



# Three-Year Audit Template

## Introduction to the tool

The three-year audit template was developed by FishChoice and is based on the FisheryProgress FIP Review Guidelines and feedback from the FisheryProgress Technical Oversight Committee. The audit template is designed to present key information about the current performance of the fishery and to verify reported progress on [www.FisheryProgress.org](http://www.FisheryProgress.org). **FisheryProgress requires the use of three-year audit template and information must be in English.**

Text in italics provides additional guidance about information that should be included in each section. Text in red provide examples for possible responses.

## Basic FIP information

*Fill in the following table. The management authority is the regulatory authority with fishing management responsibilities; there may be multiple authorities where joint jurisdictional responsibilities occur.*

Target species scientific name and common name	<i>Microstomus kitt</i> and <i>Pleuronectes platessus</i> (North Sea Lemon Sole and Plaice)
Fishery location	ICES Subarea 4 (North Sea) 7d (Eastern Channel) and Subdivision 3.a.20 (Skagerrak).
Gear type(s)	Bottom Trawl, Otter Trawl, Seine
Catch quantity (weight)	Approximately 1820 tonnes
Vessel type(s) and size(s)	Mixed demersal fleet using seine netting and demersal trawl gears. Typically vessels are 12m+ (range of 9m – 48m)
Number of vessels	Approximately 240 vessels
Management authority	English government bodies: Cefas, MMO, Defra

## Stakeholder consultation & meetings

Fill in the following table and include a high-level summary of the subjects that were discussed. Additional rows may need to be added or modified depending on number of participants and meetings completed.

Name	Affiliation	Date and Subjects Discussed
Lisa Readdy	Cefas	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>9<sup>th</sup> August 2019</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fishery Management Plan introduction</li> <li>• P1 and 2 action review</li> <li>• Introduction to Osprey Fish fleet</li> </ul>
Aisla Jones	Co-op	
Iain Glasgow	Defra	
Anton Diestschel-Buehler	flatfish	
Richard Stansfield	Flatfish	
Nigel Edwards	Hilton Seafoods	
Will Davies	Hilton Seafoods	
Mike Kendrick	Hilton Seafoods	
Hannah Macintyre	M&S	
Hubert Gieschen	MMO	
Simon Dixon	MMO	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>25<sup>th</sup> April 2019</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update on the Annual Review process</li> <li>• P1, 2 and 3 action review and update on Alternative Measures review</li> <li>• Conclusion that LS is unlikely to be a choke species</li> <li>• Osprey update and proposal to support FIP logistically</li> </ul>
Joseph Prosho	Morrisons	
Rob Whiteley	Natural England	
Adam Townley	NESI	
Ally Dingwall	Sainsburys	
Bill Lart	Seafish	
Jennifer Mouat	SWFPA	
Kenny Coull	SWFPA	
Mike Park	SWFPA	
Helena Delgado-Nordmann	Tesco	
Melissa Pritchard	Waitrose	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>5<sup>th</sup> February 2020</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion of an appropriate Unit of Assessment</li> <li>• P1, 2 and 3 action review</li> <li>• Plaice update; closure of condition by Osprey</li> <li>• Terms of reference circulation held due to issue raised by Round 2 member</li> <li>• Final Project UK logo presented</li> </ul>
Andy Boulton	Waitrose	
Clarus Chu	WWF	
Abigayil Blandon	WWF	
Hayley Swanlund	WWF	
Cameron Moffat	Youngs	
Mike Mitchell	Youngs	
Scott Johnson	Youngs	
		<p style="text-align: center;"><u>13<sup>th</sup> July 2020</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joint Demersal Fishery habitat requirements and discussion</li> <li>• Use of VMEs in protected areas to provide a reference for unimpacted areas</li> </ul>
		<p style="text-align: center;"><u>17<sup>th</sup> July 2020</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lemon sole harvest control rules and discussion</li> <li>• ETP list update and discussion</li> </ul>
		<p style="text-align: center;"><u>20<sup>th</sup> January</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of Principle 3 actions</li> <li>• Certification process</li> <li>• Brexit impact</li> <li>• FMP update</li> </ul>
Leendert Hakvoort	Lowestoft PO	

3rd February 2021

- Principles 1 and 2 action review
- An alternative fishing reference point is required as a recent benchmark is unavailable
- Alternative HS as required as a single species TAC is unlikely
- Discussion on overlap with Nephrops grounds
- ETP list review
- Review of Scottish MPA management

## Summary of MSC performance indicator scores

Fill in the likely scoring category (<60, 60-79, ≥80) for each performance indicator (PI) and provide a rationale for the score by referring to the text used in v2.0 of the MSC Standard's scoring guideposts for the related Performance Indicator.

