



Joint Action on Sensitive Species Bycatch

Clean Catch Local Focus Group Terms of Reference

Background

Clean Catch is a collaborative programme key to the UK Government's ambitions to help minimise and – where possible – eliminate bycatch of sensitive marine species, as set out under the ecosystem objective of the Fisheries Act and elaborated in the UK Marine Wildlife Bycatch Mitigation Initiative (BMI). Originally established in 2019, Clean Catch has now entered a second three year “expansion” phase, stewarded by a new consortium, which runs until the end of October 2026. The overarching objectives of this phase are to expand its scope and trials for monitoring and mitigation of bycatch and enhance its role in knowledge exchange within and beyond the UK.

Clean Catch's mission is to champion collaborative working to help monitor and minimise the bycatch of sensitive marine species in UK fisheries and to exchange knowledge globally. Further detail on the objectives of this Clean Catch expansion phase can be found in Appendix 1.

For this phase of Clean Catch, a new streamlined governance framework has been established to enhance transparency, ensure equitability, and make the most effective use of the diversity of expertise from across Clean Catch's key actors¹ (such as fishers, scientists, environmental Non-Governmental Organisations, and policy-makers).

1. Purpose of the Local Focus Group

The Clean Catch Local Focus Group (hereafter: LFG / Clean Catch LFG) provides **local knowledge, expert advice, recommendations, and guidance as required on activities relating to the delivery of the Clean Catch programme expansion phase (2024-26) objectives**. As part of this, the LFG will support Clean Catch in sharing information and knowledge and promoting collaboration and will be integral to ensuring a holistic approach and the equitable co-design of programme activities as appropriate.

1.1 Scope

The Clean Catch LFG provides **local expert advice and guidance** focused specifically on **delivery of the Clean Catch programme expansion phase (2024-26) objectives**.

There will be two LFGs, one in each of the two key locations where the Clean Catch programme's bycatch monitoring and mitigation trials are taking place:

¹ “Key actor” is Clean Catch's preferred term for people and organisations more conventionally called “stakeholders”. More information about the rationale for this approach can be found at <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2024/05/07/should-we-stop-using-the-word-stakeholder-in-research/>.



- i. Cornwall Local Focus Group
The previous Clean Catch Cetacean Local Focus Group based in Cornwall, which has been running since 2018, will be renamed to the “Cornwall Clean Catch Local Focus Group”. Membership of this group will be reviewed and refreshed and the purpose and function of this group clarified in these updated Terms of Reference.
- ii. A new Local Focus Group will be established in the location of the new bycatch monitoring and mitigation trial which will be agreed in late 2024.

Other groups forming part of the governance framework for the Clean Catch Programme expansion phase (2024-26) are the Programme Governance Board, National Advisory Board, and temporary expert working groups. Further information can be found in Appendix 2.

2. Membership

2.1 Composition

The group brings together the UK Government (Cefas), local representatives from the fishing industry and fishers associations, local environmental Non-Governmental Organisations (eNGOs), local Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities (IFCAs), and others with expertise in bycatch as well as key representatives from the project team delivering Clean Catch.

The group will be chaired by Cefas as the Clean Catch lead for bycatch monitoring and mitigation trials.

Other members of the Clean Catch programme delivery team partner organisations (Cefas, Arribada, MMOC, Zoological Society of London, Mindfully Wired), may be invited to attend LFG meetings.

Additional presenters, including representatives from other groups within the Clean Catch governance framework, may be invited to relevant meetings, to **ensure strong communications and coordination between the overarching Clean Catch governance structure and Defra’s wider bycatch programme and policy.**

2.2 Appointment

Members will be appointed by Defra based on their expertise and experience, and to ensure representative spread of coverage.

Defra will appoint members based on the following criteria:

- Has relevant expertise and experience, i.e. subject matter knowledge/expertise relevant to either marine wildlife bycatch, bycatch monitoring or mitigation, local area (particularly the trial locations).
- They have a clear line to provide feedback to the expert group and area of expertise they have been nominated for and will represent the views of that expert group at the LFG.
- Has the time to attend meetings and review/prepare papers if required.



- Can commit to the costs (if any) of attending any in-person meetings. Note that LFG meetings will be held locally as close as possible to where fisher representatives are based, see Section 4.1 for further details.

2.3 Chairperson

Cefas will chair the group as the Clean Catch lead for bycatch monitoring and mitigation trials and will be responsible for:

- Leading and facilitating LFG meetings.
- Ensuring effective communication and decision-making.
- Representing the LFG in external engagements. (Members of the LFG, particularly local fishers will also be invited to represent the LFG in external engagements too).

3. Roles and responsibilities of the Clean Catch LFG:

3.1 Advisory role

- Provide **local expert knowledge, advice and guidance** to help shape and support the delivery of activities or objectives included in the Clean Catch expansion phase 2024-2026, particularly **co-design input and practical advice on local Clean Catch bycatch monitoring and mitigation trial activities**.

3.2 Advocacy role

- Advocate for evidence-based programme activities and practices.
- Promote awareness and understanding of key issues among key actors.

3.3 Collaborative role

- Foster collaboration and partnership among key actors.
- Share lessons learned locally and with the other Clean Catch Local Focus Group
- Facilitate the exchange of knowledge.

