



CONSEIL CONSULTATIF POUR
LES EAUX OCCIDENTALES
SEPTENTRIONALES

**NORTH WESTERN
WATERS**
ADVISORY COUNCIL

CONSEJO CONSULTIVO PARA
LAS AGUAS
NOROCCIDENTALES

WORK PROGRAMME FOR NWWAC

Period: 01/10/2025 to 30/09/2026

Background

The North Western Waters Regional Advisory Council (NWWAC) was established in accordance with Commission Decision 2005/668/EC on the 22 September 2005 as one of the seven Regional Advisory Councils, proposed under Council Decision 2004/585/EC, establishing Regional Advisory Councils under the Common Fisheries Policy.

With the entry into force of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013, on the Common Fisheries Policy (henceforth, “CFP”), on the 1st of January 2014 the Regional Advisory Councils changed to Advisory Councils (ACs). The advisory role of the ACs was also enhanced as a constituent part of this change.

The NWWAC’s current structure includes:



At time of writing, the NWWAC has 38 members with 33 representing fisheries organisations from five Member States (Belgium, France, Ireland, Spain and The Netherlands), as well as 5 organisations representing other interest groups, for example with environmental or recreational fishing interests.

There are 25 seats on the NWWAC Executive Committee, 15 for industry representative organisations and 10 for Other Interest Group organisations.

Seats in the industry college are allocated as follows:

- 2 Belgium
- 3 France
- 3 Ireland
- 2 Spain
- 2 The Netherlands
- 3 Other industry representative organisations with a wider European remit, for example the European Transport Federation

At the time of writing, two seats are vacant in the “other industry” category, and 7 seats are vacant in the OIG college. The NWWAC embarked on a strategic membership drive in Spring 2022 with a vision to increase its membership number across both colleges and in particular to attract NGOs into joining the GA as well as the ExCom. This drive was repeated in Spring 2023, however it did not result in an increase in membership numbers.

In line with the requirements of Commission Delegated Regulation 2022/204 amending Delegated Regulation 2015/242 (OJ L 34, 16/2/22) EC which came into force on 08 March 2022, the NWWAC carried out an external performance review. The report was presented at the meeting of the NWWAC General Assembly in September 2023 ([link](#)) with follow-up actions implemented during Year 19 addressing the various recommendations made. This work will continue in Year 21 (2025-2026).

Mission and objectives of the NWWAC

The NWWAC’s mission is to contribute to the achievement of the objectives of the Common Fisheries Policy as described in Art. 2 of 1380/2013 as in effect at any given time and in particular to advise the Commission and the Member States on matters of fisheries management in respect of the North Western Waters. This advice (recommendations and suggestions) will incorporate the social, economic and environmental dimensions of fisheries as well as the Ecosystem Based Approach and Precautionary Approach to management and will be prepared with the general aim of attaining sustainable fisheries management.

The principal aim of the North Western Waters Advisory Council is to bring together European stakeholders (fishers, representatives of producers’ organisations, environmental NGOs, recreational fishers, processors and consumers, amongst others) to provide advice to the European Commission and the Member States, in order to achieve the sustainable exploitation of the fish stocks within the geographical remit of the NWWAC as identified in (EU) No 1380/2013.

The advice produced by the NWWAC is directed by the objectives of the CFP. The NWWAC also addresses topics for advice on environmental, economic and social management of fisheries in the wider context of all EU policies.

Given the mixed nature of the fisheries within the geographical remit of the NWWAC, the development of sustainable fisheries management options for the short and long term will remain the foundation for advice. The objectives articulated in the Marine Strategy Framework Directive will also be taken into account, as well as the European Green Deal and its related strategies.

NWWAC WORK PRIORITIES

Overarching long term and short term work priorities (at least 3 priorities)

CFP evaluation

On 27 January 2025, the European Commission launched a public consultation regarding the evaluation of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) regulation. The public consultation ran for 12 weeks until 21 April 2025. Feedback collected is used to shape the evaluation of the Common Fisheries Policy regulation, which the Commission aims to present early 2026.

In April 2025 the North Western Waters Advisory Council (NWWAC) provided extensive and detailed advice on the “CFP Regulation Evaluation” in support of ongoing advancements in sustainability and governance.

In Year 21 the NWWAC will continue its involvement in the evaluation where needed and closely collaborate with the European Commission services regarding all aspects of this work via its dedicated Focus Group CFP which was set up in 2023 in response to the publication of the Commission’s fisheries policy package.¹ The AC will continue to follow developments stemming from these communications in Year 21.

