

Meeting between Irish Demersal FIPs and Marine Institute scientists, 17th December 2025. Virtual meeting held on Teams.

Attendance:

Mike Fitzpatrick, co-ordinator of the Irish Nephrops and Whitefish FIPs.

Jonathan White, Section Manager, Integrated Advice, Fisheries Ecosystem Advisory Services, Marine Institute.

Hans Gerritsen, Team Leader, Fisheries Ecosystem Advisory Services, Marine Institute.

Haleigh Joyce, Scientific & Technical Officer (STO) - Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems and Nephrops Assessment, Marine Institute.

Graham Johnston, Fisheries Ecosystem Advisory Services, Marine Institute.

Agenda

General points

- FIP gear & TCM survey - relevance for science
- MI work on fishery & VME habitat interactions

Whitefish points

- Discussion on what Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) can do
- Can MSE be used for example to look at effect of different TCMs on whitefish stocks?
- ETP species bycatch data in whitefish (Whiting /Haddock/Saithe) fisheries

Nephrops points

- Timeline for the definition of a B_{MSY} reference point for FU 16.
- Update on data collection fishery in FU16.
- Options to expand FU16 data collection approach in Irish Sea
- Data on Whiting & Cod bycatch in prawn fishery
- ETP species bycatch data in prawn fisheries

General topics

As this meeting had a very long agenda and the meeting was rescheduled it was agreed that this would serve as a preparatory meeting to a series of others to be held early in 2026. The next steps for further work on each of the topics were discussed rather than an in-depth analysis of them at this point.

- Results of FIP gear & TCM survey and relevance for science. Mike Fitzpatrick gave a brief outline of the FIP selective gear survey. Marine Institute participants agreed that this work could be useful in terms of providing a baseline for assessing new TCMs, potentially for Management Strategy Evaluation and for the scientists working on ETP bycatch.
- MI work on fishery & VME/habitat interactions. This topic will be discussed further at a meeting on Feb 19th 2026. In the meantime, it was agreed that Mike Fitzpatrick will send Haleigh Joyce information on the Whiting FIP workplan and pre-assessment which outlines the challenges relating to habitat interactions and this will be discussed in detail in the meeting in February.
- ETP species bycatch data in whitefish (Whiting/Haddock) and Nephrops fisheries. Graham Johnstone of the Marine Institute committed to organising a dedicated meeting between the FIP, himself, and Ailbhe Kavanagh who co-ordinates ETP species data for the Marine Institute and who is involved in the ICES Working Group on fisheries bycatch of ETP species. This meeting will take place in early 2026.

Nephrops points

- Timeline for the definition of a B_{MSY} reference point for FU 16. Jonathan White confirmed that there is sufficient data to define a B_{msy} reference point for FU 16. This data has been analysed by the Marine Institute and the next step is that it will be assessed by an ICES Working Group. The ICES assessment will most likely happen in 2026.
- Update on data collection fishery in FU16. Jonathan White confirmed that the operation of the data collection fishery had at this stage filled the data gap which did exist as a result of the fishery closure to Irish vessels.
- Potential/options to develop similar initiative to FU16 data collection initiative in the Irish Sea – and how the FIP could play a role in such an initiative. The necessity for such an initiative was stressed by the Marine Institute as observer coverage and data collection levels for the Irish Sea Nephrops fishery remain

low. Mike Fitzpatrick agreed that this would be a priority action for the Nephrops FIP in early 2026 building on work done in FU16.

- Availability of data on Whiting & Cod bycatch in prawn fishery. The Marine Institute agreed to provide an up to date catch profile for the Nephrops fishery which will allow the assessment of current bycatch rates.

Whitefish points

- General discussion on what MSE can do. Can MSE be used for example to look at effect of different TCMs on whitefish stocks? It was explained that MSE can be used to assess TCM impacts but that running MSE simulations was complex and that TCM impacts on the stock could be swamped by the impact of an environmental factor for example. However it was agreed to look at this in further detail, including the relevance of the FIP selective gear survey, at a follow up meeting on February 19th 2026.
- Discuss whether stock recovery provisions set out in NWWMAP are likely to result in stock recovery. Hans Gerritsen described the current situation in North Western Waters demersal fisheries and indicated that overall productivity of demersal stocks in the region was currently low which will complicate recovery efforts. It was agreed that some more specific questions regarding this topic would be formulated before the next meeting in February 2026.