4. Meetings

4.1 Frequency, type and location

The LFG will meet approximately three to four times throughout the project (between 2024-2026). Meetings will be scheduled to coincide with key project stages. For example, a kick-off meeting at trial start (trial design), mid-point of trial (trial review, early results), periodic six-monthly reviews of trial progress, and at the end of the of the project.

Meeting type, date and precise location will be arranged based on local fisher representative availability and ability to attend, to maximise engagement and participation of fishermen representatives. For example, meeting dates and timings will be scheduled based on fishing activity and tide times.

The type of meeting will be tailored appropriately and may take the form of:

- Informal quayside visits and discussions with LFG members and/or



- Formal meeting

Meeting length will be dictated by the agenda and meeting type, but is anticipated to be up to half a day

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

4.2 Agenda and format

The agenda for the meetings will be set by the Clean Catch programme delivery team and Defra, with input and suggestions from the LFG members.

Agenda items will be defined as either:

- Items for Information: To be reviewed and discussed by the LFG.
- Items for Advice and Guidance: To be discussed by the LFG and a decision reached for a **recommendation** on the specific issue or item to be issued to Defra, the Clean Catch programme delivery team and the Clean Catch Programme Governance Board for their **consideration.**

For each meeting, the Clean Catch programme delivery team will provide a package of documents as appropriate. This package could include:

- An update on the research or other work from the Clean Catch Programme.
- *Items for Information* – submitted by the LFG chair or LFG members.
- *Items for Advice and Guidance* – submitted by the LFG chair or LFG members.
- Documents to guide discussions for meetings.
- Updates from Defra about wider bycatch policy development, updates or implementation.

5. Reporting

The LFG will report its findings, recommendations, and progress to Defra, the Clean Catch programme delivery team and the Clean Catch Programme Governance Board through:

- Meeting minutes and summary reports
- Special reports on specific issues as requested

The Clean Catch programme delivery team will prepare these minutes and reports for the LFG to review and endorse.

The Clean Catch Programme Governance Board will provide responses to LFG recommendations, clearly communicating the rationale for any decisions made. Defra as the project authority acts as the final decision maker.

6. Support and resources



The Clean Catch programme delivery team will be **responsible for the administration of the group for Defra including:**

- Meeting venues and arrangements
- Access to relevant data and facilitation
- Secretariat support for documentation and communication

7. Review and evaluation

The effectiveness and relevance of the LFG will be reviewed periodically.



Appendix 1: Objectives of the Clean Catch Programme Expansion Phase

The **objectives** of this Clean Catch expansion phase are to:

- Enhance inclusion and representation of key people and groups through an equitable and effective governance framework.
- Expand the programme scope to other species and fisheries in England.
- Conduct a comprehensive bycatch hotspots review, in terms of key areas and fisheries for bycatch risk and for “bright spots” where monitoring and mitigation efforts have been most successful.
- Explore and seek to overcome barriers to broader fisher engagement.
- Continue to deliver the ongoing cetacean bycatch mitigation trial in the southwest of England and establish a second trial elsewhere in England, encompassing at least one other species group.
- Additionally support the continued research and development of Passive Acoustic Reflectors.
- Explore whether monitoring of underwater sound can be an effective and reliable method for continuous monitoring of cetaceans in areas of higher bycatch risk.
- Explore whether Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM) can be used as a tool to increase the monitoring coverage of sensitive species bycatch.
- Develop interdisciplinary approaches – including the use of social science to capture fishers’ insights – to monitor, analyse, and assess results of case study monitoring and mitigation trials.
- Share our outputs widely and in accessible formats, including through best practice guides on bycatch monitoring and mitigation developed for and with the fishing industry.
- Collaborate with adjacent initiatives within Defra’s bycatch programme of work and those of devolved administrations, and foster national and international knowledge exchange.
- Underpin all our work through strategic engagement and communications.



Appendix 2: Clean Catch Governance Framework Overview

- **Programme Governance Board (PGB)** formed of members representing the Clean Catch consortium programme delivery team and Defra. The PGB is responsible for **programme direction** and meets as needed to **make decisions on recommendations** issued by Clean Catch's other governance groups or **escalated issues**. Defra is project authority and **decision-maker**
- **National Advisory Board (NAB)** formed of members representing Defra, the fishing industry, scientists, environmental NGOs and others with relevant expertise. Together they provide **expert advice, recommendations, and guidance** on Clean Catch's activities and act as a forum for **vital knowledge exchange and promoting collaboration on bycatch**.
- **Local focus groups (LFGs)** formed of members representing Cefas, fishers, fishing industry, scientists and local environmental NGOs. The LFGs represent the grassroots, implementation-oriented end of Clean Catch. Together they provide **local expert advice and guidance** on Clean Catch's activities, especially the bycatch mitigation and monitoring trials. They also act as a forum for **vital knowledge exchange**.

There will be two LFGs, one in each of the two key locations where the Clean Catch programme's bycatch monitoring and mitigation trials are taking place: the Cornwall LFG and a new one to be established once the location of the new trail has been agreed.
- **Targeted (temporary) expert working groups** created on an ad-hoc temporary basis to work on specific topics providing **targeted expert input and advice** as needed to support the delivery of Clean Catch's activities. Membership will be dictated by remit.