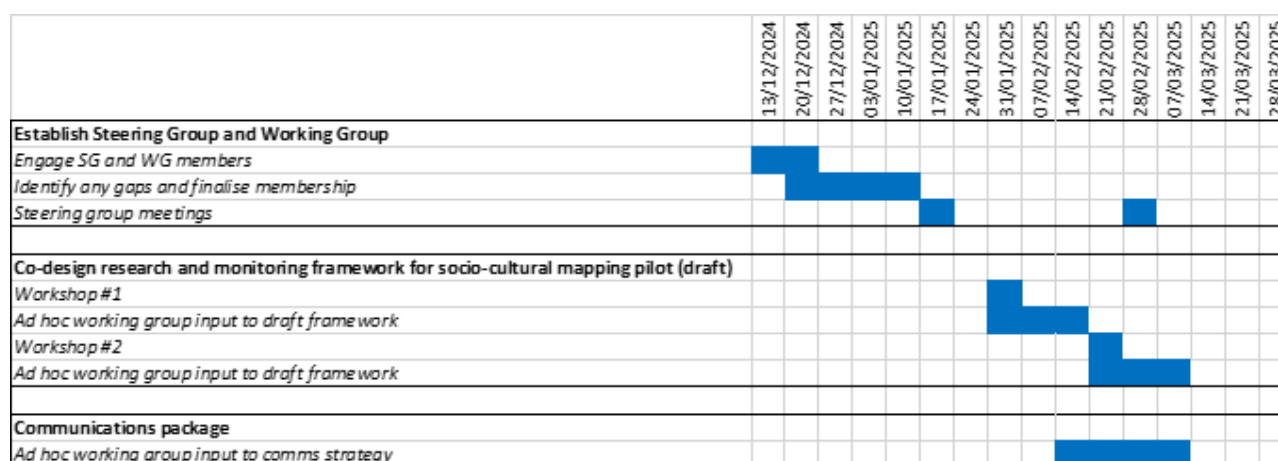
Using insights gained from the first workshop, the project team will design a draft methodology which will be shared and reviewed by the Working Group in a second workshop.

During workshop #2 (online), the initial methodology will be discussed and reviewed by the Working Group. The key activities during this meeting will include:

- **Framework and Methodology Review:** Review, refine, and agree on the framework and methodology for the regional pilot;
- **Communication Strategies:** Discuss potential communication strategies to engage fishermen in the regional pilot;
- **Pilot Locations:** Consider pilot locations, with significant support indicated for the South-West as per the Cefas (2025) report;
- **Participant Recruitment Strategy:** Develop the strategy for recruiting participants;
- **Communications Strategy:** Develop the overall communications strategy;
- **Data Presentation and Sharing:** Develop the approach for presenting and visualizing data, as well as access to and sharing of data.

The discussions recorded during Workshop #2 will be used to refine the draft framework and methodology, and any additional questions or clarifications for the Working Group will be followed up on through emails and/or phone calls.

Figure A1.1 Timeline for input from the project Working Group



Benefits of participation

This project provides an important opportunity to contribute to Defra's decision-making processes by providing knowledge on socio-cultural values of fishing grounds. Benefits of participation include:

- an opportunity to contribute directly to supporting Defra to consider socio-cultural values in decision making;
- an opportunity to contribute to the direction of this project and how it is rolled out regionally and nationally;
- improved understanding of socio-cultural values and approaches to participatory mapping;

- representation of a specific sector (e.g. gear type, vessel size, target species);
- insights into the progress of the project;
- knowledge sharing;
- an opportunity to build a network of fisheries representatives in England and Defra/MMO/Cefas contacts.

Workshop dates and locations

It is anticipated that this phase of the project will require three days of commitment between January and March 2025. These will comprise of a one day in person workshop, and half day online workshop and ad hoc conversations to finalise the framework design.

The first workshop will likely be held the **week commencing 27 January 2025**, in London. Time and expenses will be covered in line with the Defra reimbursement policy.

The second workshop will be held online during the **week commencing 24 February 2025**.

Group organisation

- ICF, ABPmer, and Defra will co-chair the Working Group and provide a secretariat function;
- the Working Group will meet once in person and once online, as well as any ad hoc input up to the end of March 2025.

Wider governance

This is a co-design group, with final outputs signed off through the Defra hierarchy and be subject to the usual Government clearances and processes.

Group ways of working

The discussions, substance of the discussions and information disclosed during the meeting must be considered sensitive and must not be shared outside of Defra-group organisations/advisory group membership, unless explicitly agreed within the group. Any information disclosed during a meeting may not be explicitly or implicitly attributed to an individual.

All interactions within this group will be guided by the following principle:

- **Realism:** A need to manage expectations from all sides and to acknowledge each other's perspectives and the wider context;
- **Transparency:** Open, honest dialogue between everyone involved, with (potential) conflicts of interest declared, discussed and a way forward agreed between members;
- **Confidentiality:** The transparency and engagement from Defra is contingent on information provided and discussions being kept confidential. Lines being used for communications outside of the group must be agreed with Defra, in advance;
- **Cooperation:** This group's task is complex, needing input from many entities. This input must be provided in the good spirit of cooperation;

- **Constructiveness:** Discussions need to be constructive in nature and focus on the progression of this project;
- **Impartiality:** Defra and Cefas staff are bound by the [Civil Service Code](#) and thus will carry out their roles with dedication and a commitment to the core values of integrity, honesty, objectivity and impartiality.

Members of the group who do not adhere to the Terms of Reference may be removed from or asked to leave the Working Group by the Defra Co-Chair.

Financial Support

Time and expenses will be reimbursed through Fishing into the Future, at the standard Defra rates:

Time: £293 per day (plus VAT, if chargeable).

Travel expense: in line with Defra travel policy (see below).

Commitment for three days to cover one in person workshop, one online workshop, reasonable travel time and ad hoc review. Fishing into the Future will be in touch directly to set up the payment process with Working Group members.

The full Defra travel policy has been shared alongside these ToRs, and in summary here:

- accommodation up to £150 per night;
- rail travel is covered for standard class only;
- subsistence up to £33 per 24 hours.

Data handling and GDPR

Best practice will be followed for stakeholder engagement. This will ensure:

- participants are informed of the purpose of the study, and that participation is voluntary;
- responses will be kept confidential and only aggregated or anonymised information published;
- consent for taking part in the study will be obtained.

Contact Information

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Annex 2: Summary of workshop discussions and outputs

The importance of a co-design approach to this project required multiple opportunities for the framework to be developed by the Working Group. Through workshops and online review opportunity the project team were able to develop the framework based on considerable inputs from active fishermen.

Workshop 1 – 28th January 2025, London.

During the first workshop the group discussed potential socio-cultural values that might be attributed to fishing grounds in English waters, and tested out several approaches to participatory mapping, both online and paper based.

An informal vote was held, and an in person, low-tech paper-based approach appeared the most popular method of face-to-face data collection. Data collectors would set themselves up in an accessible location for the whole day, and fishermen could drop-in at a time that was convenient for them. This should not be restricted to ‘normal working hours’; fishermen generally have more time available in the evenings to participate and should be enabled to do so. Working Group members noted that these drop-in sessions should be informal, and some felt it necessary to offer alternative options for participation, through the post for example. Working Group members strongly recommended working with trusted local representatives and engaging ‘influential people’ at each port to collect the data. They explained the catalytic impact of convincing these trusted people of the importance of the project and how they have the potential to either ‘make it or break it’.

Working Group members generally preferred the option of editing a map with available fishing data already plotted, rather than drawing on a ‘blank’ map. This was felt to be less ‘intimidating’ and the group suspected that fishermen might be less guarded about commenting on maps showing existing fishing data. Furthermore, working group members felt that the opportunity to correct existing data collected by government agencies might encourage fishermen to participate.

