



CF SB

MEETING SUMMARY - JULY
2026



Cornish Fish
Producers'
Organisation

Cornwall Fisheries Science Board (CFSB)

Launch Meeting – Public Summary (July 2026)

Attendees

Barrie Deas - Chairman

Jacob Bentley - ICES

Colin Trundle - Cornwall IFCA

Dave Carlin - Defra

Aisling Lannin - MMO

Tom Catchpole - Cefas

Chris Ranford, CFPO

Emily Theobald, CFPO

The Cornwall Fisheries Science Board (CFSB) held its board meeting in July 2026 online, 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

Barrie Deas opened the meeting and the minutes of the previous meeting were approved. Each attendee gave a brief update on how their organisation's priorities connect to the CFSB's work. Chris Ranford reported that the CFPO board had met in June and been briefed on CFSB projects, with a request for financial investment in them. Aisling Lannin said the MMO is keen to undertake science alongside industry and that the priority projects are practical and well timed. Dave Carlin noted that Defra is launching an R&D programme to support fisheries innovation and management, and expressed willingness to collaborate on science and evidence. Tom Catchpole said Cefas is working with Defra and other arm's-length bodies on a collaborative R&D programme and suggested it would help to map the links between this commissioned R&D and CFSB projects. Colin Trundle said CIFCA's best work has always come from collaboration with industry and that CFSB offers a platform to continue this. Jacob Bentley reported he had presented CFSB priorities to ICES leadership and attended the Celtic Sea ICES working group; the previously collected pollack data is being used in stock assessment, and ICES is keen to collaborate on sole ahead of the 2029 benchmark. He also flagged the scale of change across the Celtic Sea and suggested multi-year, whole-area benchmarks (as used in the Irish Sea) could be considered.

Project updates

Crawfish

Emily Theobald reported that an expression of interest had gone out to CFPO members and a training session was scheduled to brief skippers on data collection and issue equipment and recording forms. Tom asked that the data be clearly applied to management, and Emily confirmed the MMO needs better data to build a picture of the stock. Tom and Chris stressed the importance of feeding findings to the correct MMO teams before the next consultation and fishing year.

Octopus

Emily outlined the octopus project, designed with the MMO, Defra and Devon and Severn IFCA, involving ten vessels collecting octopus and wider ecosystem data; an EOI has gone to CFPO members, and weekly length/weight/sex data collection has already begun at Newlyn and Brixham markets. Emily noted the fishery's short lifespan and volatility mean it needs a harvest-control-style approach using live data; Aisling agreed to check with the MMO on feasibility, noting this is an MMO intention. Jacob raised whether anyone was studying the social effects of the octopus bloom – currently no one is – and Dave suggested approaching Defra's social science team. Board members more broadly discussed zooming out to the wider ecosystem to get ahead of emerging issues, and Aisling proposed a system-mapping exercise with Emily.

Pollack

Emily noted three years of data now exist, but questioned the usefulness of some of it, particularly offshore data collected individually by skippers, and said it's necessary to confirm whether this data has fed into the stock assessment before deciding on a fourth year of the project. Tom stated he would work internally to understand whether the data had been applied in the ICES assessments and this would determine if the project would be to continue.

Sole

Emily said the CFSB is still waiting on ICES to specify what data would usefully feed the 2029 benchmark assessment, aimed at securing a greater quota in areas 7h–k. Jacob had asked ICES but had no specific answer yet. Chris warned that ICES advice is likely to recommend a 20% precautionary cut in area 7h–k, which would create problems and chokes for CFPO members in mixed fisheries.

Mixed fisheries

No dedicated project had previously been agreed, though a trial of 80mm/90mm cod ends had been floated to address zero-TAC species issues in mixed fisheries. Since the last meeting, a move to 90mm cod ends in otter and beam trawls in area 7e has already been adopted for implementation by late 2026, removing the need for that study. Separately, Emily flagged a Plymouth University study seeking CFPO involvement, examining sweep area and bottom-contact impacts across different trawling methods, aimed at moving away from treating trawling as a homogenous category in management. The CFPO is likely to take part, but this requires no CSFB input.

ICES advice

The CFSB discussed the newly published ICES advice, noting large recommended cuts to key south-west stocks including hake, plus precautionary cuts to sole. Chris explained this would squeeze a lot of CFPO vessels and likely cause some issues with chokes in mixed fisheries.

The group welcomed the idea of discussing the ICES advice, and the Celtic Sea as a whole, at the next in person CFSB meeting.

Funding updates

Chris reported that the CFPO board had reviewed the proposed CFSB projects and agreed to provide match funding needed because the Fisheries and Coastal Growth Fund (FCGF) covers 75% of costs and requires a 25% match from applicants. Chris also introduced the potential for a science delivery services company, to work with the fishing industry and the CFSB to deliver fisheries science partnerships. Emily flagged difficulties drawing down Defra R&D funding for species covered by Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs), since recipients must be an "approved supplier". In future, it would be great to have the potential science services company set up as a supplier, so they could receive funding to deliver vital fisheries research into species that are part of FMPs.

Communications and next meeting

Emily highlighted recent CFSB media coverage: Chris appeared on BBC Radio 4's Farming Today discussing the CFSB's role in Cornish fisheries; Emily featured in The Times on the octopus bloom and wrote a full-page piece on the same topic for The Fishing News; and Emily presented on the CFSB and its projects at the University of Exeter and Plymouth's PhD summer school. The board agreed the CFSB should have its own social media presence, separate from the CFPO. Chris raised restarting the Fathom podcast with an episode on the CFSB and asked for volunteers. The next CFSB meeting was confirmed to be held in person in October 2026.