



## Meeting summary for the Clean Catch Cornwall Local Focus Group

Meeting date and time: 20 November 2025, 09:30–15:30

Location: RNLI, Newlyn



### In attendance

- Joanna Murray, Alessandra Bielli, Spike Searle, Eilis Crimmins, and Emily Roebuck (Cefas).
- Five pinger trialists / skippers
- Ben Tutt-Leppard (Arribada Initiative)
- Al Kingston (Bycatch Monitoring Programme)
- Rebecca Allen (Cornwall Wildlife Trust)
- Nick Tregenza (Chelonia)
- Gus Caslake (Seafish and CSMA)
- Chris Ranford (CFPO)
- Tom Hooper and Adhithi Kumar (Fishtek) – Presenters
- Bally Philip and Ellie MacLennan (Scottish Entanglement Alliance, attending online) – Presenters

Apologies were received from: Nick West (Mevagissey Fisherman's Association).

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### 1. Session for pinger triallists

Cefas and the pinger triallists discussed:

- Presence and identification of cetaceans in their fishing grounds.
- Possibilities for tagging gear with pingers attached.
- The Clean Catch self-reporting app.
- REM reporting and validation processes.
- MMO engagement of Stage 4 Marine Protected Areas.

### 2. All Local Focus Group – Clean Catch updates

#### Acoustic monitoring of cetaceans with PODs

- Acoustic monitoring using F-PODs continues.
- Cornwall Wildlife Trust sightings data was offered to supplement acoustic data.
- Food availability was noted as driving the occurrence of cetaceans in the monitored area.

#### Self-reporting app

- It was clarified that the app is for research purposes only, that all data sits in the app developer's database, and that these data are anonymised before being shared with Cefas.
- There was discussion regarding whether the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) 'Catch app' could be used to report marine mammal bycatch instead of the current MMO system which requires fishers to submit an online form.



- The BATmap app was referenced as an example of how skippers can receive real-time alerts about bycatch hotspots.

### Pinger trial

- The robustness, battery life, and charging ability of the pingers were discussed. Fishtek welcomed the feedback for future development of pingers.
- Practicalities and costs of recovering pingers on lost gear were discussed.
- Refinements to the power analysis were suggested.

### Eastern England Fish Producers Organisation (EEFPO) North Sea trial

- In response to an update on the EEFPO North Sea trial, a pinger triallist commented that in the past they had seen herring gulls impact warps, although the gulls did not appear to be harmed by this. It was noted that in the Southern Hemisphere, the most common injury for these animals is a broken wing, which means mortality is not immediate and injury may go unnoticed.
- It was noted that NGOs on the Clean Catch National Advisory Board were disappointed that the trial is focusing only on seabirds and not all sensitive species; Cefas responded that the scope is specific because this will enable questions on bycatch monitoring and mitigation to seabirds to be answered more effectively within the time allowed.
- Cefas noted the need to better communicate to the wider eNGO community the practical challenges and realities of using REM to monitor bycatch.

## 3. All Local Focus Group – Presentations

### Fishtek bycatch mitigation trials

- Fishtek’s ongoing seabird bycatch mitigation trial with Above Water Bird Deterrents (kite and Looming Eye Buoy) showed that:
  - Highest bycatch rates were observed in winter, most of which was guillemots and razorbill.
  - Both deterrents led to reductions in bycatch.
- Fishtek’s Sharkguard device needs a fishery with high tuna catch and high shark bycatch to be tested in.
  - Trials of Fishtek’s Sharkguard Mark V version were completed in New Caledonia in November with plans for scaling into more fisheries in 2026.

### Scottish Entanglement Alliance development of sinking rope

- Also known as “sinking groundline”, “sinking rope” is designed for use in creel fisheries to prevent loops of rope in the water column which may entangle marine megafauna (see more about the measure on the [Bycatch Mitigation Hub](#)).



- Discussion on how sinking rope could be rolled out and supported by policy covered:
  - Subsidising the cost, as the sinking rope is more expensive than standard rope.
  - Not making the measure mandatory, as sinking rope is not always safe nor appropriate to use.
  - Rolling out sinking rope in such a way that fishermen only switch when their standard rope reaches the end of its natural lifespan, to avoid waste.
  - Initiating a pilot scheme for recycling end of life rope.
  - Providing incentives for fishermen to pay more for sinking rope, e.g. extra creels or quota allowed, or MSC certification.
- The presentation also prompted further discussion on pingers:
  - Skippers wanted pingers to be legalised but not mandated, with incentives given for their use such as issuing them for free or increasing value of catch via certification/other market recognition.
  - A code of conduct could support use of pingers.
  - The question of “ensonification” (i.e. increasing noise pollution in the water, with potentially harmful effects on marine life), how this affects licensing processes for use of pingers, and the challenges of quantifying how much pingers may contribute to the issue in any one fishery.

#### **4. Actions for Cefas**

- Update the pinger trial power analysis with more specific parameters (including the number of actual vessels collecting data).
- Follow up with the Cornwall Wildlife Trust regarding the potential utilisation of its sightings and strandings data.