The group discussed which fishing data would be most appropriate to use. Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) data was discussed, and it was suggested that it would be helpful to disaggregate and present this data on the map by gear type, target species and port of origin. However, VMS data is only collected for larger vessels (12 metres and above) and is therefore not representative of the whole fleet. Whilst many of the under 12 metre fleet have installed a similar Inshore-Vessel Monitoring System (I-VMS) following government regulations, this data is incomplete and data from the system is not yet readily available. Nevertheless, some Working Group members suggested that it may still be useful to plot what I-VMS data is available.

However, concern was expressed about overpopulating the maps with information, which could easily confuse and disorient fishermen. The plotted information needs to be understandable to fishermen. One group suggested printing extra layers of information on tracing paper that can be optionally layered up, if fishermen find the information useful. Working Group members expressed a preference for admiralty charts, over the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) statistical rectangles for instance, because they bear more similarity to mapping technology used by fishermen (e.g., chart plotters). Working Group members agreed that the scale of the base maps provided for fishermen to draw on would need to differ for the inshore and offshore fleet. The offshore fleet would require larger-scale maps given the greater range of their fishing activities and the opposite would be required for the inshore fleet.

An informal voting exercise was held with Working Group members and the Project Implementation Team in which core grounds and back/up/extended grounds appeared the most popular areas to map, followed by historic/barren grounds. They felt it was enough to just acknowledge the area as a 'seasonal ground' and an important part of their livelihood strategy, even if it is only fished for one month a year.

The idea of labelling fishing grounds with their local names was highly liked by the Working Group to highlight the 'cultural stories' embedded within fishing grounds. The Working Group reiterated the cultural importance of these names (e.g., The Witch's Brew, Church Hall, Hayburn Wick) and explained how they get passed on through generations of fishermen. The Working Group felt that most fishermen would be comfortable sharing this information.

Discussions around differentiating fishing grounds based on their relative value or importance were met with concern and the group felt this exercise would raise considerable suspicion among fishermen. They explained that suspicion could arise from the perception that 'lower value' areas might be considered 'low impact' areas by decision-makers and targeted for development (e.g., OWF, MPAs).

The workshop also aimed to explore and identify the socio-cultural values of fishing grounds relevant to the English fleet. Working Group members were prompted by the question 'why do you fish where you fish?' to tease out some of these socio-cultural values (framed in the workshop as 'non-economic values'). Working Group members were asked to write their answers on Post-it notes to develop an initial list of socio-cultural values that could be used to develop a predefined set of responses to survey questions that ask fishermen to identify why an area is important to them.

Concerns raised by Working Group members:

Fishermen are very secretive about their fishing grounds in general, even between fishermen themselves. Given the fishing industry's longstanding distrust of government, it was felt that fishermen might be particularly apprehensive about sharing this sensitive information with Defra. Fishermen are likely to fear that this information could be misused or used against them, as they feel this has been the case in the past. The Working Group

cited several cases where data collected for marine spatial planning had been misused. Older fishermen were considered more likely to be suspicious than younger fishermen.

This led on to a more specific discussion around data access. The Working Group expressed concerns about the data being open access. They suggested that data access and use should be restricted (i.e., it should not be licensed, sold or made available online). Results from an informal voting exercise, demonstrated the overwhelming preference for data access to be restricted to Defra/the Defra family. The Working Group expressed fears that open access data could be misused by the offshore wind industry, or be used by the recreational fishing sector, with negative implications for the inshore fleet. The working group agreed that any publicly available data should be 'really high level'.

The Working Group also raised additional points regarding data governance. The working group explained that fishermen want ownership of the data and should have the power to decide how it is used (e.g., for specific purposes and/or scales). They suggested that, at the very least, government should commit to using the data so that important fishing grounds beyond economic value and/or for fleets underrepresented in current evidence base is considered in marine planning decisions. The Working Group explained that there has also been greater 'buy-in' from fishermen on projects where data is owned by fishermen and restricted in its use.

Workshop 2 – 19th February 2025, online.

Prior to the second workshop the Project Implementation Team used the discussion from the first workshop to develop a draft framework. This framework formed the basis of the second workshop, where the Working Group were able to vote on aspects of the methodology, as well as discuss ideas for a pilot and Communications Strategy.

Working Group members voted in favour of the data collection methodology and suggested maintaining some flexibility in the approach, so that the data collection methods could be adapted to suit each local context. This would result in a more organic, than structured methodology, and communication around the project should reflect the flexibility in the approach. The Working Group agreed that all participants should be given the opportunity to review the data once it has been digitalised to verify its accuracy but there was no agreement on whether this should be at an individual or community level. Some Working Group members said that they would like the chance to review some level of amalgamated data for their community or peer group (sector). They thought this extra level of data validation would be beneficial as fishermen could identify any suspected inaccuracies, drawing upon their knowledge of the community. Others disagreed; they did not think that asking people to review community-level amalgamated data was appropriate in their areas and expressed that even between fishermen from the same community this data can be considered too sensitive for such an activity. One Working Group member thought that fishermen in their area were unlikely to want other fishermen, even those from within their own community, to see an amalgamated map, out of fear that it might expose commercially sensitive information and the perceived risk that their grounds could be encroached upon by others from within the community. So, it was generally agreed that

the appropriateness of reviewing community-level amalgamated data would be location specific and depend on how sensitive the community and individuals are about sharing information about where they fish.

The Working Group discussed approaches for fishermen to regularly update their information. Working Group members all agreed that individual fishermen should be asked at the point of data collection how they would like to be contacted to update their personal information in the future.

The Working Group reviewed the options for base maps, agreeing that a chart background is most useful and then options for MPAs and OWF locations should be made available as a layer if relevant to the region being mapped. There were still concerns over whether AIS and VMS data was useful, but the Working Group agreed it should be provided during the mapping process so that participants could choose whether they want to use it.

It was concluded that multiple options should be created for fishermen to use in the pilot study. These should be presented as different optional layers, printed on multiple acetate sheets, that fishermen can experiment and interact with and use at will to help fill in their data. For this approach to be effective the Project Implementation Team would need to speak with relevant local organisations and representatives beforehand to ask them what information should be provided on the different acetate layers, based on the local context. For those filling in the data via post, they could be asked beforehand what information and features would be helpful for them to see on the map, before it is printed and sent to them. Fishermen can also be asked in the pilot which layers of data they found helpful when plotting their information.

The Working Group agreed with the plan presented which was to ask fishermen to map four key areas: 1) core fishing grounds, 2) back-up/extended fishing grounds, 3) historic/barren/closed/lost grounds, and 4) transit routes to fishing grounds. In addition, the Working Group was presented with and asked to comment on a categorised table of values. This table included responses from one of the exercises carried out during the first workshop in London, during which Working Group members were asked to identify why they fish where they fish. In the table presented to the working group these responses had been categorised into distinct types of values (e.g., seasonal value and heritage value). The group agreed that these pre-defined values can be used as examples to prompt fishermen in thinking about the non-economic values of an area. As examples they are useful. Nevertheless, fishermen should be free to define value themselves and if this primarily concerns economic values, then that is fine, people should not feel forced to acknowledge the social and cultural values if that is not what is important to them.

Challenges associated with the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act on data storage options were discussed. Working Group members agreed that the data collected during the pilot phase of the project should be held by an independent organisation, until the data governance plan for the project has been agreed. The Working Group reiterated the importance of clear and transparent communication with fishermen on data governance, including what their data is going to be used for and who else is going to be able to access it.

The Working Group requested that Defra provide more clarity around several things, including who would own the data, what level of data would need to be shared through an FOI, what capacities Defra might have to refuse FOI requests, whether some kind of co-ownership arrangement could be made, and if Defra did own the data and use the data to make official decisions would the data still be subject to an FOI request even if it is held by a non-governmental organisation.