Principle	Component	Performance Indicator	Current Score	Rationale and Justification	
1	Outcome	1.1.1	Stock status	>80	<p>A P1 review was conducted due to the 2019 ICES assessment and ICES WKLIFE proposals for revised assessment approaches. This report resulted in score changes to PI 1.1.1. as it indicated F can be used as a proxy where biomass reference points are not available.</p> <p>The Length-Based Indicator (LBI) analysis suggests that fishing mortality is below proxies of the MSY reference points (ICES, 2019). This hits SG80 as Standard guidance states: 'At least an 80 score is justified (B highly likely above the PRI and at or fluctuating around BMSY ) if F is likely to have been at or below F MSY for at least two generation times (or for at least four years, if greater).'</p> <p>Fishbase gives age at maturity for lemon sole in North Sea as 4 years. Latest ICES figures shows the LBI index ratio to have been above 1 (and therefore below the FMSY proxy) since at least 2002. Therefore, it is considered that 1.1.1 continues to score &gt;80.</p>
		1.1.2	Stock rebuilding	N/A	
	Management	1.2.1	Harvest Strategy	60-79	<p>In 2019 ICES provided advice to the European Commission that the removal of TAC for lemon sole would not risk the sustainability of the stock. However, no stated intent to do so by European Commission. Brexit gives the UK more flexibility from 2021 to adopt its own measures, including single species TACs. With the downturn in cod status in the North Sea, lemon sole is less of a priority for action from Government so change is unlikely.</p> <p>With change to a single species TAC unlikely in the next two years, alternative approaches are required to ensure SG80 is met. It is proposed these focus on additional measures in line with the North Sea MAP for bycatch species.</p>
		1.2.2	Harvest control rules and tools	60-79	<p>HCRs need to be well-defined to ensure exploitation rates reduce as limit ref points are approached. HCRs have been discussed within the FIP but there remains a need to formalize these and put in the FMP.</p>
		1.2.3	Information and monitoring	>80	<p>The information that there is on lemon sole is perhaps sufficient to support a harvest strategy and abundance survey data exist for the North Sea stock but it is not clear whether these data</p>

					are sufficient to support a harvest control rule. Biological data from the fishery have been collected by UK, the Netherlands and Belgium and landings data are complete.
		1.2.4	Assessment of stock status	>80	ICES (2019) revised the assessment following a benchmark in 2018 where ICES explored the appropriateness of the assessment in relation to the stock, which remains a category 3 (data limited) stock. While the resulted in no B reference points being presented, a Length Based Indicator (LBI) is used to determine fishing mortality in relation to MSY and F reference points continue to be presented.  <b>Question for Rod: Giuseppe recommended 1.2.4 would not meet 80. What do I put here?</b>
2	Primary species	2.1.1	Outcome	60-79	Primary species identified in the UoA of the FIP are Nephrops, cod and monkfish after harmonizing with other assessments in the North Sea region. Uncertainty over UoA of FIP impact on these stocks with greater information to be provided in the outputs from the re-assessment of SFSAG Demersal stock. The ACDR (before site visit) indicates a score of 60-79 for 2.1.1 due to Nephrops FU 34 (Devils Hole) and cod in North Sea.
		2.1.2	Management strategy	>80	A review and re-scoring of main primary and secondary species during the Action Plan v5.1 found the following: <b>Cod:</b> Score on 2.1.2 remains >80 (due to cod strategy being put in place). NB. This is the scoring for both UoAs as cod is a main species for trawl & seine. <b>Nephrops:</b> Based on SFSAG ACDR (April 2021): since the combined TAC seems to be working in practice (see 2.1.1), it is considered a 'partial strategy' when combined with gear specifications, mesh sizes and spatiotemporal restrictions (EU 2019). SG60 and SG80 are met, but SG100 is not met on the basis that the stocks are not managed at the FU level. Score on 2.1.2 increases to >80 (harmonised with Nephrops FIP, but note SFSAG Re-assessment ACDR currently at 60-79 due to cod) NB. This is the scoring for the Trawl UoA due to Nephrops fleet, but not the Seine UoA, which should score >80.
		2.1.3	Information	>80	Primary species are typically explicitly mentioned in the EU Data Collection Framework Requirements, are subject to regular ICES working group review and assessments, supported by sampling and survey. In addition, the vessels fishing in the mixed demersal fishery of the North Sea have been subject to high levels of enforcement scrutiny as a result of stock recovery