EU Ocean Pact

In July 2024, President von der Leyen announced the development of a European Ocean Pact in her political guidelines for the next European Commission (2024-2029). This strategic initiative aims at enhancing the coherence and effectiveness of EU ocean-related policies. Recognising the ocean’s vital role in climate regulation, food security, clean energy, and economic growth, the Ocean Pact seeks to align governance frameworks, support the sustainable blue economy, and strengthen the EU’s global leadership in marine conservation. Addressing fragmented policies, the initiative seeks to integrate environmental, economic, and social dimensions, thus ensuring that all stakeholders engaged in shaping a resilient and competitive maritime sector.

The NWWAC participated in the High-Level Roundtable with Commissioner Kadis in February 2025 and provided detailed advice in response to the public consultation in March 2025. In addition, it supported the Commission’s efforts in consulting stakeholders via the ACs’ dedicated workshop at the European Maritime Day 2025.

Work will continue in Year 21 within the AC on this important initiative in order to ensure integration of the identified objectives in its work.

Vision for Fisheries 2040

During the Inter-AC meeting on 08 April 2025 Commissioner Kadis referred to reflections with the Commission on the Vision for Fisheries and Aquaculture 2040 and invited the Advisory Councils to put forward first suggestions for the strategic preparation of a long-term vision for the sector. The

¹ The package included COM(2023) 103 final and staff working document SWD(2023) 103 final/2; COM(2023)102; COM(2023) 100 final; and COM(2023) 101 final

NWWAC will prepare its contributions and recommendations on this important initiative as part of the consultation process once initiated by the Commission.

Impact of the EU-UK TCA

The NWWAC will continue to monitor the functionalities and consequences of the EU-UK TCA, both in respect of the activities in the relevant area and of the functioning of the ACs themselves. The NWWAC joined forces with the AAC, PelAC, MAC, NSAC and LDAC in Year 17 in the “Inter-AC Brexit Forum” with the aim to discuss and develop joint advice to the European Commission and Member States on Brexit-related matters commonly affecting these ACs impacted by Brexit, as well as providing structured input to relevant horizontal agenda items discussed in the Specialised Committee on Fisheries (SCF) between the EU and UK. The NWWAC will pay particular attention during Year 21 to all developments related to the review of the TCA scheduled for 2025-2026 and assist the Commission in all aspects in relation to this work where needed. The NWWAC notes the EU and UK’s long-term agreement granting full reciprocal access to fishing waters adopted in June 2025. However, concerns remain in the ability of EU vessels to make full use of their allocated fishing opportunities in UK waters, especially considering UK MPA proposals, offshore windfarms and cumulative impacts.

As an additional consequence of Brexit, the future of regionalisation remains an important topic for discussion in the NWWAC. The AC will continue addressing this aspect during Year 21.

Landing obligation (LO)

In Year 17 the NWWAC launched the updated version of its Choke Identification Tool (CIdT) to better reflect the changes following Brexit. The CIdT provides useful information in support of the management of shared stocks with the United Kingdom following its full exit from the EU.

During Year 19 the NWWAC continued its collaboration with both the NWW Member States Group and the European Commission utilising the CIdT to address potential mitigation actions required in fisheries subject to the landing obligation in all the sub-regional areas of the North Western Waters. This tool provides the basis and direction for much of the NWWAC’s work and members received training regarding its use at a workshop in July 2023.

Since Year 15, the NWWAC’s Focus Group Landing Obligation has come together consistently with the objective of examining and discussing the CFP objectives of the LO as well as observing developments regarding related topics, such as the discard plans and the technical measures. In addition, the NWWAC will include the LO in the agendas of internal meetings (e.g., working groups and advice drafting groups) as well as in the agendas of meetings with scientists, the Commission and the NWW Member States Group to find solutions for stocks for which the implementation of the LO represents major challenges. The work of this Focus Group will address the issues identified in COM(2023) 103 final, specifically in support of the Commission’s proposed evaluation of the LO and the development of the terms of reference.

Following from the successful joint workshop in Year 15 between the NWWAC, EFCA and the NWW Control Expert Group on monitoring, control and enforcement of the Landing Obligation, the NWWAC continued its engagement by organising two meetings during Year 16. The NWWAC organised a joint in-person workshop with EFCA, the NWW MS Control Expert Group and members of the NWWAC Focus Group Control and Compliance on the Evaluation of Compliance with the Landing Obligation in Copenhagen in January 2024. The information provided during all the above-mentioned meetings and

the exchanges between NWWAC members, EFCA, the Commission and the NWW Control Expert Group is highly valuable to our members, and the AC will continue these exchanges in Year 21.