Working Group members suggested the data should be held by the fishing industry via organisations such as the NFFO. Fishermen were said to be more likely to trust these organisations with their data. Working Group members also expressed how frustrating and unfair it is that the fishing industry does not have access to their own data (e.g., iVMS data), yet it has been shared with organisations such as The Crown Estate who use it to make decisions that could fundamentally endanger fishermen's livelihoods.

Fishermen acknowledged the importance of government having access to the data to make more informed decisions. However, fishermen were said to be unlikely to engage in the project if the data is shared beyond government. Fishermen would want to be reassured that their data is only going to be used by government to make decisions. Alternatively, Working Group members suggested that different outputs should be produced, with various levels of information. Access to high resolution outputs should be restricted to government, but some low-resolution outputs could be shared more widely. Though this would need to be reconsidered in the pilot phase.

Consensus among the Working Group was for two pilot locations. It was decided that the pilot locations should be in an area where one of the Working Group members can lead on engagement. This was said to be particularly important as it would be difficult to reach the right people and levels of engagement without a trusted individual advocating for the project at the local level. It was concluded that Whitby would make an interesting pilot location from the East Coast, that has experienced a lot of changes from trawling to potting for example, and a Working Group member agreed to help facilitate a pilot in this area. A Working Group also volunteered to facilitate a pilot in the South West (Brixham).

Communications strategy

The Working Group were asked about relevant communication tools to reach fishermen. The Working Group noted that a multi-pronged approach is required to reach different groups, in different places. They said that the title of the project would be very important and the imagery that is used. It was suggested that this project could take lessons from fishermen's engagement in the Fishing Industry Social Survey (FISS) project.

Annex 3: Draft value questions

Core grounds:

Draw in [BLACK] pen to indicate your core fishing grounds (grounds you use on a regular basis).

Follow-up questions (to be answered for each area identified):

- What gear do you use in this area? (list of pre-identified options)
- How long have you been fishing here? (option of time ranges e.g., 1-3 years, 3-5 years, etc)
- Why is this area important to you? (open-ended, value categories can be used as prompts if necessary)
- Does this ground have a local name? If yes, what is it? Do you know the history/origins of its name? If yes, please explain (open-ended).

Back-up grounds:

Draw in [ORANGE] pen to indicate your back-up fishing grounds (grounds you use on an irregular/occasional basis).

Follow-up questions (to be answered for each area identified):

- What gear do you use in this area? (list of pre-identified options)
- How long have you been fishing here? (option of time ranges e.g., 1-3 years, 3-5 years, etc)
- Why is this area important to you? (open-ended, value categories can be used as prompts if necessary)
- Does this ground have a local name? If yes, what is it? Do you know the history/origins of its name? If yes, please explain (open-ended).

Additional questions about changes and threats to core and extended/back up grounds, for example:

- Have you witnessed any changes to these grounds within the last [5 years]? If yes, what changes? (open-ended)
- Do you foresee any challenges with using these grounds in the future? If yes, please explain (open-ended).

Lost grounds:

Draw in [PURPLE] pen to indicate areas where [YOU]/ [YOUR COMMUNITY] used to fish but are no longer able to.

Follow-up questions (to be answered for each area identified):

- What gear did you use in this area? (list of pre-identified options)
- Was it your core or extended ground? (select relevant)
- Why are you no longer able to fish there? (Pre-identified options inc. OWF development, no fish, habitat destruction, MPA or other restrictive regulations etc. and open-ended 'other')
- When did you stop fishing there? (option of time ranges)
- Why did you fish there and what has been the impact of losing it? (open-ended)
- Did you face any challenges finding or moving to an alternative ground? Please explain (open-ended).

Other possible questions to consider further:

- If more of your core or back-up grounds were lost, where might you fish? Draw this area in [YELLOW] pen.

Transit Routes:

Draw in [GREEN] pen the routes you take to get to your fishing grounds (core and extended):

- How important is this route to your fishing ground?
- Do you have alternative routes you could use?

Annex 4: Draft participation and consent form

Socio-cultural mapping of fishing grounds in English waters

[XX consultants] are undertaking this study on behalf of Defra (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) to understand and map the socio-cultural (non-economic) values associated with fishing grounds in English waters.

This study has been co-designed by a Working Group made up of fishing industry members, socio-cultural mapping experts, and government. It provides an important opportunity to contribute to government decision-making processes by improving understanding of the social and cultural importance of different fishing grounds.

Some information on the location of fishing activity is already publicly available, and so this study is designed to provide context to fishing activity data to support the understanding of social impacts of marine planning and activities carried out under the Fisheries Act and support the monitoring of socio-cultural values of fishing grounds and marine areas. Data will be used by marine policy and regulation teams to inform their decision making on marine planning, including future designations and developments within the marine area.

Final outputs will be signed off through the Defra hierarchy and be subject to the usual Government clearances and processes.

1. Aims of the study

We would like to hear about the reasons for fishing where you fish, including, but not limited to, seasons, safety, weather, tradition, heritage. Your response will form part of a larger increased focus on the non-economic side of fishing, exploring socio-cultural aspects, and there are no right or wrong answers. Your responses can help improve future policy decisions in this area.

2. Study details and use of your data

You have received this Participant Information Sheet to inform you of the survey process:

- The survey will be conducted in person, by phone, or by post, as agreed with you.
- At the start of the survey, you will be asked whether you have any questions. You will then be asked for your consent to proceed. We ask that you provide a signed copy of the consent form. If this is not possible (for example, in a phone interview with limited email access), we will read the consent form to you and ask for your verbal agreement.
- Participation in this study is voluntary. You can withdraw your consent and the information provided, at any point during the survey process, and for 30 days after the survey has been completed. You can choose not to answer certain questions.

- You are free to withdraw by informing the person who did the survey with you or by informing our Project Director/Manager for 30 days after the survey (see contact details below).
- Your individual response will be kept confidential and will only be used to produce the final aggregated map. Any information provided will not be attributable to you, unless you specifically request for this to be the case. Any personal information collected will not be published. None of your personal data (e.g., name or contact information) will be shared beyond the team working on the study, or made public. Please see [Defra's Research Privacy Notice](#) for more information.
- The hand drawn contribution to maps will be uploaded to a GIS data viewer stored XX. All information collected will be stored and managed in accordance with our confidentiality and GDPR protocols.
- Hand drawn contribution to maps will be retained for three years after the completion of the research and then they will be deleted.
- The information collected will be updated every 1 to 2 years through the process agreed with you during this session (e.g. by post, online, in person). If you provide contact details we will be in touch for your input when the data is reviewed. If you provide consent to use your own data, then we will also share the aggregated maps for your area for comment.
- If you are a member of a fishing organisation and wish to share your contribution to the project with them, please provide consent and the name of the relevant organisation.
- Your personal information will be deleted after the pilot is complete, unless you consent to participate in the data review and update process. Under GDPR provisions, you have the right to request access to your information and for it to be deleted at any time. Your rights are listed in full on the Information Commissioner's website ([A guide to individual rights | ICO](#)).

If you have any queries or concerns, please contact:

XX Project Manager

Email: XX

3. Consent

I have read and consent to the below:

- The Participant Information Sheet, or have had the Participant Information Sheet read out to me;
- I have had the opportunity to ask any questions regarding the study;
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and I have the right to withdraw from participation at any time without giving a reason;
- I know how to withdraw from the study;
- I agree that my anonymised contribution will be used to attribute socio-cultural values to fishing grounds in English waters;

- I understand that my input and any information used in the research outputs will not be personally identifiable, unless I specifically request that any comment I make be attributable to me;
- I understand that none of my personal data (e.g. name or contact information) will be shared or made public;
- I agree to the researchers holding my personal data (name and contact details) for the purpose of this study and to support review and update of the data at regular intervals;
- I understand that I can request at any time for my personal data to be deleted, by contacting XX;
- I agree that the information I have provided can be used to create aggregated maps for decision making.

