

# Cornwall Fisheries Science Board (CFSB)

### Setting the scene

The UK is now an independent coastal state and with the publication of the UK Fisheries Act 2020 and the Joint Fisheries Statement there is a timetable of work for developing an entirely new system for managing fisheries in the form of fisheries management plans. With the first six FMPs now published, and many more to follow, there is a clear opportunity for the fishing industry to engage and establish scientific research partnership projects to create the necessary evidence base for informing FMPs. Alongside this, the UK and EU maintain a relationship on managing shared stocks and other fisheries related matters, which takes place through the Specialised Committee for Fisheries as well as the end of year annual negotiations process. Improving data and science to inform international management is also a vital part of sustainable fisheries management.

## Why Cornwall?

Given the wide range of fish and shellfish stocks in Cornish waters and access to credible partners available from the scientific community within the county, Cornwall should present a strong case to lead and deliver credible biological, ecological, economic and social science to support the long-term sustainability of the Cornish seafood industry. This is of fundamental importance; put simply, without productive and sustainable seas, the industry is sunk.

Foreseeing the change that Brexit would bring, the CFPO developed and published the Cornish Fishing Strategy in 2022, with support from the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly LEP. Within the strategy there is a commitment to establish a Cornwall Fisheries Science Board. Further to this, the CFPO published the True Value of Seafood to Cornwall report in 2024, highlighting the uniqueness that fishing and seafood present to Cornwall, making it four times more important to the county than anywhere else in the UK.



## Why a Science Board?

The Cornish fishing industry recognises that its harvesting activities must be sustainable from economic, biological, and environmental perspectives. Scientific evidence provides the central plank of credible fisheries management plans. Therefore, access to timely, robust, credible and relevant science is fundamentally essential to achieving a fishing industry that is sustainable from social, economic and environmental perspectives.

The Board will be a partnership between relevant stakeholders and will initiate and engage with local, regional, national and international fisheries science and policy issues. The Board will be made up of active fishermen, fisheries and social scientists, an NGO, fisheries managers and wider experts. The initial focus will be on implementation of the relevant published FMP's, as well as supporting the development of relevant future FMP's. The Board will also engage with the ICES scientific advice for a number of stocks of commercial importance in Cornwall, as well as any local fishery issues with the Cornwall IECA

# Why is fishing industry input important?

Historically, the expertise and first hand experience of fishermen have often been overlooked in scientific research and fisheries management—despite the fact that industry stakeholders are the ones most directly impacted by management decisions affecting their livelihoods and well-being. This exclusion has hindered the sustainability of fisheries, contributed to data-poor situations, limited research capacity, and encouraged a fragmented approach to fisheries science and management.

Today, it is widely recognised that industry, academia, and government each offer unique perspectives and skills essential to effective fisheries research. No single group can address the growing challenges of sustainable fisheries on its own. Collaborative research—where industry, scientists, and policymakers work together—can tackle long-standing and emerging issues more effectively, leverage the strengths of all stakeholders, and build new scientific capacity. Importantly, this collaboration also enhances communication and understanding of the science beyond the research community, promoting broader acceptance and support.



Fishing industry involvement in science and management has become increasingly important well beyond dedicated science programmes. New technologies have the potential to considerably lower the transaction costs of doing science and it is important that these are introduced in ways where the industry can have trust in the use of the data that it is actively participating in gathering. Marine science is a costly endeavor and we will never know everything, but scientists working together with industry, and vice versa, is critical to improving the evidence base and informing sound management decisions.

### **Extra Information**

Cornish fishing strategy here: <a href="https://www.cfpo.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/CFPO-Cornish-Fishing-Strategy-2022\_FINAL.pdf">https://www.cfpo.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/CFPO-Cornish-Fishing-Strategy-2022\_FINAL.pdf</a>
True Value of Seafood report here: <a href="https://www.cfpo.org.uk/our-value/">https://www.cfpo.org.uk/our-value/</a>