The Discard Plan 2021 - 2023 came to an end in 2023, and the NWWAC evaluated its provisions and made recommendations to the NWW Member States in support of their own Joint Recommendation to the Commission on a new Discard Plan for 2024-2027. Work continued throughout Year 20 on this topic with particular focus on the requirements and actions identified in the CFP Communication (SWD(2023) 103 final) and the Action Plan (COM(2023) 102 final) as well as any additional considerations following from the progression of the public consultation of the CFP evaluation and the publication of the EU Ocean Pact.

Technical measures

The NWWAC will continue to provide advice on technical measures in the Celtic Sea and in the Irish Sea, specifically in the context of the full implementation of Regulation EU 2019/1241. This includes the definition of directed fisheries. The NWWAC will monitor and incorporate in its advice, where possible, relevant research to improve selectivity and reduce unwanted catches. Also, in Year 21 the NWWAC will continue its collaboration with the NWW Member States Group and scientists. This will allow fishing industry and scientists alike to learn about best practices and avoid duplication.

An important aspect in this is the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) between the EU and the UK, specifically the work of the Specialised Committee on Fisheries. The NWWAC is ready to provide competent advice on all topics related to fisheries management in its remit area and on all items relevant to joint stock management. This includes the upcoming review of the TCA and the potential contributions by the NWWAC as any changes could potentially have significant consequences for fisheries in the NWW. The NWWAC notes the EU and UK's long-term agreement granting full reciprocal access to fishing waters adopted in June 2025. However, concerns remain in the ability of EU vessels to make full use of their allocated fishing opportunities in UK waters, especially considering UK MPA proposals, offshore windfarms and cumulative impacts.

The NWWAC stands ready to support the NWW Member States in their response to the call from the Commission to better involve stakeholders in the regional organisations to ensure involvement of both fisheries and environmental authorities as identified in COM(2023) 103 final, as well as work on relevant action identified in the CFP Communication (SWD(2023) 103 final) and the Action Plan (COM(2023) 102 final) as well as any additional considerations following from public consultation of the CFP evaluation and the publication of the EU Ocean Pact.

Non-quota species

For the management of fisheries on non-quota species, both the EU multi-annual plan for fisheries in the Western Waters (WW MAP) and the TCA are relevant. Such stocks have been under the attention of the NWWAC for a long time.

This includes the establishment in previous years of dedicated Focus Groups on the management of the following stocks:

- Seabass: As in previous years, the NWWAC will continue to follow the development of recommendations on specific management measures for the stock concerned, especially the work of the Specialised Committee on Fisheries, and provide advice when possible. Collaboration with the North Sea AC will remain an objective.

- **Scallops:** In Year 15 the NWWAC set up a Focus Group on Scallops. In Year 16 this group discussed and agreed for the NWWAC to support the joint recommendation on a regional management plan for King Scallop stocks in the English Channel as proposed by the NWW Member States Group. The work of this Focus Groups continued in Year 19 with the organisation of a webinar in June 2024 bringing together the European Commission, Member States representatives, scientists and researchers as well as AC members. The webinar's purpose was to discuss and progress issues such as stock status, currently available scientific information, current management measures and identification of potential additional / alternative measures, as well as identify existing data gaps. The outcome of this EU only webinar was used in the preparation of an in-person workshop on king scallop management in the North Western Waters in September 2024, involving European Commission, UK representatives, experts from both Parties, ICES representatives, NWW Member States Group and NWWAC members. The Focus Group continued its work in Year 20 and at time of writing is evaluating the development of specific advice on this topic.
- **Whelk:** In Year 16, the NWWAC set up a Focus Group on Whelk aiming at discussing and providing advice on the management of this resource in the Channel. In Year 18, this group submitted advice to the NWW Member States Group for a joint recommendation on whelk management in European Waters of ICES 7d and 7e. The work was put on hold in Year 20 due to a lack of development at Member State level. In Year 21, the NWWAC will continue to explore opportunities for further collaboration with the NWW Member States and consider where liaison with UK counterparts could be useful, in accordance with any work to be carried out by the Specialised Committee on Fisheries.
- **Brown Crab:** As a result of the work of a former NWWAC Focus Group on Year 16, a joint Focus Group was set up with the North Sea AC and the Market AC delivering advice in Year 17. Due to noticeable impacts on the stock from fishing effort as well as disease, this work continued in Year 18. On foot of the response received from the European Commission to the joint advice submitted in September 2023, the NWWAC brought this topic forward into the NWW Member States Group with a view of developing a Joint Recommendation. It was hoped that this topic would be discussed in greater detail in the NWW MSG as well as the Scheveningen Group during Year 20, however no new developments occurred. The NWWAC continues to address this topic during meetings with the NWW MSG and will work jointly again with the NSAC on addressing the requirements for and developing the details of a Joint Recommendation in Year 21.