Please sign below to provide your informed consent to participate in this study. If you are providing verbal consent, this will be noted and your name will be typed in by the interviewer.

Name (participant)

Signed:

Date

Annex 5: Example of prefilled maps to aid data collection and mapping process

Figure A5.1 Example of chart basemap with AIS data to be used during the participatory mapping phase

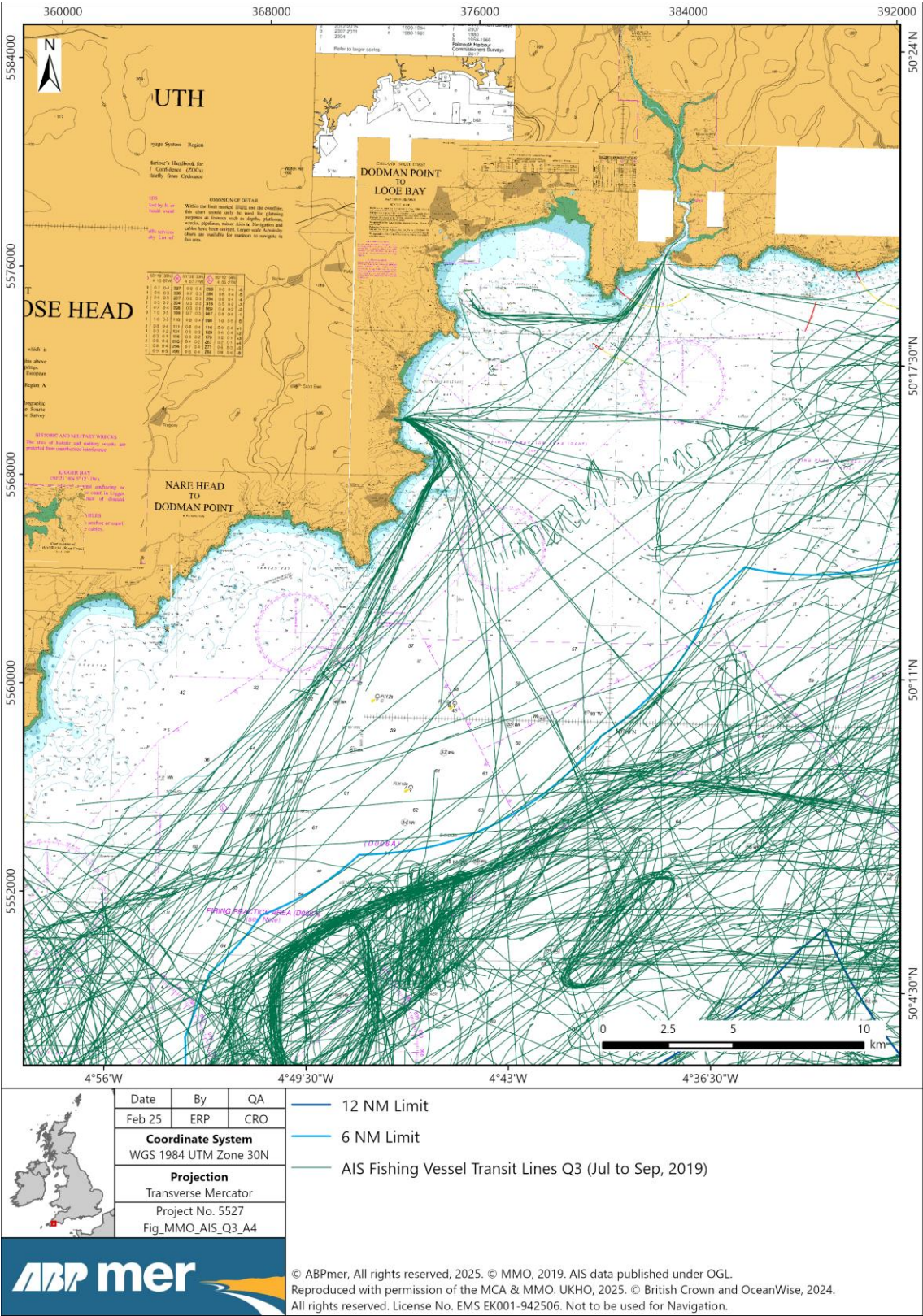
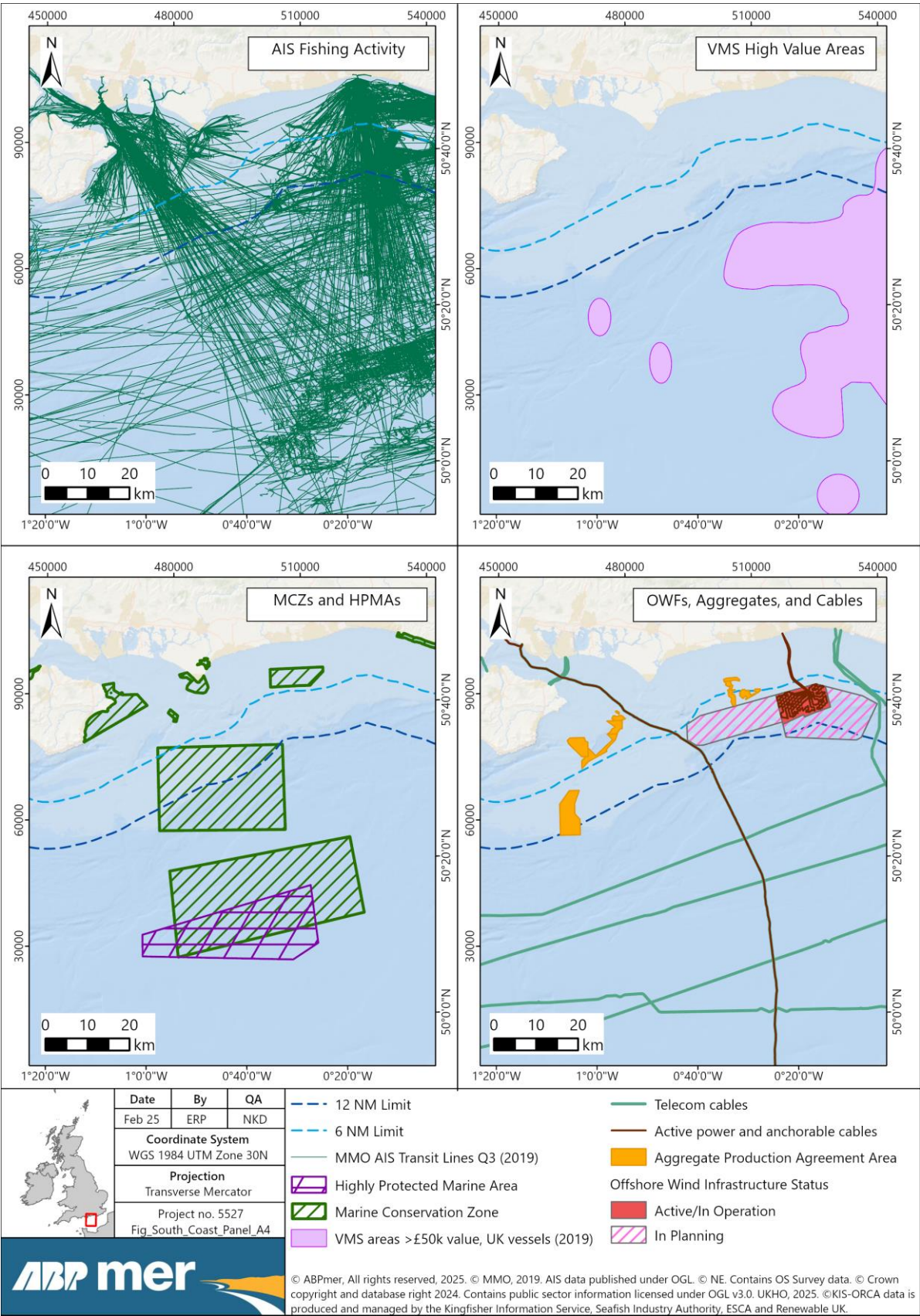


