



# Clean Catch

*Joint Action on Sensitive Species Bycatch*

## OUR NEW APPROACH TO GOVERNANCE AND KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

**Report**  
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**ARRIBADA**  
initiative



Department  
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# OUR NEW APPROACH TO GOVERNANCE AND KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

## AT A GLANCE

- Clean Catch has entered an “expansion phase”, with the objectives of expanding its scope and trials for monitoring and mitigation of bycatch and enhancing its role in knowledge exchange within and beyond the UK.
- A new governance framework will enhance Clean Catch’s ability to bring together key actors to find effective and practical solutions for minimising – and where possible eliminating – bycatch of sensitive marine species.
- The National Steering Group (NSG) and Regional Working Group (RWG) are formally dissolved, with the new framework incorporating a Programme Governance Board (PGB), National Advisory Board (NAB), the existing Local Focus Groups (LFGs), and ad-hoc expert working groups.
- This briefing sets out our new approach to governance and knowledge exchange, and the rationale for this.

## INTRODUCTION

**Clean Catch champions collaborative working to help monitor and minimise the bycatch of sensitive marine species in UK fisheries, and to exchange knowledge globally.**

Originally established as Clean Catch UK (CCUK) in 2019 with funding from Defra, the programme has brought together fishermen, the wider fishing and seafood industry, environmental NGOs, scientists, policymakers, regulators, and technology-providers to share expertise and experiences – and, ultimately, to develop ways to mitigate bycatch that are both effective and practical.



A new consortium is now stewarding Clean Catch, with the overarching objectives of expanding its scope and trials for monitoring and mitigation of bycatch and enhancing its role in knowledge exchange within and beyond the UK. This three-year “expansion” phase will run until the end of October 2026.

The first tasks of the consortium have been to gather feedback from key actors engaged in Clean Catch to date, to reflect, and to enhance the programme’s governance framework. The UK is replete with people and organisations who have the experience, expertise, and passion to contribute to efforts to minimise and – where possible – eliminate sensitive marine species bycatch in UK fisheries. Clean Catch’s new approach to governance and knowledge exchange is designed to be equitable, transparent, and effective in drawing on this collective capability.

## WHO INPUTTED TO THE NEW APPROACH?

During early 2024, the consortium team held many conversations with key actors involved in Clean Catch’s previous phase. An online survey was also used to gather further responses. The feedback received was synthesised and used as a basis for additional feedback and for solution-suggesting at the Reflections Workshop held in-person and online in May 2024. These workshops were attended mainly by members of the former National Steering Group. A full account of discussions at the Reflections Workshop can be found [here](#).

Recognising practical challenges to their attendance at the two workshops, fishermen involved in Clean Catch to date were mainly reached using a one-to-one approach to gather their insights in advance and feed these into the workshop design and discussions.