					plans in recent years. Therefore, these fisheries and the fisheries that exploit them are well monitored.
Secondary species	2.2.1	Outcome	>80		The current FIP score does not reach SG80 because it includes the status of <i>Nephrops</i> in Devils Hole, but other certified fisheries do not include this.  <b>Question for Rod: Nephrops now a Primary species what is the reasoning for 80 here?</b>
	2.2.2	Management strategy	>80		A review of alternative measures has been undertaken for the FIP. The review includes consideration of whether alternative gear or other measures have been implemented as appropriate.
	2.2.3	Information	>80		Some secondary species data available through Cefas catch composition reviews.
ETP species	2.3.1	Outcome	60-79		Assessment of UoA interaction with the latest ETP species list was undertaken by WWF. This identified need to consider Scottish Priority Marine Features in line with other assessments. A further review was required with the introduction of the Osprey vessels in Yr 3. This showed that the Starry Ray was another ETP species with known interactions with UoA vessels – an existing condition (under Osprey’s plaice certificate) was collecting information on the extent and impact of this interaction. After a harmonization review with Nephrops FIP, which includes West of Scotland, scores 60-79 due to benthic invertebrate PMFs (still to be considered by the SFSAG re-assessment at site visit), however, their extent and level of fishery interaction in the North Sea should be confirmed to determine likely score.
	2.3.2	Management strategy	60-79		Based on the review of ETP species list, the requirement for management should be reviewed. Likely dependent on findings from SFSAG demersal stocks re-assessment before this FIP can progress further.
	2.3.3	Information	>80		There is a reasonable level of information – with species distribution, some trend information coupled with good information on fleet activity and good understanding of the level of interaction with the fleet. A Seafish project is underway to document and map MPAs and fishing restrictions to inform fishermen within the UoA of the FIP. This project has been extremely positively received by industry. The project is expected to conclude in October 2021. In March 2021 a new bycatch reporting app was launched by Clean Catch UK. Through collaboration with the UK fishing industry, Clean Catch UK have produced an app designed to gather data on

					accidental wildlife bycatch. Steering Group will consider the use of trailing the clean catch app.
Habitats	2.4.1	Outcome	60-79	<p>Cefas were commissioned to carry out a habitat assessment in 2018. Two indicators were estimated to quantify the impact of the FIP vessels on different types of North Sea habitats: overlap and recovery. It found that the impact of the vessels on commonly encountered habitats is low according to MSC standards. However, the fishing effort of the FIP fleet overlaps with &gt; 20% (up to 60%) of sea pens, sponges and cup corals (VMEs), and sea-pen and burrowing megafauna communities (OSPAR threatened and declining habitats) in the North Sea. These habitats have low recoverability and based on MSC standards overlap should be lower than 20%.</p> <p>A final report was provided in Jan 2019, which clarified a number of issues, but did not conclude whether a habitat strategy was necessary. It was also evident that the VME habitats reported to be over 20% overlap did not correspond to those identified in other MSC assessments ,such as the recent Joint Demersal Fisheries in the North Sea</p>	
	2.4.2	Management strategy	60-79	The Cefas habitat assessments, commissioned by the FIP state it is not evident that measures in place in offshore MPAs are sufficient to ensure avoidance of sensitive areas.	
	2.4.3	Information	>80	The information presented in the habitat report shows that VMS and logbooks are available for vessels in the FIP, and when compared against existing habitat information, is sufficient to score >80. Note SFSAG re-assessment needs more info and currently scores it at 60-79 due to a lack of iVMS on <12m vessels, which is not considered an issue for the plaice and lemon sole vessels.	
Ecosystem	2.5.1	Outcome	>80	Evidence from the MSC (re)certified North Sea plaice fisheries concluded that "at present rates of exploitation for North Sea plaice, the demersal trawl fishery was highly unlikely to disrupt key elements underlying ecosystem structure and function". In these re-assessments this PI was scored at SG80 and it is most likely that any future full assessment would harmonise with these scores.	
	2.5.2	Management strategy	>80	There is an increasing focus on ecosystem management at the UK and ICES advisory level. Recent evidence for this includes the issuing of ICES of mixed fisheries advice and proposals for mixed fisheries multi-annual management plans. In addition, there is considerable focus on ecosystem management through the proposed implementation of FMPs for all UK fisheries.	

