

## Clean Catch UK National Steering Group

### Terms of Reference

#### Purpose of Group

The Clean Catch UK National Steering Group (hereafter: NSG / Clean Catch UK NSG) is a national consultative group, developed to ensure that bycatch of sensitive marine species in the UK is addressed with a holistic approach. The group brings together Government policy advisors, fishing industry representatives, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), scientists, and experts in technology and engineering, who share an interest or have expertise in bycatch policy or research.

Through formal processes instituted by the Clean Catch UK Secretariat, members of the NSG - from all nations of the UK - come together to work collaboratively, share information and thereby provide expert governance and strategic advice for Defra to consider its application as relevant to policy in England. As domestic marine environment and fisheries policy is devolved, this advice could also be an additional resource for Devolved Administrations to consider for the development of evidence-based bycatch policy in their own nations.

This group formally replaces the previous national Bycatch Focus Group (BFG)<sup>1</sup>, which last met in November 2019, and will be chaired by Defra as part of a new, multi-species approach to engagement on bycatch policy in England.

#### The NSG is responsible for:

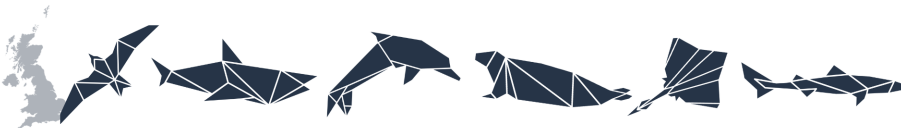
- Providing expert input and advice that will be used by Defra to help shape and support the delivery of actions or objectives included in:
  - The UK Bycatch Mitigation Initiative (BMI), to be published in 2022.
  - Other policies developed by Defra with the intention to monitor and/or reduce incidental bycatch of sensitive marine species or 'wildlife' including cetaceans, seals, seabirds, turtles, and unwanted, non-target catch species of elasmobranchs and tuna.

#### This will be achieved by:

- Members coming together at regular meetings to share knowledge and experiences working on bycatch research and policy, using group discussions and '*Items for Information*', to keep Defra informed of current thinking, innovations, and other pertinent arising issues.

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<sup>1</sup> The NSG also replaces a Seabird Bycatch Stakeholder group, formerly convened by JNCC, which last met in November 2020.





- Members providing expert advice and input on bycatch monitoring and mitigation research, issues or policy development through discussion on *'Items for Decision'*, with the results of said discussions being issued as formal *'Recommendations'* to Defra for their consideration in policy development and implementation. These will also be shared with other Devolved Administrations.
- Assisting in identifying data or engagement gaps to be filled by the other groups in the Clean Catch UK Programme: the technically focussed Clean Catch UK Regional Working Group (RWG), and action-oriented Local Focus Group (LFG).
- Using the NSG as a forum for proactively raising questions, *'Items for Information'*, or *'Items for Decision'* pertaining to the Clean Catch UK NSG Work Plan. NSG members will therefore contribute to a collaborative discussion with expert colleagues and policymakers, and ensure that a multi-species approach is taken by the Clean Catch UK programme in its work and by Defra in its policy development.
- The NSG Work Plan - to be agreed by NSG members in 2022 and based around the objectives of the UK BMI - will be regularly reviewed, and will ensure items raised for discussion, information or decision are 'on topic'. This will ensure that the NSG is providing advice on issues most pertinent to Defra's policy needs – as outlined here in the Terms of Reference. Responsibility for delivery of research or other actions within the Work Plan will be collaboratively discussed and assigned within NSG meetings, with the intention that NSG members contribute to this delivery.

## Management and Functioning of the Group

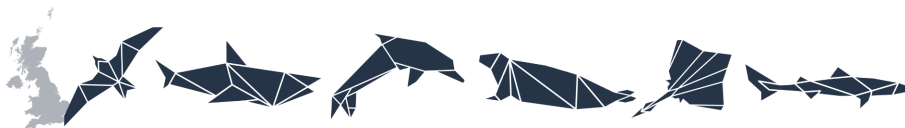
Cefas is responsible for the administration of the group for Defra, and Defra will chair meetings, occasionally with the support of additional external facilitation. Cefas will be responsible for overseeing and managing the Secretariat support, with help from external partners.