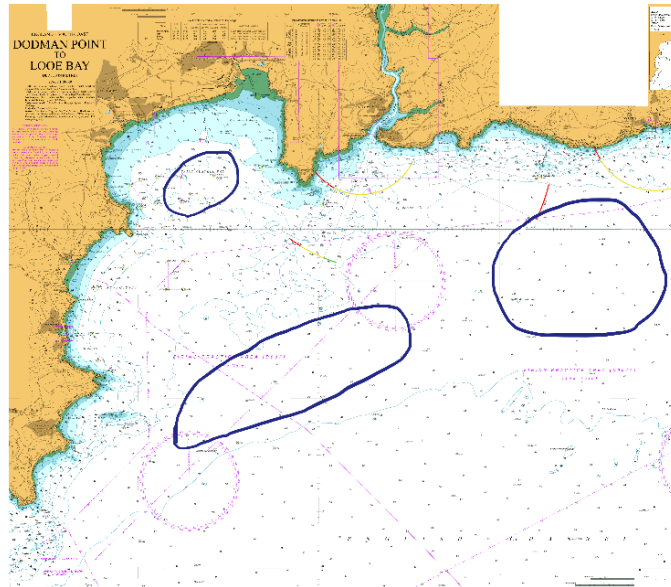
Figure A5.2 Example of marine features and data to be provided as optional layers (e.g. on acetate) during the participatory mapping phase



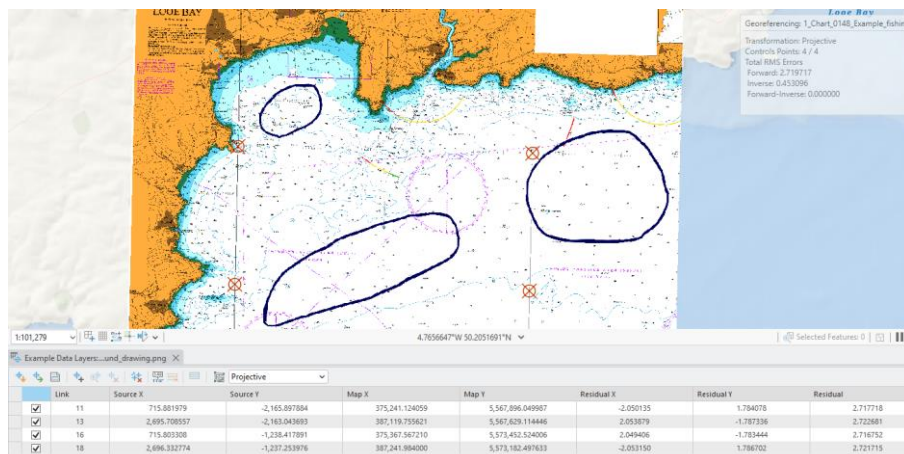
Annex 6: Process for digitising maps

The method to transfer hand drawn fishing grounds (polygons) and/or fishing vessel transits (polylines) from hardcopy maps to digital maps is set out below.

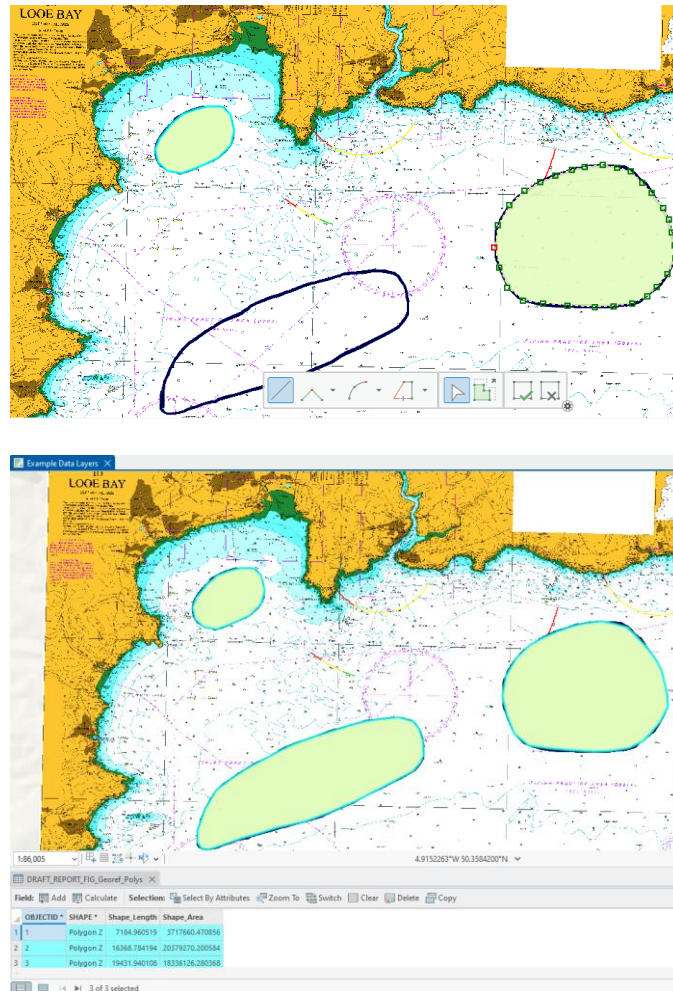
1. Scan edited hardcopy map (i.e. Admiralty chart) and save as PNG or JPEG format image.



2. Set up a GIS project (e.g. ArcGISPro) with relevant basemaps, ideally these would be the same data as used for the hardcopy map.
3. Load image into GIS project.
4. Using the 'Georeferencing' tool add 'control points' to fix the image to the correct location in the real world. This can be done by assigning coordinates to identifiable locations on the image or by identifying 'source points' on the image and 'target points' on the basemap in GIS. Ideally 4 control points that are spaced out across the image should be set up. Once the control points have been added these can be applied to the image which is then automatically georeferenced in the right location by the GIS software.



5. Create a blank data layer in the GIS project in which to add the polygons/polylines. (Note that polygons and polylines must be separate data layers). The data layers must, as a minimum, include an attribute field to record the Unique ID assigned to each stakeholder who provided the data and a Unique ID associated with each dataset i.e. each fishing ground polygon/ vessel transit line.
6. Using the 'Edit > Create' tool trace around the fishing grounds/along the vessel transit lines on the georeferenced image and save the digitised data.



7. Add the Unique ID(s) associated with each polygon/polyline.
8. A spreadsheet with all the completed attributes associated with each fishing ground polygon/vessel transit line should be set up for each dataset. The attributes should be pre-determined and suitable for completing based on the questions asked of stakeholders and the answers provided. They should be applicable to all types of stakeholders in all locations and cover all information that is required to be captured throughout the duration of the study. It is important that this step is thought through carefully to ensure the consistency of attributes across all regions and types of stakeholders to enable useful analysis of the data. The Unique ID for each stakeholder /polygon/polyline must also be included so that information can be cross-checked and, if necessary, checked with the original stakeholder who provided the data.

9. Join the attribute information in the spreadsheet(s) to the spatial data layer(s) created based on the common Unique ID field. (Alternatively, manually type in the information provided with each polygon/polyline into the relevant fields of the attribute table(s), which would need to be set up in advance in the spatial data layers).