		2.5.3	Information	>80	The North Sea is a well-studied ecosystem. Good quality information is available for key elements e.g., abiotic & biotic productivity modelling, plankton recording; CEFAS trophic work, habitat mapping & fish stock assessment. The impacts of fisheries on these elements is adequately understood e.g., habitat damage, biomass removal, species size & maturation studies, etc. And the nature of impacted communities is understood, e.g. target and bycatch spp. (composition, volume & function), ETP e.g. seal & skates / rays / birds are known; Consequences can be inferred from gear studies, impact assessments (and key elements in some cases), but not many specific studies; Some spatial data, seabird and cetacean surveys, WQ assessments, hydrographic and oceanographic studies. Biodiversity assessments can show ecological risks. Information covers both fisheries-dependent and fisheries-independent variables.
3	Governance and Policy	3.1.1	Legal and customary framework	60-79	Within the UK there is an effective national legal system implementing the Fisheries Act. The UK/EU Trade and Co-operation Agreement set out the planned framework, but the time of review (April 2021) there is uncertainty regarding the effectiveness of the UK-EU bilateral negotiation on fishing opportunities for shared stocks, and the role and function of the Specialised Committee on Fisheries: "organised and effective cooperation with other parties" is not yet proven.
		3.1.2	Consultation, roles and responsibilities	60-79	At a UK level, roles, responsibilities and consultation processes are well-established and function in the same way as prior to UK exit from the EU. Organizations and individuals involved in the management of shared stocks such as plaice and lemon sole have been identified in the UK-EU TCA. Functions, roles and responsibilities are generally understood, but are yet to become operational. It is not yet clear how the UK industry and NGO's will participate in consultation processes following withdrawal from bodies such as North Sea Advisory Council.
		3.1.3	Long term objectives	>80	This PI assesses objectives contained in high level or broader government policy, rather than on fishery specific operational objectives. These high-level objectives at both an EU and UK wide level which guide management decision making are fully consistent with the MSC fisheries standard and would support scoring at the SG80 level.
	Fishery specific management system	3.2.1	Fishery specific objectives	60-79	The UK has retained an amended version of the North Sea Multi-Annual Plan in domestic legislation, the North Sea MAP therefore remains relevant for stating fishery-specific objectives for plaice. However, lemon sole as an un-named by-catch species, still requires explicit objectives to be set. The UK government is in the process of developing Fishery



					Management Plans. It is unlikely lemon sole will be in the first tranche of UK FMPs and therefore an FMP is being drafted by the FIP.
		3.2.2	Decision making processes	60-79	<p>The decision-making processes meet the minimum (conditional) requirement for MSC, insofar as there are informal decision-making processes which respond to the fishery specific objectives. ICES advisory processes are expected to be unchanged (with the provision that UK could ask for additional advice to that sought by the EU).</p> <p>The Trade and Cooperation Agreement provides for annual negotiations on total allowable catches and related issues each year. Annual negotiations for 2021 were ongoing at the time of review.</p>
		3.2.3	Compliance and enforcement	60-79	<p>Within the UK there is an effective judicial system to impose incremental sanctions for non-compliance with fisheries management measures.</p> <p>To date the UK has not demonstrated enforcement of certain management measures, specifically the Landing Obligation. It is not clear how the UK will apply the LO in future, so SG80 may not be met.</p>
		3.2.4	Management performance evaluation	>80	<p>UK Fisheries Act (section 11.5) includes requirement for 3-year evaluation of Fisheries Management Plans reported to UK parliament and the devolved nations. The UK-EU TCA has provisions to be re-evaluated after 5.5 years, while the UK-EU TACs for shared stocks are agreed annually. ICES stock assessments are also reviewed bi-annually and benchmarked regularly. The fishery-specific management systems would therefore be subject to an external review and so scores 80.</p>

## Workplan results

Fill in the following table by reviewing the FIP's workplan and summarizing the key results that have been achieved over the last three years (or since the last audit took place) as a result of the FIP's workplan. Provide an explanation of steps that the FIP participants took in supporting and achieving each result.

