



Clean Catch

Joint Action on Sensitive Species Bycatch

Clean Catch National Advisory Board 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 National Advisory Board

The Clean Catch National Advisory Board (hereafter: NAB / Clean Catch NAB) provides **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 NAB will support Clean Catch in sharing information and knowledge and promoting collaboration; The NAB will be integral to ensuring a holistic approach and the equitable co-design of programme activities as appropriate.

The group brings together UK Government, (Defra), the fishing industry, environmental Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), scientists, and others with expertise in bycatch as well as representatives from the project team delivering Clean Catch.

The group will be chaired by Defra as the project sponsor, project authority, and policy-maker.

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/>.



1.1 Scope

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

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

- **Out of scope** is management of and input into Defra's broader bycatch programme, which is separately managed by Defra. However, we will ensure strong links with this wider programme via members of the NAB attending relevant groups/fora established by Defra for their wider programme, for example the Wildlife and Countryside link group and any bycatch technical advisory group if established Defra will act as the link to Defra Arm's Length Bodies, such as Natural England and JNCC and the devolved administrations.

Note: The previous Clean Catch UK National Steering Group, which last met in May 2022, will be formally dissolved. This NAB has a different function and purpose to the previous National Steering Group. It is a more streamlined **advisory** group, with a clearer focus - specifically on Clean Catch expansion phase objectives from 2024-2026.



2. Membership

2.1 Composition

The NAB shall consist of approximately 17 members, comprised of a range of relevant experts as detailed in Table 1 below. A list of organisations represented can be found in Appendix 3.

Members will act as representatives for an area of expertise (e.g. taxa, location, bycatch issue) and/or organisation or group of organisations, and may also act as the link to and representative for other groups within the Clean Catch governance framework.

Table 1: NAB membership composition

Expert group	Areas of expertise	Number of representatives
Project sponsor/authority - Defra	Defra Chair: Brigid Finlayson – Head of bycatch policy Backup chair: Jonny Peters – Deputy Director Marine and Fisheries Emma Kelman – Science and evidence lead for marine species (in attendance).	1
Fishing industry & fish producer organisations representation	Organisations covering a wide geographic spread, with diverse experience (covering a range of fisheries and gear types), including representation from fleets with a high risk of bycatch and the inshore fleet.	5
Academic scientific representation	Representatives from a geographic spread of universities with significant expertise in bycatch mitigation and/or monitoring, covering a range of taxa and research disciplines.	3
Environmental NGO representation	Representatives from organisations with relevant expertise spanning a range of bycatch issues and species; will include a representative from the Wildlife and Countryside Link Bycatch Group.	5
Other key actor representation	Experts from other organisations with an interest in minimising bycatch and supporting sustainable fisheries.	3

Representatives from the Clean Catch project delivery team partner organisations (Cefas, Arribada, MMOC, Zoological Society of London, Mindfully Wired), will attend NAB meetings, but not be formal members of the board (i.e. will not have voting rights).

Defra may invite others to attend NAB meetings as observers or presenters as and when needed, for example Arm’s Length Bodies, such as Natural England and JNCC.

Additional presenters, including representatives from Local Focus Groups or Expert Working Groups, 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 across the areas of expertise described in the table above.

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), or wider within England.
- 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 NAB
- Has the time to attend meetings and review/prepare papers
- Can commit to the costs of attending any one in-person meeting per year.

2.3 Chairperson

Defra will chair the group as the Clean Catch project authority and will be responsible for:

- Leading and facilitating NAB meetings.
- Ensuring effective communication and decision-making.
- Representing the NAB in external engagements.

Additional external facilitation support may occasionally be provided if required.

3. Roles and responsibilities of the Clean Catch NAB:

3.1 Advisory role

- Provide independent expert input and advice to help shape and support the delivery of activities or objectives included in the Clean Catch expansion phase 2024-2026
- Offer recommendations as invited on specific project activities. **Recommendations** will be made to the **Clean Catch Programme Governance Board** which includes Defra and the Clean Catch programme delivery team, for their **consideration**.

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.
- Facilitate the exchange of knowledge.



4. Meetings

4.1 Frequency

The NAB will meet twice a year – with one face-to-face meeting per year, if possible. (There will be one meeting in the first project year, 2024). Meeting length will be dictated by the agenda, but is anticipated to be approximately 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 NAB members.**

4.2 Decision-making and quorum

Decisions on advice and recommendations, issued by the NAB to Defra, the Clean Catch programme delivery team and the Clean Catch Programme Governance Board, will be via majority vote rules.

A quorum of 50% of membership plus one will be required for voting. Board members may abstain from voting.

4.2 Agenda and format

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

Agenda items will be defined as either:

- Items for Information: To be reviewed and discussed by the NAB.
- Items for Decision: To be discussed by the NAB 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.**

Two weeks in advance of each meeting, the Clean Catch programme delivery team will provide a package of documents to NAB members for their consideration at the meeting.

This package could include:

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



5. Reporting

The NAB 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 NAB to review and endorse.

The Clean Catch Programme Governance Board will provide responses to NAB 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 NAB 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.



Appendix 3: NAB representation

A list of current NAB members can be found here: [Clean Catch NAB](#)

Table 2: NAB membership – organisations represented

Expert group	Organisations represented
Project sponsor/authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Defra
Fishing industry & fish producer organisations representation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skipper, Crystal Sea Fishing and Cornish Fish Producers Organisation (CFPO) Eastern England Fish Producers Organisation (EEFPO) Fishing into the Future (FITF) National Federation of Fishermen’s Organisations (NFFO) Skipper, South West Handline Fishermen’s Association
Academic scientific representation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> University of Exeter Newcastle University University of St Andrews (BMP, SMRU)
Environmental NGO representation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) Seal Research Trust Shark Trust Whale and Dolphin Conservation (WDC)* The Wildlife Trusts <p>*Also acting as representative for the Wildlife and Countryside Link Bycatch Group</p>
Other key actor representation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) Seafish (Fishing Gear Innovation)