☒ Visible	☐ Read Only	Field Name	Alias	Data Type
☒	☒	OBJECTID	OBJECTID	Object ID
☒	☐	Shape	SHAPE	Geometry
☒	☒	Shape_Length	Shape_Length	Double
☒	☒	Shape_Area	Shape_Area	Double
☒	☐	StakeholderID	StakeholderID	Long
☒	☐	Category	Category	Text
☒	☐	Local_Ground_Name	Local_Ground_Name	Text
☒	☐	Years_Ground_Fished	Years_Ground_Fished	Short
☒	☐	Gears_Used	Gears_Used	Text
☒	☐	Species_Fished	Species_Fished	Text
☒	☐	Season_Fished	Season_Fished	Text
☒	☐	Future_challenges	Future_challenges	Text
☒	☐	Changes_noticed	Changes_noticed	Text
☒	☐	Historic_Ground	Historic_Ground	Text

Annex 7: Communications strategy

Contents

Section 1: Introduction.....	75
Section 2: The purpose of communications for the project	75
Section 3: Principles of our communications	76
Section 4: The language we use.....	76
Section 5: Key message themes	79
Section 6: Engaging with our key audience: the fishing industry.....	80
Section 7: Communication tools for engaging with our key audience: the fishing industry	81
Section 8: Other important audiences	83
Section 9: Guidelines for accessible communication material design	85
Section 10: Communication sign-off procedures	85
Section 11: Communication risks	85
Section 12: References	86

Section 1: Introduction

This Communications Strategy supports the project “Mapping what Matters”. The overall aim of this project was to co-design a framework for participatory mapping with English fishermen of the socio-cultural (i.e. “non-economic”) values of their fishing grounds. Such mapping will be essential to ensuring that important fishing grounds in English waters, and the many social and cultural values associated with them, are recorded and considered in decisions related to marine planning and fisheries management.

This Communications Strategy has been developed to support a national roll-out of the participatory mapping project, which will be preceded by two regional pilots. The project Working Group has agreed that these pilots will take place in Brixham and Whitby. The pilots are intended to test the framework and ensure it will be fit for purpose for a national roll-out. Learnings from the pilots will also be used to amend this Communications Strategy as needed prior to a national roll-out.

Section 2: The purpose of communications for the project

This Communications Strategy will guide effective communications for the following purposes:

Raising awareness:

- raising and maintaining awareness of the project, which includes establishing a strong visual identity;
- helping key audiences to understand the “why” of conducting participatory mapping with English fishermen;
- supporting shared understanding and expectations of the process of participatory mapping, the aims of the pilots, and the aims of the whole project.

Driving engagement:

- engaging fishermen to participate;
- keeping participating fishermen informed and engaged;
- ensuring that fishermen know whom they can contact about questions, concerns, or complaints, and having a process in place to handle and resolve any complaints;
- proactively – and reactively as needed – easing the understandable concerns and fears that many fishermen have when it comes to sharing information about where they fish;
- being fully transparent to fishermen and all other stakeholders.

Section 3: Principles of our communications

Project communications are guided by the following principles:

- **We are guided by co-design:** This strategy, and all communications that flow from it, have been shaped in dialogue with a Working Group including a variety of fishermen representing the different regions of England – reflecting the project's broader co-design approach. Future refinement of this strategy is expected through the pilot phase in collaboration with the Working Group.
- **We are trustworthy:** We'll work hard to build trust, be transparent, and address the concerns and questions that fishermen might have about providing their data. As part of this we'll make sure we provide the information that fishermen need when considering whether to participate, during their participation, and afterwards, all in a timely fashion.
- **We are flexible and inclusive:** We'll use appropriate methods to reach and involve the fishermen whose input will be vital to the project, tailoring our methods as needed for the different regions in which the pilots take place.
- **We are accessible:** We'll speak plainly in all our communications and ensure that the visual design of our communication materials align with best practice for accessibility.
- **We are responsive:** We'll listen to fishermen and use their input to adapt our approaches and methods whenever needed.

Section 4: The language we use

Everyone benefits from communications that are accessible, clear, and appropriate. With that in mind:

- we'll keep our language and tone as informal as possible, without being condescending or disrespectful; for example, whenever appropriate, we'll directly address the audience ("We'd like to record your knowledge about fishing grounds" rather than "We seek to record fishermen's knowledge about fishing grounds");
- we'll keep our language free of jargon;
- we'll use the term "fishermen" in line with the preferences of the people in the industry with whom we work, as advised by the project Working Group.

Using the project name and tagline

The project name "Mapping what Matters" is accompanied with the tagline "Capturing the importance of English fishing grounds". The tagline should only be used in appropriate contexts and where space allows. It can also be used (and edited if needed) for a stand-alone statement, to support the project identity and messaging.

Guidelines for use of the name and tagline are as follows:

- all project communications will reference the project name at least once (see example in Figure A7.1)
- for visual materials such as social media graphics, the tagline should be included with the project name once, if space allows (see example in Figure A7.2)
- the tagline can, in certain materials, be used as a heading and edited if needed (see example in Figure A7.3)
- for written outputs including reports, summaries, briefings, the document title should be: “Mapping what Matters: Capturing the importance of English fishing grounds”
- the tagline should not be used together with the project name when introducing the project in text (e.g. avoid writing something like “Drop-ins have been announced for the Mapping what Matters: Capturing the importance of English fishing grounds project.”).

Figure A7.1: Example of inclusion of project name in social media graphic (Facebook dimensions)

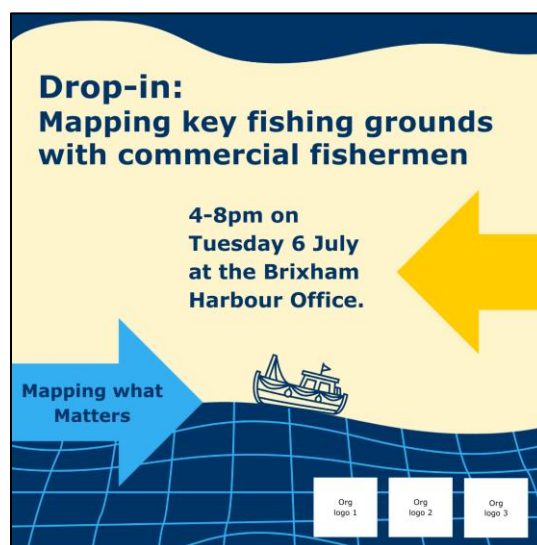


Figure A7.2: Example of inclusion of project name with tagline in social media graphic (X and Instagram dimensions)

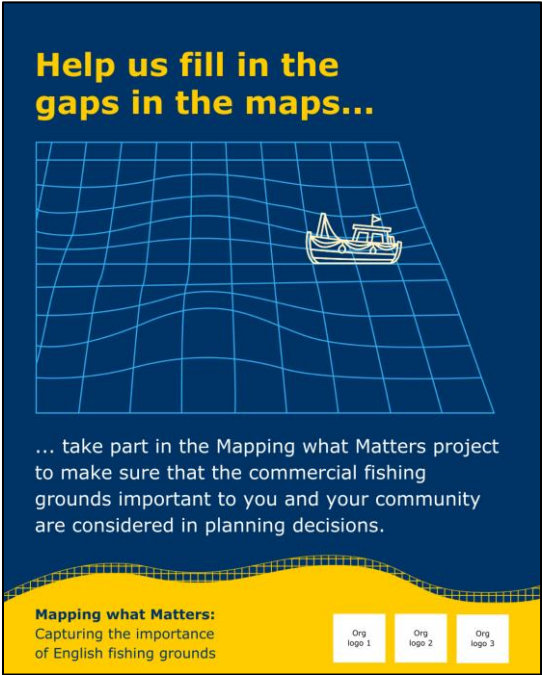
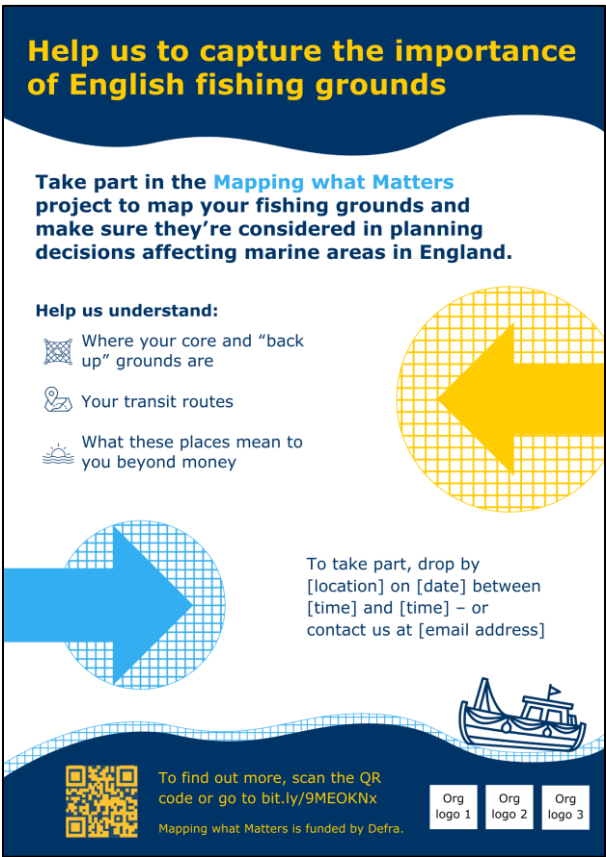