# CLEAN CATCH'S GOVERNANCE: 2019–2023 PHASE AND 2024–2026 PHASE

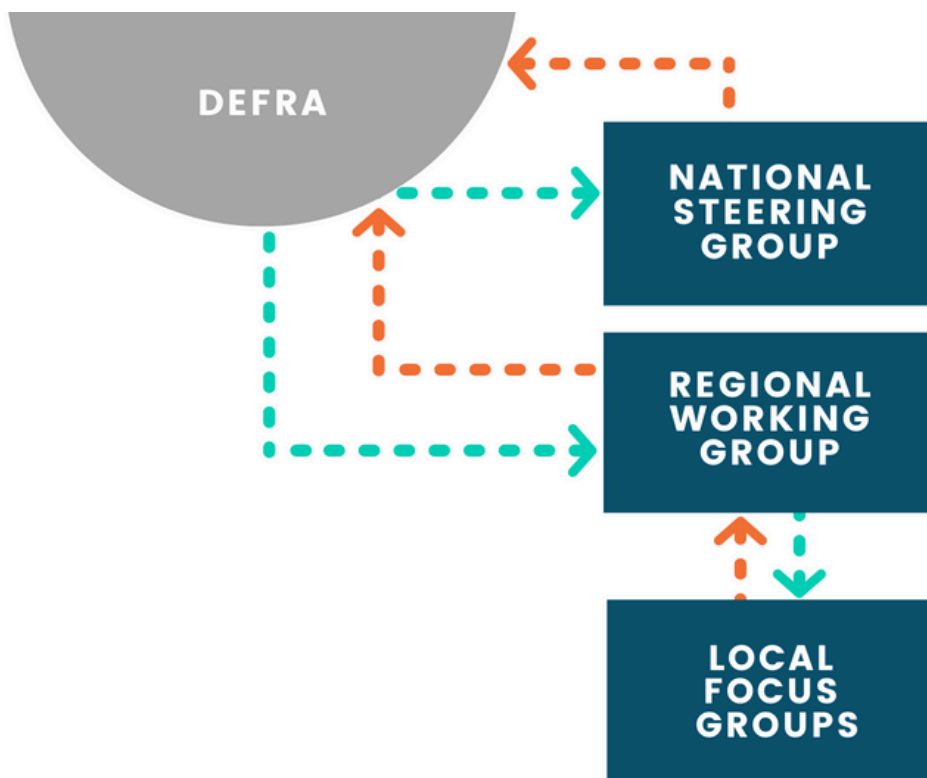
In Clean Catch's first phase between 2019–2023, the governance framework included three "levels" of group: two Local Focus Groups, a Regional Working Group, and the National Steering Group, with Defra as final decision-maker.