The group will be made up of the **main interested Government departments, Devolved Administrations, scientists, regulators, NGOs, fishing industry representatives, engineers and other experts** (see a full list of NSG members at the bottom of this document). Additional presenters, and/or observers, including representatives from the Regional Working Group and Local Focus Group, may be invited to relevant meetings, to **ensure strong communications and coordination between the overarching Clean Catch UK governance structure** (more information on the Clean Catch UK groups [here](#)).

**The group will meet twice a year** – with one full day face-to-face meeting per year, if possible.

For each meeting, the Clean Catch UK Secretariat will collate a package of documents that will be provided to NSG members for their consideration during the meeting. This package could include:

- An update on the research or other work from the wider Clean Catch UK Programme, from Cefas.
- Updates from Defra about bycatch policy development, updates or implementation.
  - Similar updates from Devolved Administrations as appropriate.
- *Items for Information* – submitted by the programme chair or NSG members.





- *Items for Decision* – submitted by the programme chair or NSG members.
- Documents to guide discussions for meetings.

The Clean Catch UK NSG will be asked to comment on key documents in the package during the meeting and will be asked to discuss and decide on the statements posed in *Items for Decision*. Items for decision will be discussed by the NSG to determine if a broad consensus for a 'recommendation' on the specific issue can be issued to Defra. Understanding that this may not be a unanimous position, all views will be captured and reported accurately alongside the 'recommendation'.

Where the NSG is clearly split on a 'decision' item, no recommendation will be issued. All discussions will be captured in the meeting report and transmitted to Defra regardless.

Out-of-session activities will also sometimes progress the work of the group. These **intersessional activities will be designed to foster continued engagement and input from NSG members** and may include:

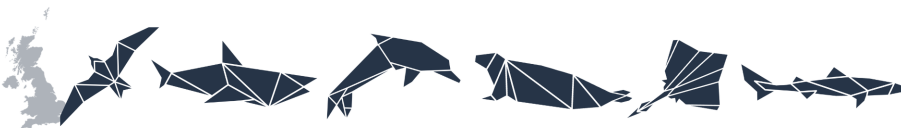
- Surveying of participants around structure and functioning of the group,
- Seeking proactive new ideas to ensure maximum value is secured from in-person meetings,
- Interviews to capture thoughts and reflections on the group's running and trajectory,
- Reviewing and responding to actions or materials produced by the Regional Working Group and Local Focus Groups.

### **Scope of Oversight – providing advice on multi-species, bycatch monitoring, and mitigation**

The Clean Catch UK NSG has been developed to ensure that **bycatch of sensitive marine species is addressed with a holistic approach**. The group works together in the acknowledgement that methods used to tackle bycatch of one species may also impact on bycatch of others. This builds on the previous work of the BFG, as well as other groups such as the Seabird Bycatch Stakeholder group (formerly convened by JNCC).

As such, the **NSG will consider bycatch of wildlife species, including cetaceans, seals, seabirds, turtles, and non-target, unwanted species of elasmobranchs and tuna**. While a multi-species approach offers an opportunity to ensure bycatch prevention is not being addressed in isolation, there are some instances where actions will focus on reducing bycatch for certain sensitive species. In these instances, wherever appropriate, consideration will be given to sub-group working, to develop targeted responses to specific issues. As with all discussions and design of interventions, the holistic approach of the NSG and overall Clean Catch UK programme will help ensure that addressing one problem is not making another one worse.

**The group will explore how monitoring and mitigation techniques for any of these sensitive marine species may be used or adapted to the benefit of other species.** On monitoring, the group will consider how monitoring coverage of bycatch incidents and/or presence of wildlife around the UK can be augmented, and supported by Defra for policymaking in England, and by other policymakers in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland if appropriate. It will also be important to consider how monitoring and mitigation can be brought together through innovative techniques or use of multiple approaches/devices appropriate to the identified fishery.





