



CF SFB

MEETING SUMMARY - APRIL
2026



Cornish Fish
Producers'
Organisation

Cornwall Fisheries Science Board (CFSB)

Launch Meeting – Public Summary (April 2026)

Attendees

Barrie Deas - Chairman
Jeroen Van Der Kooij (deputising for Tom Catchpole) - Cefas
Isobel Johnstone (deputising for Aisling Lanning) - MMO
Rob Yarlett (deputising for Dave Carlin) - Defra
Paul Trebilcock - CFPO Chairman, W Stevensons & Sons
Jacob Bentley - ICES
Sharmin Rouf - The Fishmongers' Company
Colin Trundle - Cornwall IFCA
David Stevens - CFPO vice Chairman and fisherman
Chris Ranford, CFPO
Emily Theobald, CFPO

The Cornwall Fisheries Science Board (CFSB) held its inaugural meeting in April 2026 at Newlyn Harbour, bringing together representatives from the fishing industry, science, and government. The CFSB has been established to strengthen collaboration and ensure that high-quality scientific evidence is more effectively integrated into fisheries management across Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. This summary outlines the key themes, priorities, and next steps discussed at the meeting.

A shared commitment to better fisheries management

The meeting was opened by Chair Barrie Deas, who highlighted the importance of the CFSB at a time of increasing pressure on the fishing industry. Environmental change, regulatory complexity, and economic challenges all require more responsive and evidence-based management.

A central purpose of the CFSB is to close the gap between science and practice, ensuring that data collected at sea is translated more quickly into real-world decisions. Across all attendees, there was strong agreement that:

- Scientific data must be timely, relevant, and practical
- Industry should play a central role in data collection and research design
- Existing data sources should be better coordinated and fully utilised

Management decisions must reflect both ecological sustainability and economic reality. Participants from organisations including Cefas, MMO, Defra, ICES, Cornwall IFCA, and The Fishmongers' Company emphasised the importance of collaboration. Industry representatives reinforced that science must deliver clear, tangible benefits to fishing operations and coastal communities.

Vision and strategic direction

Chris Ranford (CEO, Cornish Fish Producers Organisation) presented the strategic vision for the CFSB, building on the Cornish Fishing Strategy (2021), which identifies science and sustainability as a key pillar. A clear priority is to demonstrate early impact, showing how collaborative, industry-led science can improve fisheries management in practice.

Early Project Priorities

Initial priorities were developed through consultation with CFPO members and the fishing industry, ensuring the CFSB's work reflects real operational challenges and opportunities for management.

Crawfish - *Panulirus argus*

Crawfish was identified as a valuable but data-poor fishery in the South West. Current monitoring is limited, making it difficult to assess stock health.

The CFSB agreed to launch a new data collection programme involving 10 vessels across Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. This will collect:

- Catch per unit effort (CPUE)
- Discard data
- Bio-metric data

This project will begin in the 2026 fishing season and aims to create a robust dataset to support future management decisions.

Pollack - *Pollachius pollachius*

Pollack has been a particularly challenging stock in recent years, especially following the introduction of a zero Total Allowable Catch (TAC).

Although significant data has already been collected from both commercial and recreational fisheries, uncertainty remains about how this data is being used. Before expanding efforts, the CFSB agreed to confirm:

- Whether current datasets are fully informing stock assessments
- Whether additional data (e.g. from netting and trawling vessels) is required

This reflects a key principle of the CFSB: prioritising data collection that directly supports management needs.

Octopus - Octopus spp

Octopus populations in the South West have increased significantly, creating both opportunities and challenges. While the fishery has provided additional income for some vessels, it has also affected shellfish fisheries.

The CFSB supports the development of a data collection programme but agreed that this should align with work already underway by regulators and the Octopus Management Group. This will ensure coordination and avoid duplication. CFPOs Science and Policy Lead, Emily Theobald is currently working with other interested parties to design a methodology, and implement a data collection programme to inform management.

Dover Sole - *Solea solea*

Dover sole was identified as a complex management issue due to uneven quota allocation between different fishing areas. This creates operational challenges for vessels and can lead to “choke” risks, where limited quota for one species restricts fishing activity for others.

The CFSB discussed the need for further scientific work - particularly genetic sampling - to support future stock assessments and inform upcoming benchmarking processes. Further guidance will be sought before progressing this work. Guidance from ICES is being sought, and additional data collection will take place if it is determined that is what is needed to inform on the benchmark assessment in 2029.

Mixed Fisheries

Mixed fisheries, where multiple species are caught together, were highlighted as a key area of concern. Challenges discussed included:

- The risk of “choke” species limiting fishing opportunities
- The complexity of managing stocks that are caught together

There was also discussion of emerging technologies, such as onboard camera systems, which could support improved data collection and gear selectivity. These tools may provide new opportunities for understanding catch composition and reducing unwanted catch.

Communications

- Emphasis on clearly communicating the work of the CFSB to CFPO members, the wider industry, and the public.
 - Use of multiple channels including the CFPO website, social media, and industry podcasts.
 - Transparency is a key priority, alongside highlighting the role of external partners and funders in communications.
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Funding

- The Fishing and Coastal Growth Fund was highlighted as a key opportunity.
 - CFPO intends to apply for and deliver projects through this fund, focusing on collaboration and match funding.
 - Projects must align with government priorities, particularly fisheries management plans, and involve industry participation.
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Future Meetings

- Proposed structure of quarterly meetings: two in person and two online each year.
 - Discussion of hosting a Cornwall Fisheries Science Board Conference.
 - Recognition of growing public interest in fisheries, presenting opportunities for broader and more innovative engagement.
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