Recognising the importance of targeted fisheries on several non-TAC stocks in the area, the NWWAC will continue to identify the necessity to provide advice that contributes to the sustainable management of these fisheries especially in light of the EU-UK negotiations.

Relevant scientific experts and representatives from national and EU administrations, along with the STECF evaluation of proposals, will greatly enhance the structure of these meetings.

WW Multi-Annual Plan

According to Regulation (EU) 2019/472, the Commission is required to report by 27 March 2024, and every five years thereafter, to the European Parliament and to the Council on the results and impact of the plan on the stocks to which the Regulation applies, and on the fisheries exploiting those stocks, in particular as regards the achievement of the objectives set out in Article 3. Following the

Commission's request, in Year 18 the NWWAC provided its contribution by replying to the targeted consultation on the matter.

The NWWAC will consider how to follow up on this work in Year 21.

TACs and quotas

As in previous years, the NWWAC will produce advice on this important topic following the presentation of the ICES advice at its July meetings. The timing of this advice is dependent on the processes developed and agreed as part of the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement and the EU-UK consultations on the management of joint stocks, including the work of the Specialised Committee on Fisheries. The NWWAC will follow the procedures as identified by the European Commission.

This advice will provide the NWWAC opinion on a number of subject areas, including a review of the state of stocks, the application of MSY, ICES stock assessment categorisation, and multi-species considerations in the context of shared stock management with the UK. The implications of the Landing Obligation and the mitigation of choke risks will receive significant attention as in previous years.

The NWWAC advice on TACs and quotas will be submitted in sufficient time to inform all relevant discussions between the EU and the UK leading to the Commission's proposal to the Council for the Regulation on Fishing Opportunities for species in Atlantic waters in 2026.

As in previous years, a number of specific requests may also be submitted to the Commission and concerned Member States for some stocks in response to a specific advice request or when identified by members of the NWWAC following the latest scientific developments, for example cod, hake, pollack, *Nephrops* and sole. If required and in accordance with available resources and budget, the NWWAC will organise specific Focus Groups or Advice Drafting Groups to develop the advice, as is already the case for skates & rays.

- Skates & Rays: In Year 15 the NWWAC and North Sea AC set up a joint Focus Group on Skates and Rays to prepare advice on a harmonised management approach to the respective Member States Groups. In Year 16 and 17 this group updated the NWWAC and NSAC best management advice to these Member States Groups and identified additional areas of importance for its work and contributed to the Terms of Reference for the STECF EWG set up in Q2 of 2022. The Focus Group continued its important work in Year 18 by organising a workshop specifically also in relation to conclusions reached in several research projects carried out in several Member States and by STECF. Work continued in Year 19 with a submission made to the Commission specifically calling for the holding of an STECF Expert Working Group to focus on simulation of consequences related to changes in TAC setting and management including issues related to the use of the relative stability allocation key, and specifically the removal of individual commercially important or vulnerable species from the group TAC. The Focus Group continued its work during Year 20, and in Year 21 is looking at organising a follow up stakeholder-led workshop based on the set up of the Year 19 workshop in order to address specific aspects that need consideration regarding the co-management of these stocks under the TCA.

The NWWAC will continue its involvement in the annual MIAC and MIACO meetings and appreciates the Commission's initiative regarding AC involvement in the MIRIA process. In addition, the AC will continue to monitor the revision of ICES stock categorisation and support efforts in improving the consistency of ICES advice.

Ecosystem based approach to fisheries management

The NWWAC Work Programme includes the implementation of the ecosystem approach in the North Western Waters by promoting the development of monitoring programmes and conservation measures. The NWWAC work will focus on the following key elements:

- Continuing engagement in discussions on Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems (VMEs) with the Commission, ICES and STECF, following closely the development of scientific advice and socio-economic assessments.
 - Promoting understanding and acceptance by all stakeholders of the ecosystem approach to the management of human activities (e.g., marine litter, underwater noise), and improving communication among various management authorities in the NWW;
 - Acting as a point of contact between policy makers and AC stakeholders in order to facilitate consultation for the designation and management of: Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems, Natura 2000, OSPAR and national marine offshore sites (i.e., MCZ, etc.), where fishing activity by EU vessels takes place in North Western Waters. The NWWAC wishes to contribute to the meetings of the NWW Member States subgroup on Article 11, dealing with conservation measures necessary for compliance with obligations under the EU environmental legislation (e.g., Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)).
 - Identify and prioritise the needs for the NWWAC members to protect sensitive species and habitats.
- SEAwise

In Year 17, the NWWAC joined the SEAwise project and will continue supporting this project by co-organising workshops as needed as well as providing input via written procedures in Year 18.