Figure A7.3: Example of project tagline used as a heading with minor edits on flyer



Section 5: Key message themes

The following key message themes are the “DNA” that guides the production of all our project communications. They signal what we want to say about the project, and the kind of language we want to say it in. This applies both to messaging directed at the fishing industry, and any messaging directed at other important audiences.

Key message theme 1

Using a co-design approach, we are working with fishermen in England to record and preserve their irreplaceable knowledge about their fishing grounds and those of their communities.

Key message theme 2

Fishing grounds mean more to fishermen than just money – they can and do matter in far deeper and broader ways, from being safer during stormy conditions, to the feeling of being at home, to the heritage of grounds worked by generations of the same family.

Key message theme 3

If information is lacking on the specific fishing grounds that matter to fishermen, planning decisions on the use of marine space cannot fully consider potential impacts on fishing communities. Fishermen can help us reduce this risk by telling us about where they fish, and why they fish there.

Key message theme 4

We’ve designed robust protocols to safeguard data that fishermen shared with us about their fishing grounds, because it’s essential that this information is used only for its intended purpose: keeping fishermen in mind when decisions are made on the use of marine space.

Example copy based on key message themes

The following copy shows how the key message themes could be put into practice. It’s a hypothetical example and does not need to be duplicated across project communications when these are produced.

Although data is already collected on fishing activities in England, this often focuses on things that are easier to measure, like effort and landings. Plenty of gaps remain on the maps, especially when it comes to the true meaning of fishing grounds to fishermen – not just in terms of income, but also wellbeing, family, community, heritage, and more.

We want to record and preserve the knowledge and meaning that fishermen hold about fishing grounds in England, to make sure that this vital information is taken into account in planning decisions affecting marine areas. That’s why we’re asking

fishermen like you to take part in a mapping exercise, to help fill in the gaps. Whether you're actively fishing or are retired, are a crew member or a skipper, working inshore or further out, your knowledge and experience matters.

The main way to take part in this mapping is to come to one of our drop-in sessions. There, you can write and draw on a nautical chart to show us specific fishing grounds (and routes), and to share any extra details about what those places mean to you. You can do this on your own, or in conversation with other fishermen – whichever you prefer. If you can't come to any of the drop-ins, you can get in touch with us to request the materials by post, and we can guide you through the process over the phone. After you've provided your input, we'll add it to a digital version of the map, and send this back to you so that you can check we've uploaded it correctly.

We know you might have concerns about how the information you share with us about your fishing grounds could be used in the future, and who could access it. What's important to note is that everyone's contributions will be combined, so that they can't be linked to any one individual.

We can't guarantee that future planning decisions affecting the waters you fish in will always go the way you hope they will. But with your knowledge and input, we can make sure that decision-makers have the best possible evidence about the fishing grounds that matter to you and your community – and that decisions are made with you in mind.

Section 6: Engaging with our key audience: the fishing industry

The fishing industry is our key audience because mapping of fishing grounds and their values to fishermen can only be achieved with those fishermen themselves.

Below we've set out the different groups of fishermen we hope to engage with in the pilots, and the key practical considerations when it comes to their participation in the mapping work. Many fishermen will, of course, fit into multiple groups:

- **active fishermen:** may have less time to participate and/or fewer windows to do so, due to the need to be at sea
- **retired fishermen:** may have more time to participate
- **skippers:** may be less willing to participate due to the amount of paperwork they deal with
- **crew members:** may work on multiple boats and thus a greater mix of grounds, so this would need to be considered when providing instructions on how to participate
- **older fishermen:** may have less up-to-date knowledge about current fishing grounds, but may have more knowledge about historic grounds and cultural/heritage values
- **younger fishermen:** may have less knowledge of historical/barren grounds
- **inshore fishermen:** may be more worried about recreational and commercial nomadic fishermen getting access to information on their grounds (particularly the

possibility that aggregated data will reveal fishing opportunities to commercial nomadic fishermen)

- **offshore fishermen:** may be at sea for longer stretches of time, so the timing of any drop-ins or windows for giving input will need to be such that they aren't missed out.

Section 7: Communication tools for engaging with our key audience: the fishing industry

A variety of communication tools will be used at different points in the process of the mapping, depending on the needs of fishermen in different regions. These tools, and how and when they'll be used, are set out below. The tools can also be adapted as needed for communications to other important audiences.

Trusted local representatives

- This includes but will not be limited to Working Group members, Producer Organisations, associations and other representative/fleet-based organisations, and trusted local individuals. It could also include entities with a regional or national reach which still have significant local representation (e.g., the NFFO).
- Representatives may spearhead data collection, but at a minimum will play a key role in spreading the word about the project via (as appropriate) word-of-mouth by other fishermen, flyers/posters, direct email, phone, WhatsApp, and other social media platforms.

Word-of-mouth by other fishermen

- Any Working Group members in the area(s) will be encouraged to speak to other fishermen about participating, using flyers as appropriate.
- Fishermen who have signed up to participate or show interest in doing so could also be asked to spread the word, especially to older/retired peers.

Website/webpage

- The two options are to create a one-page "splash page" website (if the project budget and timeframe allows) or a new webpage on the existing organisation website of a Project Implementation Team member. Other communication tools such as social media and flyers/posters will signpost to this page.
- The page will need to provide:
 - overview of the project;
 - step-by-step process of how participation by fishermen will work;
 - FAQ (see suggested questions in this Communication Strategy);
 - contact details for enquiries.
- It is essential that a splash page or webpage is implemented from the pilot stage, to provide a public-facing "single source of truth" and further reassurance for fishermen as to the professionalism and credibility of the pilots.

Direct email

- To be used on a flexible and “as appropriate” basis by trusted local representatives who will likely already be in email contact with fishermen.
- To be used by Project Implementation Team members only if consent has been given by participating fishermen, to:
 - respond to queries;
 - send information about how to participate;
 - provide updates following the submission of input.

Phone

- To be used as per direct email, as needed.

WhatsApp

- To be used as per direct email, as needed.
- Text or voice note messages will be used as appropriate.

Social media platforms

- This could include Facebook, Instagram, X, Threads, LinkedIn, and Bluesky.
- Trusted local representatives will be asked to use this tool as part of their outreach, provided they consider it useful (and weighing up the risks of criticism of the project received via social media). Text and graphics will be provided for this.
- Project team members may also raise awareness of the project via their organisations’ social media accounts, or repost posts by trusted local representatives or (other) fishermen.

Newsletters

- Trusted local representatives will be asked to distribute information about the project via any print or online newsletter they run.
- Newsletters by members of the project team, Working Group and/or Steering Group – and any other relevant national-level organisations – could also be used as appropriate.