## ARROW KEY



### 2019-2023 phase:



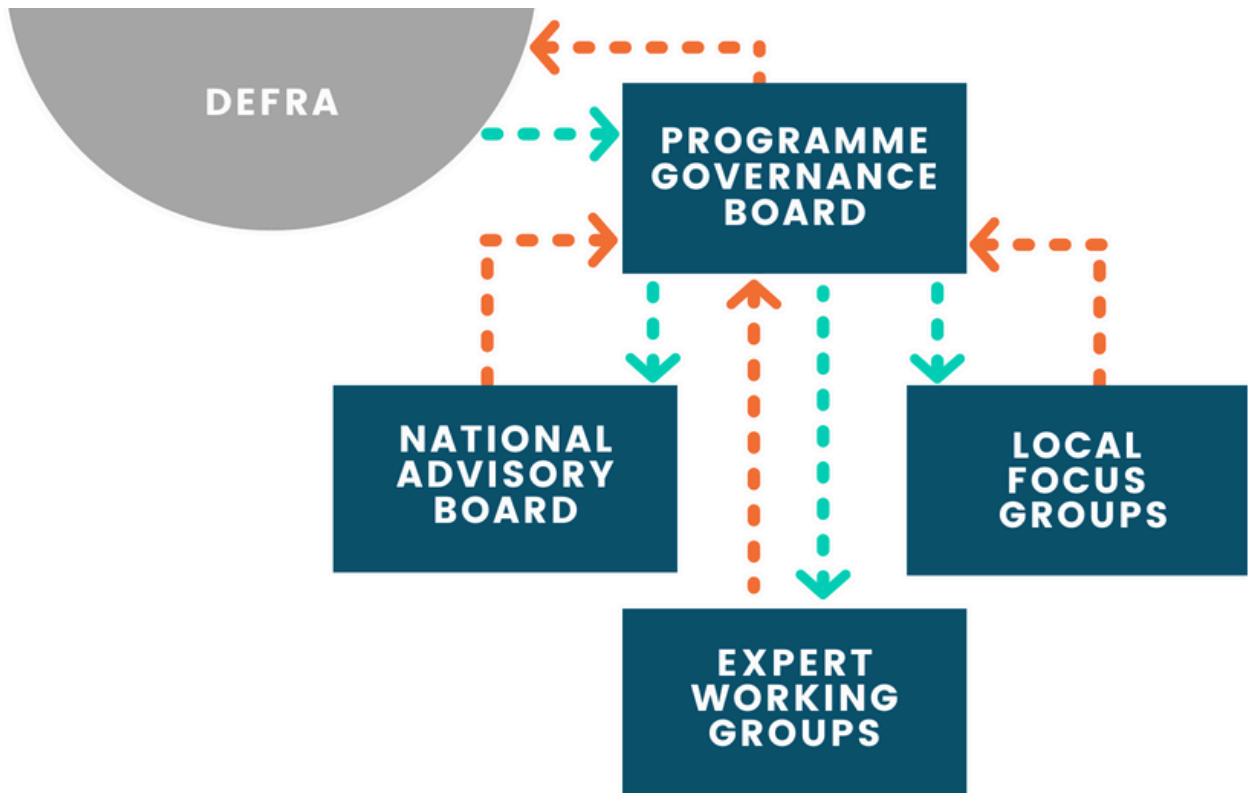


For Clean Catch's expansion phase (2024-2026), the National Steering Group and Regional Working Group have been dissolved. The Local Focus Groups and the new National Advisory Board together provide advice, guidance, and recommendations to the new Programme Governance Board, with Defra continuing to act as final decision-maker. This governance framework also includes flexibility to create temporary expert working groups to consider specific topics as needed.

Memberships, Terms of Reference and related resources for the groups in Clean Catch's governance framework can be found on our website.



**2024-2026 phase:**



# WHY DID WE CHANGE OUR GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK?

## KEY ISSUE: GOVERNANCE

### Reflections

The purpose and remit of the National Steering Group (NSG) was unclear, and it lacked a mechanism to manage conflicting opinions.



### Solutions

The National Advisory Board (NAB) has the explicit role of providing expert advice, recommendations, and guidance as needed on Clean Catch's activities.

Decisions on advice and recommendations to be issued by the NAB will be made via majority vote rules. The Programme Governance Board (PGB) will meet ad-hoc to decide on recommendations from Clean Catch's other governance groups or on escalated issues.

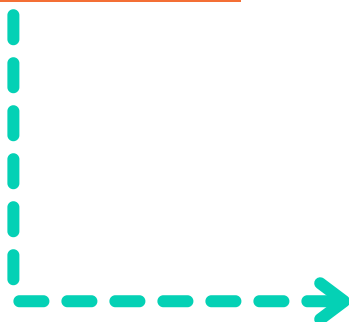


The NSG was too large and had an imbalance of voices, with some sectors not as well represented as they should've been.



New criteria have been developed to guide the appointment of the NAB's 17 members, with the objective of balanced representation (across sectors and species).

Our new governance framework includes the flexibility to create ad-hoc temporary working groups, formed of experts who may come from Clean Catch's governance groups or from outside these, to deal with specific issues as needed.



Fishermen weren't sufficiently represented.



Criteria for NAB membership will be used to ensure that fishing perspectives are effectively and equitably represented in our governance structure. We're also developing an engagement plan to support fishermen involvement in Clean Catch.

Decisions weren't communicated to the NSG or other groups in a timely manner and rationales for these were often unclear.



Decisions will always be communicated to governance groups in a timely manner, with clear rationale given where the decision diverges from a recommendation made by the NAB.





# KEY ISSUE: TRANSPARENCY AND COMMUNICATION MECHANISMS

## Reflections

The programme didn't fully realise its ability to be a forum and conduit for knowledge exchange on bycatch.

## Solutions

We'll proactively seek opportunities for collaboration and knowledge exchange with other initiatives working on the issue of bycatch, both within and beyond the UK.

While our new governance bodies don't include representatives from the devolved administrations (DAs), Defra will continue to engage with the DAs via existing groups and mechanisms, and may invite them to meetings as relevant; observers from Clean Catch's other governance groups or from outside the programme may also be invited by Defra to attend PGB meetings.

In addition to updates on our own work, the Clean Catch newsletter includes news and research from the wider world of bycatch monitoring and mitigation.

We will continue to regularly update our [Bycatch Mitigation Hub](#), a comprehensive database of mitigation measures from around the world which have undergone trials.



External-facing updates on Clean Catch's work were too irregular.



As of February 2024, we've started a public newsletter series, with new editions issued approximately every two months and shorter interim updates issued as needed.



Newsletters will highlight information such as the publication of meeting reports from Clean Catch's governance groups. You can sign up to the newsletter [here](#).



We've also refreshed our website, with all resources including ToRs and meeting reports provided in a central library.

## KEY ISSUE: SCOPE AND AMBITION

### Reflections

Clean Catch didn't clearly expand beyond its roots in a focus on cetacean bycatch in the Southwest, so it didn't sufficiently address bycatch of other species groups.