SEAwise is an international project paving the way for the implementation of Ecosystem Based Fisheries Management (EBFM) in Europe. Through a targeted programme of interdisciplinary research led by a collaborative network of partners, together with the input of key fisheries stakeholders, SEAwise aims to deliver a fully operational tool that will allow fishers, managers, and policy makers to easily apply EBFM structures in their own fisheries.

The first stakeholder workshop of this project was coordinated and supported by the NWWAC during Year 17 in January 2022. A project update was provided to members at the NWWAC Spring plenary meetings in March 2023, and NWWAC members participated in the second stakeholder workshop during Year 18 in June 2023. An update was provided on the project under the Mission Atlantic Project in August 2023, and a third dedicated workshop was facilitated by the NWWAC in March 2025. Following the final symposium in July 2025 the NWWAC will assess how to integrate the outcomes of this project in its work in Year 21.

- Mission Atlantic

This EU-funded project maps and assesses the present and future status of Atlantic marine ecosystems under the influence of climate change and exploitation. NWWAC members first became involved in this project in 2022 and have closely followed developments since mainly via participating in the associated workshops which include additional updates on other projects such as [OceanICU](#), [GES4SEAS](#), [MarinePlan](#).

Environment

In 2019, the European Commission published the Green Deal which recognises that climate change and environmental degradation are an existential threat to Europe and the world and proposes new strategies to overcome those challenges. Recognising the influence of environmental policies on fisheries management in the European Union and acknowledging the inter-connectedness of fisheries management and specific and non-specific marine environmental issues, the NWWAC decided in Year 16 to include work on wider environmental issues such as climate change, biodiversity loss, marine plastics, CO₂ emissions, impact of seismic activities on fish stocks.

The Focus Group Climate Change and Environment is identifying and examining the AC's needs in developing advice related to climate and environmental initiatives promoted and adopted by the Commission in the context of the EU Green Deal. These include:

- the EU Farm to Fork Strategy,
- EU Biodiversity Strategy, including the Action plan to conserve fisheries resources and protect marine ecosystems,
- the new approach for a Sustainable Blue Economy in the EU,
- Nature Restoration Law
- Marine Strategy Framework Directive
- Energy Transition Partnership

as well as any DG MARE initiative relating to the implementation of the relevant Sustainable Development Goals, whilst also tracking the IUCN and FAO initiatives in this respect. A relevant topic in this respect is the discussion around 30% protection of the ocean area and strict protection of 10%. The importance of these issues regarding fisheries management is becoming ever clearer and the NWWAC will continue to include work on these in its work programme for Year 21 via its Focus Group Climate and Environment.

In Year 15, the NWWAC and Pelagic AC set up a joint Focus Group on impacts from seismic activities and offshore wind energy developments with a view to developing specific research questions for an ICES Special Request Advice on the impact of seismic activities on fish stocks and marine ecosystems in the relevant sea basins taking into account previous AC requests to the Commission. This work continued during Year 16, and in Year 17 the NWWAC and PelAC jointly organised a successful virtual workshop following up on its 2020 submissions and developing additional joint advice on the potential impact of offshore renewable energy developments on fishing activities. NWWAC members believe there is a continued and urgent need to address these important topics and set up a new joint Focus Group Spatial Dimension with the Pelagic AC. An update on this work was provided to all AC members during the joint Horizontal Working Group which was organised in-person as part of the joint 20-year anniversary celebrations of the NWWAC and PelAC in Dublin Castle in March 2024. The ACs held a joint webinar in February 2025 which led to the development and submission of advice. Further work of this Focus Group is envisaged for Year 21.

At time of writing the NWWAC is leading the liaison with the Seafood/ORE Group in Ireland for which representation has been sought on behalf of both NWWAC and PelAC since 2022. At time of writing admission to this group has still not been approved despite several meetings and increased dialogue

on his issue. It is hope that the NWWAC will be able follow the proceedings of this group on behalf of both ACs in Year 21.

In April 2024, the North Western Waters AC received a request by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), a unit of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage in Ireland, to nominate a suitable person to represent the AC on the industry side of the Designated Areas Appeals Advisory Board. This Board was established by the Minister in 1997 to act as an independent body that makes recommendations to the Minister on appeals against proposed site designations (Special Protection Areas, Special Areas of Conservation and Natural Heritage Areas). The AC was contacted as the composition of the Board needs to reflect the perspectives of stakeholders in these sites, including fisheries. The NWWAC Executive Secretary has been nominated to represent the AC on this Board and attended a first hearing in March 2024 from which a recommendation was made to the relevant Minister. The Executive Secretary will continue this involvement in Year 21 when called upon.

