



## WORK PROGRAMME FOR NWWAC

Period: 01/10/2024 to 30/09/2025

### 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 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 20 (2024-2025).

### **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

At the informal meeting of the Council of Fisheries Ministers in March this year, Commissioner Sinkevičius announced that he has tasked DG MARE to carry out a full evaluation of the CFP Regulation.

In line with the Commission's better regulation requirements, the preparation for this full evaluation requires careful planning and must be based on studies, assessments and inputs of Member States and stakeholders. As the main CFP advisory bodies, the ACs will have a very important role to play, and the NWWAC stands ready to contribute to this work when requested as a priority topic.

#### CFP package

On 21 February 2023 the European Commission adopted its fisheries policy package including:

- Communication on the common fisheries policy today and tomorrow: a Fisheries and Oceans Pact towards sustainable, science-based, innovative and inclusive fisheries management (COM(2023) 103 final), including the Commission staff working document (SWD(2023) 103 final/2)
- Communication on the EU Action Plan: Protecting and restoring marine ecosystems for sustainable and resilient fisheries (COM(2023)102)
- Communication on the Energy Transition of the EU Fisheries and Aquaculture sector (COM(2023) 100 final)
- Report on the implementation of Regulation (EU) No 1379/2013 on the common organisation of the markets in fishery and aquaculture products (COM(2023) 101 final)

In relation to the remit of the NWWAC, the objective of this package is to promote sustainable fishing practices, cleaner energy sources, to limit the dependence on fossil fuels and to reduce the impact of the seafood sector on marine ecosystems. Improvements in fuel efficiency and a switch to renewable and low-carbon energy sources are proposed to make the sector climate neutral by 2050. Emphasis is placed on stakeholder involvement regarding all elements of the package with the Commission calling on Member States, fisheries stakeholders and the scientific community to come together in a 'Fisheries and Oceans Pact' to fully implement the CFP and contribute to additional reviews and adaptations in the future. Furthermore, the Commission announced its project "Fishers of the Future" to identify the trends, opportunities and threats that determine the attractiveness of the fishing sector while recognising the need for an analysis of the social dimension of fisheries.

In response to the publication, the NWWAC set up a new Focus Group to address certain requirements under the actions included in the first three documents, and identified which of its existing Focus Groups is already working on specific topics identified in the package. The NWWAC will follow and support where necessary the work of the Market Advisory Council on the CMO as this falls fully under the MAC's remit. Based on the work in the Focus Group, the NWWAC submitted relevant advice during Year 19. This work will continue during Year 20 where necessary. This Focus Group is also likely to carry out any initial work needed as part of the CFP evaluation as identified above.

## **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 20.

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 will continue 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 discussions and progression of the CFP reform as announced by Commissioner Sinkevičius in March 2024.

## **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 20 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.

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 the discussions and progression of the CFP reform as announced by Commissioner Sinkevičius in March 2024.

### **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 to be used in the preparation of an in person workshop on king scallop management in the North Western Waters for Q4 2024, involving European Commission, UK representatives, experts from both Parties, ICES representatives, NWW Member States Group and NWWAC members. Preparation for this workshop will begin immediately following the webinar.
- **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. In Year 20, 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. At time of writing (May 2024) this work is being discussed in the NWW MSG. With an expected positive outcome of these discussions the NWWAC will work jointly again with the NSAC on addressing the requirements for and developing the details of a Joint Recommendation in Year 20.

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 20.

### **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, 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 2025.

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 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 NWWAC stands ready to support this work in Year 20 as well as any additional aspects that need consideration regarding the co-management of these stocks under the TCA.

### **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 20 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.

As an additional consequence of Brexit, the future of regionalisation remains an important topic for discussion in the NWWAC. This was the focus of the joint 20-year anniversary event held by the NWWAC and PelAC in March 2024 the results of which will feed into additional discussions and relevant advice during Year 20.

### **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 the NWWAC continues following progress made.

- 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, CO<sub>2</sub> 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

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 20 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. 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 (May 2024) admission to this group seems likely to be approved by summer 2024. The NWWAC will then follow the proceedings of this group on behalf of both ACs.

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.

### **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 NWWAC recognises that social sustainability is intrinsically linked with environmental and economic sustainability and continued exploring relevant aspects in Year 19 in order to develop advice based on best practice. The AC paid specific attention to the “Fishers of the Future” project in Year 19. At the time of writing this, a letter to DG MARE on this topic is in preparation and presented to other ACs for their consideration of a joint approach. The NWWAC will continue to follow the remaining phases of this project closely in Year 20.

### **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. The NWWAC will continue to follow the implementation of the new control regulation and analyse the need for advice taking into account the timelines identified.

### **Overall follow-up of achievement of the CFP objectives**

The continued dialogue with the Commission at NWWAC and Inter-AC meetings in Year 19 will contribute to the NWWAC work on all of the above topics in Year 20.