Result	Related Action on FisheryProgress	Related MSC Performance Indicator	Explanation
Stock assessment review based on WKLIFEX update	Stock status	1.1.1, 1.2.4	<p>The Steering Group commissioned an MSC Principle 1 specialist to review the most recent ICES DLS technical guidance for Category 3 stocks as described in Annex 3 of the WKLIFEX 2020 report, and to consider how they would score in an MSC assessment with specific reference to the North Sea lemon sole stock.</p> <p>The review includes whether the latest ICES advice for North Sea lemon sole (ICES Sub area 4 and divisions 3a and 7d) which uses proxy estimates for fishing mortality would be sufficient to score this lemon sole stock (Figure 1) without the need to use the RBF methodology. In particular, Annex 3 of ICES WKLIFEX 2020 contains a decision tree (Figure 2) which leads to Methods 1, 2.1, 2.2, 3 and 2.3 for advice rules, each of these methods is evaluated in 1.2.4 term in a MSC P1 assessment.</p> <p>The outputs of such analyses evidenced that for stocks considered under methods 1, 2.1, 2.2 the RBF approach is not needed, differently from stocks under methods 2.3 and 3 where the RBF would be triggered. Moreover, the 1.2.4 scores of stocks under methods 1 and 2.1-2.2 are respectively above and below 80. Finally the North Sea lemon sole stock scores above 80 in term of 1.1.1 but below 80 in term of 1.2.4.</p>
Cefas review of fishery catch composition	Catch Composition Review	Catch Composition Review	<p>In year 4 of the FIP it was decided that an updated catch composition was required for the FIP. This represented an updated list from Cefas' 2018 report.</p> <p>The aim of the study was to compile catch composition profile for each gear type in the FIP. The catch profile was developed using the official landings database and discards data collected by Cefas Observer programme in 2018 and 2019.</p>

			<p>Landings, discards, proportion of each species and species category (Primary, Secondary, 'Out-of-scope or ETP) were tabulated. The top 20 species for each gear were provided in the report and the complete list of species was provided in excel format, as supplementary material. The main species for each gear include:</p> <p><b>Otter trawl (OTB_70-99, TR2):</b> Norway lobster (<i>Nephrops norvegicus</i>, 31%), plaice (<i>Pleuronectes platessa</i>, 12%), spider crab (<i>Maja squinado</i>, 11%), whiting (<i>Merlangius merlangus</i>, 9%), dab (<i>Limanda limanda</i>, 6%), thornback ray, (<i>Raja clavata</i>, 4%).</p> <p><b>Otter trawl (OTB_≥100, TR1):</b> Saithe (<i>Pollachius virens</i>, 32%), plaice (28%), Norway lobster (9%), whiting (8%), haddock (<i>Melanogrammus aeglefinus</i>, 4%) and cod (<i>Gadus morhua</i>, 4%).</p> <p><b>Beam trawls (TBB_≥80):</b> plaice (73%), common sole (<i>Solea solea</i>, 7%), Turbot (<i>Psetta maxima</i>, 4%), dab (3%), Edible crab (<i>Cancer pagurus</i>, 2%) and lemon sole (2%)</p> <p><b>Demersal seine:</b> Whiting (17%), striped red mullet (<i>Mullus surmuletus</i>, 16%), various squids (<i>Loliginidae</i>, 15%), tub gurnard (<i>Chelidonichthys lucerne</i>, 10%), common squid (<i>Loligo spp.</i>, 10%), gurnards (<i>Triglidae</i>, 6%), jack and horse mackerel (<i>Trachurus spp.</i>, 5%) and pout whiting (<i>Trisopterus luscus</i>, 5%).</p>
Alternative measures paper	Review of alternative measures for by-catch	2.2.2	In year 4 Bill Lart drafted a paper outlining the alternative measures that are being considered to reduce unwanted bycatch in the North Sea fisheries. This is to be incorporated into the Management Plan though mainly due to Brexit, and now Covid-19, the review is still to be shared with fishery managers for their consideration.
Cefas habitat assessment review by Principle 2 expert	Habitat Assessment	2.4.3, 2.4.2, 2.4.1	<p>In year 3 Dr G. Gaudian was commissioned to provide clarity on the confusion arising from the Cefas habitat assessment and advise on the need for a habitat strategy. The Cefas report appears to use VME and VME indicator species interchangeably which may have led to confusion. A specimen of a possible VME indicator species in a trawl sample does not make a VME as defined above.</p> <p>The report concludes that it is the designation of MPAs and subsequent adherence to management measures associated with the MPAs that will be critical to the MSC assessment.</p>
Development of Fishery Management Plan	Management plan	3.2.2, 3.2.1, 3.2.4	The development of an FMP began in 2019/20 to help log all the documentation and progress the FIP had made to date. The FIP's FMP is industry led, crucially by two organizations that have gone through MSC certification process before.

			Having the FMP represents crucial progress against some of the principle 3 actions
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