Social Aspects

Over the past years there has been an increasing difficulty to fill vacancies in the seafood sector with qualified employees, and specifically in the catching sector. In Year 17 the NWWAC established a joint Focus Group Social Aspects with the NSAC and agreed Terms of References which include an analysis of the causes of this specific issue. With the number of jobs depending on the fisheries sector declining in the majority of the coastal areas, some coastal communities are at risk of not being viable in the future. The joint Focus Group developed several recommendations to the European Commission since its inception. The NWWAC recognises that social sustainability is intrinsically linked with environmental and economic sustainability and continued exploring relevant aspects in Year 20 in order to develop advice based on best practice. The AC paid specific attention to the “Fishers of the Future” project in Year 19 and Year 20. The NWWAC will continue its work in the joint Focus Group as well as monitor any additional aspects that may require specific advice in Year 21. This includes considerations regarding the standardisation of fisheries training across Member States and UK, transferability of fishing qualifications to other marine sectors, as well as gender equality across the sector

Control and compliance

The NWWAC will continue to follow the operational activities of the European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA) in Areas 6 and 7 and will participate in Advisory Boards and other Monitoring, Control and Compliance fora, when invited.

As already mentioned above there is an active Focus Group on Control and Compliance in the NWWAC with the objective of preparing further advice on all relevant monitoring, control and enforcement measures. In Year 20 the NWWAC organised a multi-AC workshop on the implementation of the new control regulation involving 8 ACs in total. Following this workshop, joint advice was developed with the NSAC and PelAC. The NWWAC will continue its work on this topic in Year 21 and analyse the need for additional advice taking into account the timelines identified in the implementation of the control regulation including implementing and delegated acts scheduled. The use of REM and monitoring of engine power will also be important topics to be considered.

Overall follow-up of achievement of the CFP objectives

The continued dialogue with the Commission at NWWAC and Inter-AC meetings in Year 20 will contribute to the NWWAC work on all of the above topics in Year 21.

The NWWAC will also remain at the forefront of organising events when required, where useful and preferable, in collaboration with other ACs.

Funding post EMFAF

The NWWAC collaborated with on a joint submission with all other ACs in a response to the Commission's communication 'The road to the next MFF' which outlines a comprehensive overview for the post-2027 multiannual financial framework (MFF) and for the next generation of funding programmes. Of particular importance is the continued maintenance and enhancement of participation by stakeholder organisations in the EU decision-making process. As foreseen in Article 43 of the Common Fisheries Policy Regulation (CFP), The ACs are bodies pursuing an aim of general EU interest and provide the Commission and Member States with valuable recommendations/advice on fisheries, aquaculture, and markets management, considering socio-economic, and environmental aspects. The ACs are stakeholder-led bodies comprising representatives of the fisheries and aquaculture value chain and Other Interest Groups.

Given their broad representation, ACs are among the most representative bodies for consultation and gathering of information, observations, knowledge and on-ground experience from the sector and other affected stakeholders. Continuation and enhancement of the ACs work is crucial for political priorities of the European Commission, such as the evaluation of the CFP, the European Ocean Pact and the Energy Transition Partnership, following the lines of participatory governance and Better Regulation principles. Specifically, The EU Ocean Pact is expected to mark a new phase of stakeholders' cooperation for a common vision on Ocean policy, including on the future of the fisheries and aquaculture sectors. Through the Pact, and in the context of the evaluation and anticipated reform of the CFP, the inclusive, representative, and relevant role of the ACs can be further recognised. To continue their work, funding for the ACs must be ensured, and the NWWAC will closely follow developments in this regard.

Work priorities identified for each Working Group and Focus Group (where available)

Working Group 1 – Irish Sea:

- TACs & Quotas
- Technical Measures
- Choke Identification Tool
- Ecosystem based approach to fisheries management

Working Group 2 Celtic Sea & West of Scotland:

- TACs & Quotas
- Technical Measures
- Choke Identification Tool
- Ecosystem based approach to fisheries management

Working Group 3 – English Channel:

- TACs & Quotas
- Technical Measures
- Choke Identification Tool
- Ecosystem based approach to fisheries management
- Non-quota species via relevant Focus Groups

Horizontal Working Group:

- Evaluation of the CFP
- Landing Obligation
- Other CFP Objectives and impact of the EU-UK TCA and especially the review scheduled for 2025/2026
- Ecosystem based approach to fisheries management
- Environmental aspects relating to fisheries in the NWW, including the EU Farm to Fork Strategy, the Biodiversity Strategy, Marine Spatial planning and offshore renewable energy development, Natura 2000 and MPAs, VMEs, Nature Restoration Law etc., impacts of climate change and decarbonising the EU fleet linked to the Energy Transition Partnership
- Social Aspects
- Control & Compliance
- Spatial Dimension and ORE development
- MFF
- Overall follow-up of achievement of the CFP objectives

Focus Groups

All Focus Groups will address relevant and prioritised issues identified in the CFP package as well as any additional considerations following from the discussions and progression of the CFP reform as announced by Commissioner Sinkevičius in March 2024.

Focus Group Landing Obligation

- support the Horizontal Working Group in drafting advice on topics such as discard plans, choke risk, fishing opportunities and technical measures, when the task demands specific focus and effort.

Focus Group Scallop

- prepare advice to the European Commission and the NWW Member States Group on measures to take in commercial fisheries to manage the scallop stock in the Channel specifically following the planned workshop in October 2024

Focus Group Seabass

- follow updates and developments in relation to management of the seabass stocks in the NWW and prepare advice where needed to the European Commission on both commercial and recreational fisheries.

Proposed Focus Group Brown Crab

- develop Joint Recommendation on the management of Brown Crab Stocks in the NWW and North Sea once agreed with the NWW Members States Group and the Scheveningen Group

Focus Group Skates & Rays

- respond to the specific request from the Member States
- to address ongoing issues regarding the management of skates and rays
- to address issues arising within the advisory process

Focus Group Climate & Environment

- Identify and examine the NWWAC needs in developing related advice to ongoing issues such as EU Farm to Fork Strategy, EU Biodiversity Strategy, Blue Economy, energy transition, Nature Restoration Law, MSFD and more
- Topics will be adjusted in line with the development of Terms of Reference in other Focus Groups to avoid overlap.

Focus Group Social Aspects

- Develop advice to the European Commission and Members States on social aspects relating to fisheries in the NWW/ North Sea
- Develop advice on gender equality in the wider seafood sector
- Develop advice on the socio-economic viability of communities and promotion of cooperation/collaboration between stakeholders
- Identify ways of addressing all three sustainability pillars in future NWWAC/NSAC advice in an effort to achieve economic, environmental and social objectives
- Develop advice on related issues should an urgent crisis arise

Focus Group Control & Compliance

- Provide advice on the control, implementation and enforcement of the landing obligation.
- Advice on other relevant control and compliance issues that may arise, while following the implementation of the new control regulation and analyse the need for advice

Focus Group CFP

- Monitor implementation of the Marine Action Plan and provide advice where needed.
- Monitor follow-up on the CFP communication and Staff working document and develop advice where needed.
- Identify requests made by the Commission to the Advisory Councils in the CFP Package and to provide the Commission with recommendations on the feasibility of these tasks/requests.

- Follow-up on the replies made by the Commission and on other topics that concern the CFP and that are not under the remit of any other focus groups.
- Address any additional considerations following from the discussions and progression of the CFP reform as announced by Commissioner Sinkevičius in March 2024 and develop advice where needed.

Focus Group Spatial Dimension

- Develop advice to the European Commission and Members States on aspects relating to offshore renewable energy developments, Marine Spatial Planning, conservation designations and their impact on fisheries in the remit areas of the NWWAC and Pelagic AC

Other issues of interest:

- Cooperation with the Commission via the regularly scheduled Inter AC meetings
- Cooperation with NWW Member States
- Involvement and integration into the new EU-UK framework of fisheries management
- Cooperation with scientists, specifically ICES (Revision of ICES stock categorisation and improving the consistency of ICES advice) and STECF (improving the quality of scientific and economic data)
- Collaboration with other ACs
- NWWAC membership drive
- NWWAC Fisheries Management WebGIS online tool (ACFishMap)
- Follow up on recommendations from the NWWAC Performance review carried out in Year 18 and completed in September 2023.