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

## 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
- 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.
- Social Aspects
- Control & Compliance
- 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 Member 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 (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 19:**

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 2024
2	Advice on topics related to the Landing Obligation	Article 2, 14, 15	Horizontal WG (Focus Group Landing Obligation)	March 2025
3	Advice on the implementation of the EU Technical Measures Regulation, including directed fisheries definition	Article 2, 10	Horizontal Working Group	March 2025
4	Advice on Technical Measures as a topic in the execution of the TCA if relevant proposals are put forward by the Commission	Article 2	WG1, WG2, WG3, HWG	July 2025
5	Advice on Fishing Opportunities 2024 & COM Policy Paper	Article 2, 14, 15, 16	WG1, WG2, WG3, HWG	July 2025
6	Advice on the management of skates & rays	Article 2, 10, 14, 15, 16	HWG (Focus Group Skates & Rays)	March 2025
7	Advice relating to SCF issues: technical measures, non-quota species etc.	Article 2, 14, 15	Horizontal WG	December 2024
8	Advice related to climate & environment topics, e.g., EU Biodiversity Strategy, EU Green Deal, Farm to Fork Strategy, Nature Restoration Law	Article 2	HWG (Focus Group Climate & Environment)	November 2024
9	Advice on social aspects related to fisheries in the NWW	Article 2	HWG (Focus Group Social Aspects)	January 2025
10	Advice on aspects raised in the CFP Communication or as part of the CFP evaluation	Article 2	HWG (Focus Group CFP and other relevant FGs once identified)	June 2025
11	Advice on aspects raised in the Action Plan	Article 2	HWG (Focus Group CFP and other relevant FGs once identified)	May 2025
12	Advice on aspects raised in the Energy Transition Communication	Article 2	HWG (Relevant FG once identified)	December 2024

**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

<b>NWWAC PLANNING OF MEETINGS (from 01/10/2024 to 30/09/2025)</b>
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	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	04 October 2024	CHARM	Virtual	No		
2	09 October 2024	Working Group 1	virtual	yes		1
3	09 October 2024	Working Group 2	virtual	yes		1
4	09 October 2024	Working Group 3	virtual	yes		1
5	10 October 2024	Horizontal Working Group	virtual	yes		1
6	13 October 2024	Focus Group CFP	physical	no		
7	tbc October 2024	Workshop on Scallop Management in the Channel	physical	yes		1
8	22 October 2024	Executive Committee	virtual	yes		1
9	27 October 2023	Focus Group Climate	virtual	no		
10	01 November 2024	Focus Group Landing Obligation	virtual	no		
11	04 November 2024	CHARM	Virtual	no		
12	07 November 2024	Focus Group Scallop	virtual	yes	Finalisation of advice	
13	15 November 2024	Focus Group Control & Compliance	Virtual	no		

14	25 November 2024	Focus Group Skates & Rays	physical	yes		1
15	28 November 2024	Focus Group CFP	virtual	no		
16	16 December 2024	Focus Group Social Aspects	virtual	no		
17	06 January 2025	CHARM	Virtual	no		
18	10 January 2025	Focus Group MSP/ORE	virtual	no		
19	31 January 2025	Focus Group Control & Compliance	virtual	no		
20	03 February 2025	CHARM	Virtual	no		
21	04 February 2025	Inter-AC Brexit Forum	In-person	Yes		1
22	07 February 2025	Focus Group CFP	virtual	no		
23	23 February 2025	Focus Group Social Aspects	virtual	no		
24	03 March 2025	CHARM	Virtual	no		
25	10 March 2025	Working Group 1 Irish Sea	hybrid	yes	Technical measures, Discard Plan beyond 2023	1
26	10 March 2025	Working Group 3 English Channel	hybrid	yes	Technical measures, Discard Plan non-quota species	1
27	11 March 2025	Working Group 2 Celtic Sea & West of Scotland	hybrid	yes	Technical measures, Discard Plan	1
28	11 March 2025	Horizontal Working Group	hybrid	yes	TCA & SCF, UK Technical Measures, EU public consultation Protecting the seabed from bottom trawling by fishing vessels	1
29	12 March 2025	Executive Committee	hybrid	yes	Dialogue with DG MARE: Overview on ongoing dossiers and upcoming advice requests; EU-UK negotiations, fishing opportunities 2026	1
30	07 April 2025	CHARM	virtual	no		
31	05 May 2025	CHARM	virtual	no		
32	02 June 2025	CHARM	Virtual	no		



33	02 July 2025	CHARM	Virtual	no		
34	02 July 2025	Working Group 1 Irish Sea	hybrid	yes	ICES advice, NWWAC choke tool update, Stock specific discussions with DG MARE experts	1
35	02 July 2025	Working Group 3 English Channel	hybrid	yes	ICES advice, NWWAC choke tool update, Stock specific discussions with DG MARE experts	1
36	03 July 2025	Horizontal Working Group	hybrid	yes	depending on the topics discussed a DG MARE expert will be requested	1
37	03 July 2025	General Assembly	Hybrid	no		
38	03 July 2025	Working Group 2 Celtic Sea & West of Scotland	hybrid	yes	ICES advice, NWWAC choke tool update, Stock specific discussions with DG MARE experts	1
39	04 July 2025	Executive Committee	hybrid	yes	Dialogue with the Commission and Member States; EU-UK negotiations, fishing opportunities 2026	1
40	25 July 2025	Focus Group Landing Obligation	Virtual	no		
41	29 July 2025	CHARM	Virtual	no		
42	01 September 2025	CHARM	Virtual	no		
43	12 September 2025	Focus Group Landing Obligation	Virtual	No		
44	23 September 2025	Focus Group CFP	virtual	no		
45	25 September 2025	General Assembly	virtual	no	Approval of Year 20 annual report and budget	