Flyers/posters (digital and print)

- Digital versions can be shared on social media and by email.
- Print versions will be sent to relevant entities such as ports, harbours, and fish processing units for display in offices and communal areas.

Trade media outlets

- This could include outlets such as Fishing News, The Fishing Daily, The Skipper, and Fish Focus.
- The project would aim in the first instance to have a press release published in the outlet(s); failing this, placing a paid advert/editorial could be considered, contingent on budget.

Local media outlets

- To be used as per trade media outlets, on the advice of trusted local representatives.

Section 8: Other important audiences

While project communications will be directed mainly at fishermen, a range of other audiences have a bearing on the project in terms of their ability to provide support or their anticipated interest in using data collected by the project. These groups (including examples) are listed below, as well as their relevance in terms of their interest in the project and roles they could play, and the key message themes most important to use in communications directed at them.

Given that safeguarding fishermen's data is crucial to the success of the project and the implementation of the data governance framework may require the collaboration of several of the audiences below, key message theme 4, related to safeguard data, is considered a priority for all audiences.

Fisheries representatives

- Examples: NFFO; Producer Organisations and other associations/representative/fleet-based organisations.
- Relevance:
 - excellent understanding of the needs and potential concerns of fishermen invited to participate
 - can act as trusted (and in the case of POs, local) representatives for engaging with potential participants.
- Most important key message themes: 1, 2, 4.

Charities and other non-profit organisations/initiatives

- Examples: Fishermen's Mission; Fishing into the Future.
- Relevance:
 - likely to have an excellent understanding of the needs and potential concerns of fishermen invited to participate
 - could act as trusted representatives in some places.
- Most important key message themes: 1, 2, 3.

Policymakers

- Examples: Defra; Ministers.
- Relevance:
 - as funder and owner of the project, the UK Government holds the final decision-making role for all aspects, e.g., who will hold the data, and who will be able to access it
 - the UK Government and specific policymakers would use data from the mapping in making decisions on use of marine areas.
- Most important key message themes: 3, 4.

Regulators

- Examples: MMO; TCE.
- Relevance:
 - the MMO sits on the project Steering Group
 - may be able to provide data and information useful to the design/delivery of the project
 - may access data from the mapping as part of their involvement in decision-making on the use of marine areas.
- Most important key message themes: 2, 4.

Fisheries managers

- Examples: IFCA's e.g., Cornwall IFCA.
- Relevance:
 - AIFCA's sits on the project Steering Group
 - could act as trusted representatives in some places
 - may otherwise be able to provide data and information useful to the design/delivery of the project
 - may access data from the mapping in their role as decision-maker on the use of marine areas (locally).
- Most important key message themes: 2, 3, 4.

Advisors

- Examples: Cefas; Seafish; Arm's Length Bodies (ALBs) e.g. Natural England and JNCC.
 - Cefas and the ALBs sit on the project Steering Group
 - may be able to provide data and information useful to the design/delivery of the project
 - may access data from the mapping for advising on the spatial use of marine areas.
- Most important key message themes: 2, 3, 4.

Section 9: Guidelines for accessible communication material design

As well as keeping everything we write as clear, accessible, and concise as possible, we'll make sure that the visuals of our communication materials are equally accessible and engaging. This means:

- following Defra's [accessible documents policy](#)
- consistently using the branding guidelines developed for this project, including:
 - using a "colour-blind-friendly" colour palette (see the branding guidelines):
 - for print outputs, using the CMYK (cyan, magenta, yellow, key/black) colour mode (as the alternative RGB (red, green, blue) colour mode can lead to colour coming out poorly when the output is printed).
 - being consistent with font type and font sizing
 - left-aligning any blocks of text, to better guide the eyes
- using 'clean' layouts and avoiding having large amounts of text squeezed in to small spaces
- using block colours to help separate different sections and support navigation
- considering the sizes and dimensions in which materials might appear (e.g., a graphic sent to a fisherman via WhatsApp versus a poster being printed in A3)
- avoiding the use of photographs in communication materials (note, photographs may be gathered during the data collection process with the consent of photo subjects; and project reports or blog posts may in future use these photos as appropriate).

Section 10: Communication sign-off procedures

Branding elements, a basic flyer design, a short slide deck, and three graphic templates for social media have been created alongside this Communications Strategy and signed off by Defra (28 March 2025).

Communication materials produced by the project in future should be reviewed as needed by the Working Group (for example, the splash page/webpage and press releases). Defra remains responsible for sign-off of communication materials.

Section 11: Communication risks

Potential risks of the project in relation to its communications are set out below, along with ways to reduce the likelihood of negative incidents happening and the actions that should be taken if they do.

Fishermen express expectations for the outcomes of the project that cannot be met, which could affect future participation by them or other fishermen

- How to avoid it happening: Keep to agreed messaging for describing the process and intended outcomes of the pilots, both verbally and in communication materials

- How to respond if it does happen:
 - if possible, speak to the fishermen concerned (e.g., via phone, WhatsApp) to iron out any misunderstandings
 - find out if the misunderstanding arose from a project communication (e.g., Facebook post, flyer, etc.) and retract or edit the material if possible.

Public criticism of the project (e.g., on social media or in fishing media outlet)

- How to avoid it happening:
 - keep to agreed messaging for describing the process and intended outcomes of the pilots, both verbally and in communication materials
 - engage proactively with key trade media outlets
 - avoid using particular platforms or groups on those platforms where advised by Working Group members.
- How to respond if it does happen:
 - appoint one or more members of the Working Group to act as spokespeople as needed, to provide a public response
 - provide clarity/explanation in response to specific points raised in the criticism, whether unfounded or not
 - for any criticism on a social media platform in particular, whether a response should be given and how this response is worded should be decided on a case-by-case basis by the project team.

Personal or proprietary information provided by participants is shared publicly by mistake (e.g., photo of a fishermen's annotations on a map is posted to social media)

- How to avoid it happening: Keep to agreed protocols for storage and sharing of different types of data collected by the project.
- How to respond if it does happen:
 - remove/delete the information as soon as the error comes to light
 - apologise personally to the affected person(s).

Poor uptake of communication materials (e.g., no one agrees to put up the poster designed for display in relevant places)

- How to avoid it happening: Use a range of appropriate methods to maximise the reach of materials, as per advice of the Working Group.
- How to respond if it does happen: Discuss alternative methods and modify our approach during the project process accordingly.

Section 12: References

- Ethical research handbook - Ethical guidelines (2024) for good practice in conducting participatory fisheries science (PFS).
- Fishing Into the Future (no date a): [The Scientist's and Innovator's Guide to Engaging with Fishermen.](#)
- Fishing Into the Future (no date b): [Core Values for Working Together Effectively.](#)

Suggested questions for project FAQ

1. I already provide data to regulators/researchers - why am I being asked to provide data for this project?
2. Who funds this project?
3. How is the fishing industry involved in this project?
 - a. Explain co-design process involving fishermen in the Working Group (both active fishermen and representatives from regional or national associations)
4. Will there be any compensation for taking part?
5. What will my data be used for?
6. Who will have access to the data I provide?
 - a. Use this question to explain both who holds the data and who will have access to it (assuming that some fishermen may not differentiate between parties holding data and those accessing it); note FOI considerations as relevant.
7. Will my personal data be displayed alongside the data I provide?
 - a. Note GDPR obligations as relevant.
8. Can I withdraw my data in the future if I change my mind?
9. Will I have another chance to update my data in future?
10. Will I be able to see the data provided by other fishermen?
11. Why are you only focusing on Brixham and Whitby?
 - a. Explain that the project is currently in a pilot phase.
 - b. Note the scope of any changes that may occur between the pilot and any full roll-out.
12. Will this mapping be done more widely across England or the UK in future?