Bringing together experts in each species area or fishery, the group will **share knowledge to explore interconnected risks for mitigation** – e.g. whether a device for mitigation of one species bycatch may increase risk of bycatch to another species, and/or other potential ecosystem impacts.

Within the overarching governance structure for Clean Catch UK programme, **the NSG will issue formal 'Recommendations' capturing views on questions raised in 'Items for Decision' at the NSG meetings**, to Defra for their consideration in policy development, and to other Devolved Administrations for their information. These 'Recommendations' will be issued as 'consensus' opinion or, where no consensus is reached, they will capture the various perspectives arising from the 'Item for Decision' discussion.

The group will also be a **forum through which to share information and keep abreast of updates on national and international policy developments in the bycatch space** (see further detail below).

### Background and the Bycatch Policy Landscape

Accidental bycatch in fisheries remains a global threat to vulnerable marine wildlife such as cetaceans, seals, seabirds and non-target elasmobranch and tuna species.

Defra, with contributions from the Devolved Administrations, currently funds two specific programmes which contribute to monitoring to better understand and therefore help address wildlife bycatch in the UK:

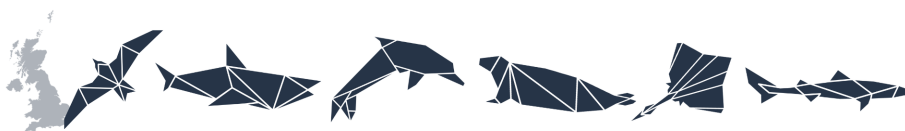
- UK Bycatch Monitoring Programme – meets UK fishing policy and supports an analysis of bycatch rates by fleet segment.
- Cetacean Stranding Investigation Programme (CSIP) – collects data in England and Wales on threats through analysis of stranded marine mammals.

The UK has domestic and international commitments to minimise and, where possible, eliminate bycatch of sensitive marine species. In order to ensure these commitments are met, and developments around both monitoring and mitigation are seen as legitimate by fishers – and as a result have a lasting legacy – close consultation and collaboration with the fishing industry throughout all stages will be important.

To deliver on these commitments, Defra and the Devolved Administrations are currently preparing:

- A UK Bycatch Mitigation Initiative, and
- Seabird Conservation Strategies.

These policy initiatives, and arising initiatives, will be agenda items for discussion by the Clean Catch UK NSG – ensuring all involved in the group are up-to-date on developments, and that linkages or opportunities for leveraging action across multiple areas are explored.





## NSG Membership

As of February 2022, member organisations are:

Association of IFCAs	North Atlantic Fishing Company
BDMLR	RSPB
Bristol University	RSPCA
BTO	Science Gyre
Campaign Whale and Seal Protection Action Group	Scotland Government
Cefas	Scottish Entanglement Alliance (SEA)
CFPO	Scottish Fishermen's Federation (SFF)
Cornwall IFCA	Scottish Marine Animal Stranding Scheme
Cornwall Seal Group Research Trust	Scottish Pelagic Fishermen's Association (SFPA)
Cornwall Wildlife Trust	Scottish White Fish Producers' Association (SWFPA)
CSIP - ZSL	Scottish Entanglement Alliance (SEA)
DAERA	Seafish
Defra	Shark Trust
Environment Agency	Southampton University
Friends of Horsey Seals	SPFA
IFAW	St Mary's Island Wildlife Conservation Society
Insight 360	SWFPA
JNCC	University of Glasgow
MCS	University of St Andrews
MMO	Welsh Government
Marine Stewardship Council	Western Fish Producers' Association (WFPO)
Natural England	Whales and Dolphin Conservation
Natural Resources Wales	Wildlife and Countryside Link
Nature Scotland	WWF
New Under Ten Fishermen's Association (NUTFA)	ZSL
NFFO	
Nord University	