Other issues of interest if any:

None identified

Planned recommendations for year 21:

No	Issue/subject	Link with the CFP	WG/FG at the origin of the recommendation	Planned date of adoption (if available)
1	Advice on Addressing Choke Risk in the NWW after exemptions	Article 2, 14, 15	WG1, WG2, WG3	December 2025
2	Advice on topics related to the Landing Obligation	Article 2, 14, 15	Horizontal WG (Focus Group Landing Obligation)	March 2026
3	Advice on the implementation of the EU Technical Measures Regulation, including directed fisheries definition	Article 2, 10	Horizontal Working Group	March 2026
4	Advice on the TCA including Technical Measures as a topic in the execution of the TCA if	Article 2	WG1, WG2, WG3, HWG	July 2026

	relevant proposals are put forward by the Commission			
5	Advice on Fishing Opportunities 2025 & COM Policy Paper	Article 2, 14, 15, 16	WG1, WG2, WG3, HWG	July 2026
6	Advice on the management of skates & rays	Article 2, 10, 14, 15, 16	HWG (Focus Group Skates & Rays)	April 2026
7	Advice relating to SCF issues: technical measures, non-quota species etc.	Article 2, 14, 15	Horizontal WG	December 2025
8	Advice related to climate & environment topics, e.g., EU Biodiversity Strategy, EU Green Deal, Farm to Fork Strategy, Nature Restoration Law, Spatial Dimension	Article 2	HWG (Focus Group Climate & Environment)	November 2025
9	Advice on social aspects related to fisheries in the NWW	Article 2	HWG (Focus Group Social Aspects)	January 2026
10	Advice on aspects raised as part of the CFP evaluation and/or the EU Ocean Pact	Article 2	HWG (Focus Group CFP and other relevant FGs once identified)	June 2026
11	Advice on the vision for fisheries 2040	Article 2	HWG (Focus Group CFP and other relevant FGs once identified)	May 2026

Planned participation to Commission public consultations

Topic/subject	Link with the CFP	Deadline for the EU Survey (if available)	Planned date for adoption (if available)

The North Western Waters AC will monitor the Commission's online "Have Your Say" portal on a regular basis and respond to the relevant consultations where needed.

NWWAC planning of meetings

NWWAC PLANNING OF MEETINGS (from 01/10/2025 to 30/09/2026)

	Date (for the first 6 months, please provide precise dates)	Topics /subjects of meeting	Type of meeting (physical/ planned/ hybrid)	European Commission participation requested (yes/no)	If Commission participation requested, specific issues to be dealt with	Priority for a Commission participation (from 1 to 4) (1= highest priority)
1	03 October 2025	CHARM	Virtual	No		

2	15 October 2025	Working Group 1	virtual	yes		1
3	15 October 2025	Working Group 2	virtual	yes		1
4	15 October 2025	Working Group 3	virtual	yes		1
5	16 October 2025	Horizontal Working Group	virtual	yes		1
6	23 October 2025	Executive Committee	virtual	yes		1
7	03 November 2025	CHARM	Virtual	no		
8	04 December 2025	CHARM	Virtual	no		
9	06 January 2026	CHARM	Virtual	no		
10	03 February 2026	CHARM	Virtual	no		
11	03 March 2026	CHARM	Virtual	no		
12	09 March 2026	Working Group 1 Irish Sea	hybrid	yes	Technical measures, ORE, Discard Plan	1
13	09 March 2026	Working Group 3 English Channel	hybrid	yes	Technical measures, non-quota species, Discard Plan	1
14	10 March 2026	Working Group 2 Celtic Sea & West of Scotland	hybrid	yes	Technical measures, Discard Plan	1
15	10 March 2026	Horizontal Working Group	hybrid	yes	TCA & SCF, UK Technical Measures, CFP evaluation	1
16	11 March 2026	Executive Committee	hybrid	yes	Dialogue with DG MARE: Overview on ongoing dossiers and upcoming advice requests; EU-UK negotiations, fishing opportunities 2027	1
17	07 April 2026	CHARM	virtual	no		
18	05 May 2026	CHARM	virtual	no		
19	02 June 2026	CHARM	Virtual	no		
20	02 July 2026	CHARM	Virtual	no		
21	03 July 2026	Working Group 1 Irish Sea	hybrid	yes	ICES advice, NWWAC choke tool update, Stock specific discussions with DG MARE experts	1

22	03 July 2026	Working Group 3 English Channel	hybrid	yes	ICES advice, NWWAC choke tool update, Stock specific discussions with DG MARE experts	1
23	04 July 2026	Working Group 2 Celtic Sea & West of Scotland	hybrid	yes	ICES advice, NWWAC choke tool update, Stock specific discussions with DG MARE experts	1
24	04 July 2026	Horizontal Working Group	hybrid	yes	depending on the topics discussed a DG MARE expert will be requested	
25	05 July 2026	Executive Committee	hybrid	yes	Dialogue with the Commission and Member States; EU-UK negotiations, fishing opportunities 2026	1
26	28 July 2026	CHARM	Virtual	no		
27	01 September 2026	CHARM	Virtual	no		
28	24 September 2026	General Assembly	virtual	no	Approval of Year 21 annual report and budget	