



Decline in fisheries



New Entrants and Crew: 3 4

- Many existing fishermen/crew nearing retirement age with difficulties employing new or young crew due to: legal restrictions in taking youngsters out on working vessels, lack of interest to become a fisher, more appealing marine opportunities (such as working on wind farms)

Fishers now have to adapt to single-handed fishing operations

Vessel Number Declines: 3 3

- The number of small-scale vessels is decreasing and Harbours are changing, with primary focus moving from fishing to tourism. Seeing increased number of pleasure crafts present in the harbours.

This change has led to conflicts of interest

Lobster MCRS Increase



Implementation: 4 5

- Fishers feel the implementation process is complicated. Frustrations at new regulations not applying to the recreational sector and concern with differing cross borders regulations.
- Different opinions felt about the increase and increments: some feel the increase is fine, others feel a longer implementation period of 5-years would be better for recovery.

Decision Making Process: 3 3

- Concerns felt that not enough scientific evidence was available in Defra's decision-making process and alternative sources of information were not used. Fishers felt their views were not considered in the consultation process and questioned if this measure will improve the fishery, considering the current decline being faced.

MCA Regulations



Inspections: 2 2

- Frustrations with the irregularities between MCA inspections and inspectors were highlighted. With inspections not completed in one day and excessive paperwork required to complete assessments.

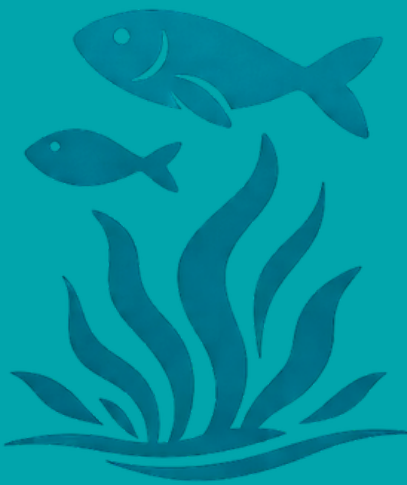
Life Jackets: 1 1

- It was felt that drone sea patrols help to ensure compliance for fishers wearing lifejackets which is good as they should be worn for most operations, but it was argued that it is safer to not wear a life jacket in certain situations (shooting gill nets), as they pose more of a risk.

Marine Environment

Marine Life: 2 2

- Significant decrease in hagfish and jellyfish, which was believed to be linked to the impacts of Storm Babet. Small increase in octopus in one area, although not on the same level as the octopus bloom in the SW.
- High numbers of squid eggs attached to fishers' pots during 2025, with increasing numbers beginning to be observed again. It was suggested that cuckoo wrasse may be becoming more prevalent, potentially replacing ballan wrasse.





Fisheries Funding

Fisheries & Coastal Growth Fund: 3 3

- Inquiries and suggestions were made for the Fisheries & Coastal Growth Fund. It was highlighted that previously there had been issues for small businesses and that the application process should not be complicated, support must be available for applications (ideally face-to-face), payment in arrears must be avoided and measures must be taken to ensure it is fairly allocated across the country.



The Fishery

Lobsters:

- Felt widely it had been a very good year for lobsters, with sightings increasing throughout the year. Some felt that 2025 has been the best year ever 5 6
- Some fishers had seen more berried hens and smaller sized lobsters on the grounds recently. Some believed it could be a benefit from the Berried Hen Ban, others felt it was more likely linked to climate change 3 4
- One fisher noticed that individual lobsters weighed less and wondered if this was linked food availability 1 1



Crabs:

- The 2025 fishery for brown crabs was felt to have been bad, and possibly an effect of observed increases of more lobsters on the ground/bad weather 3 3
- One fisher felt that the higher number of lobsters coincided with the higher number of velvet crabs 1 1



Angling:

- It was considered a poor season for angling this year, with mackerel late migrating through the district. However, fishers were surprised to learn that RSA were catching Haddock from the beach 1 1



Seals:

- In one area, there had been fewer seal interactions, until recently, where 3 pots had been opened by seals and bait removed. In another area, netting was not seen as a viable option due to the number of seals 2 2

Gear Trial/ MCZ Management Plan:

- Frustration was expressed about the lack of eligibility for an exemption within the MCZ. The area has a long history of fishing activity and is regularly influenced by natural storm events, so the fisher did not believe testing new gear was necessary 1 1

Climate Change:

- Higher than normal sea temperatures being observed. Reviewing available water temperature data, the sea surface temperature had remained warmer for longer, only dropping below 12 °C a few weeks ago (during November 2025) 2 2
- Continued rising sea levels observed over the last few decades; seen by fishers through witnessing the rise of the sea level against harbour infrastructures 1 1



The Market

Competitive: 1 1

- Concerns were raised about ensuring a competitive number of wholesalers and processors remain to avoid a monopoly in the region and skilled workers (filleters) are hired

Regulations: 1 1

- Suggestion made to extend regulations to include buyers, so they are accountable as well as fishers



Future Fisher Forums:

Details of all future Fisher Forums will be listed on the NIFCA website Fisher Forums page and posted on our social media pages. Everyone is welcome, including family members and retired fishers.