### Solutions

We'll establish a second bycatch monitoring and mitigation trial in a fishery operating in English waters, with the aim of expanding the species focus beyond cetaceans.



As noted further above, the NAB membership includes a balance of representatives for the species groups in scope of Clean Catch (seabirds, marine mammals, and elasmobranchs).

The cetacean bycatch mitigation trial in the Southwest hasn't provided a wider launchpad for scaling-up and creating greater impact.



Our trial in the Southwest is still ongoing, with seven additional new skippers now granted licences to take part - ensuring that we can deliver results from the trial as soon as possible. We'll share the results of this and our second trial - to be established in 2025 - widely, along with recommendations and advice on wider implementation of bycatch monitoring and mitigation measures.

Clean Catch didn't clearly have a UK-wide scope, nor was it clear where the programme fitted into the wider policy landscape



We've made more explicit the fact that Clean Catch's trials of bycatch monitoring and mitigation measures will focus on fisheries in England - but in parallel, we will share knowledge and learning across the UK and beyond through our external communications, our governance groups, Defra's links with the DAs, and potentially workshops or other events with adjacent bycatch initiatives.





# FEEDBACK FROM OUR RELEVANT ACTORS: WHAT HAVEN'T WE ACTIONED?

Feedback from key actors earlier this year included the following suggestions which we have not taken forward:

## Suggestion

## Rationale

Create more region-focused groups, e.g. for other species groups.



Species experts will be represented in the new NAB, and on the Local Focus Groups as appropriate, supporting our aim for our governance to be streamlined.

Facilitate wider involvement in the trials by the devolved administrations (DAs)



The scope and remit of Clean Catch means we can't include the DAs in our trials; however, Defra will continue to ensure effective communication and connection to the DAs in the bycatch mitigation space.

Produce several different newsletters and bulletins targeted at different audiences depending on their interests (e.g. innovative mitigation devices).



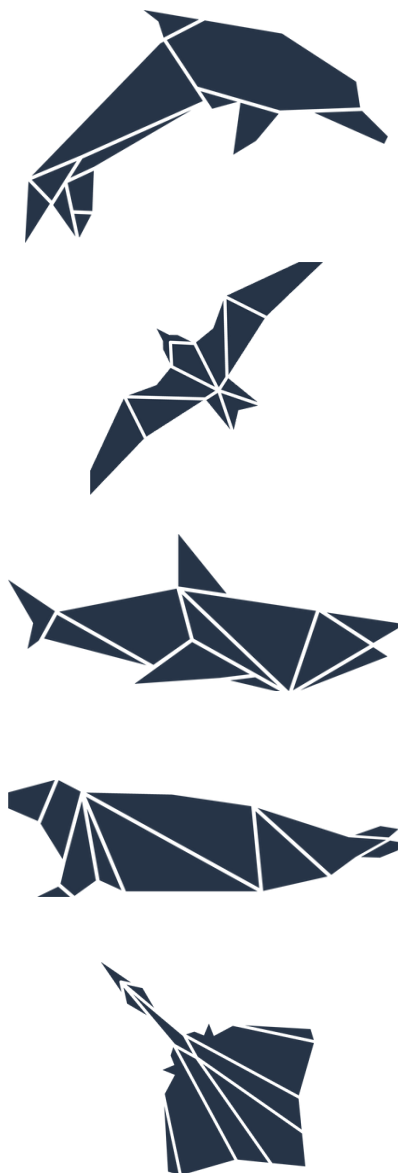
To ensure that Clean Catch's communication resources are used as effectively and efficiently as possible, we'll focus on disseminating a single newsletter to all subscribers.

## WILL THERE BE OTHER WAYS TO GET INVOLVED IN CLEAN CATCH?

Sign up to our newsletter to be among the first to hear about future opportunities to get involved. These may include:

- Responding to surveys or call-outs for information.
- Joining temporary expert working groups formed to consider specific topics relating to bycatch
- Attending workshops or other engagement activities held in support of our programme objectives

We are open to all opportunities for collaboration and knowledge exchange, so please get in touch at any time via [secretariat@cleancatchuk.com](mailto:secretariat@cleancatchuk.com).





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