

FISHING & SUSTAINABILITY



UPDATE

JUNE 2025



INTRODUCING



THE NEWEST MEMBER OF OUR SUSTAINABILITY TEAM

My name is Emma Kearns, Whitby & Kilkeel Seafoods' Ethical and Sustainable Compliance Lead, based in Kilkeel, Northern Ireland (where I am originally from!).. I hold a BSc in Marine Biology and more recently an MSc in International Marine Environmental Consulting. I worked as a Fleet Researcher at Seafish straight from Uni which allowed me to travel across the UK speaking to vessel owners, skippers and crew. Part of my role within the company is to focus on improving the sustainability of the business and supporting the fishing industry on which we depend - something for which my work on the fleet survey has prepared me excellently. In addition to ensuring the welfare of crew aboard our vessels, this year we will be focusing further on crustacean welfare and fishing gear. A selection of the live projects by the sustainability team are listed below. I hope that by joining the team, I will be able to contribute to making measurable and impactful changes within the business and beyond.



BARCELONA

SEAFOOD EXPO

Whitby Seafoods attended the Barcelona Seafood Expo from 6 – 8th May, where we had a fantastic stand showcasing both current and new products, with particular focus on peeled (uncoated) scampi tails.

As you walk through the halls you are surrounded by fresh, frozen and processed seafood from all over the world. There were also lots of lively discussions, tastings and cooking demonstrations throughout the day, with the amazing chef CJ Jackson carrying out live cooking demonstrations using UK seafood. The highlight for the sustainability team was being able to explore the displays and stalls that prided themselves in utilising the whole fish, using fish skin as an alternative to cow leather, and creating clothing and footwear. This type of forward and innovative thinking

is something that we hope to apply to our own business in the future. Watch this space!

We also attended the conference running in parallel which included talks on “Consumer behaviour and market trends”, “Data standards for traceability”, “Ecosystem-based fisheries management”, and “Seafood in a changing climate”. The discussion on ecosystem-based management provided valuable insights that will be useful when the UK Nephrops Fishery enters the MSC Improvement Program.





NEPHROPS FISHERIES



IMPROVEMENT



PROJECT



In 2019, Project UK initiated the Nephrops Fishery Improvement Project, due to the economic importance of this species within the UK and the growing demand from the wider supply chain to support environmental improvements.

During the 5 years of the FIP, more than 100 Steering Group members contributed to this project, representing 66 UK and EU businesses and organisations. The FIP made significant progress during this time. However, there were still considerable actions that were not achieved. Although the FIP has ended, the Steering Group has continued to work towards MSC certification and has announced that we are applying to enter the MSC Improvement Program.

The MSC Improvement Program will help support the UK Nephrops fishery in making measurable, independently verified progress towards MSC certification. It focuses on the three core principles: the sustainability of the stock, ecosystem impacts, and effective management.

We are hopeful that the UK Nephrops fishery will enter the MSC Improvement program in the coming months and will be sure to inform the public and wider supply chain of any further developments.



FLOMO

GEAR TRIALS



In May 2025, a trial was conducted which involved Seafish, FloMo, Northern Ireland Fishermen's Federation and Whitby Seafoods – with funding from two UK retailers too.

This 10-day trial was conducted aboard the 'Wakeful' to determine if the gear would be suitable as an alternative to traditional Nephrops nets, with the hopes that it would reduce the by catch rates and provide a better quality of Nephrops.

New Zealand-based gear tech experts, FloMo, have developed a new net to address three main challenges that the fishing industry faces – Selectivity, Survivability and Quality. The FloMo net has a few interesting features; the first is that it creates a low-turbulence environment, which reduces damage to fish from other fish and from nets banging into them. Secondly, the shape of the openings in the FloMo gear can be tailored to specific species and size requirements, which promotes the escape of

non-target or undersized fish. Finally, unlike conventional fishing nets, the FloMo gear allows the catch to be brought aboard the vessel in a bag of water (due to adaptations to the cod-end). This method minimises crushing damage to catch and increases survivability, allowing any other bycatch to be returned to the ocean alive. This exciting new gear development could help the UK Nephrops fishery reduce bycatch rates and improve the quality of its catch.



SCAN HERE to watch the **Why Change to FloMo** on YouTube, describing the gear and the benefits of using it.

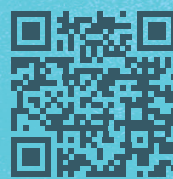


MARFISHECO

GEAR TRIALS

In 2023, MarFishEco Fisheries Consultants were awarded £800,000 of funding through the UK government's FISP to carry out a robust trial measuring the performance of two Nephrop fishery gear modifications: "the inclined net grid" (or "dual cod end") and the "coverless trawl".

This exciting project was in partnership with Whitby Seafoods, Northern Ireland Fishermen's Federation (NIFF) and Seafish. Whilst confirming what many fishermen suspected – that coverless trawls reduce bycatch – the main points raised from this study – as documented in the second video below – were that dynamic government responses to fishing gear modifications are now needed more than ever, due to the massive challenges posed by the impacts of climate change on the ocean.



SCAN HERE to watch the
**Nets of Tomorrow – A
Collaborative Effort to
Sustain Fisheries and
Marine Life** video.



SCAN HERE to watch the
**Nets of Tomorrow –
Results to Realities**
video.



OPTIMAR

GEAR TRIALS

As part of a wider UK Stakeholder project in partnership with Optimar, a stunning and tailing machine prototype was installed on the MFV Golden Ray in March 2025.

This machine is designed to stun the Nephrops before they are mechanically *dispatched*. This project is important, not only for improving crew welfare by reducing the manual processes of tailing and thus increasing crew rest hours, but also for improving animal welfare practices aboard Nephrops vessels. This project brings us closer to ensuring our compliance with UK government's ground breaking The Animal Welfare (Sentience) Act 2022.



SCAN HERE to view the UK government's ground-breaking The Animal Welfare (Sentience) Act 2022.



SCAN HERE to view OPTIMAR's LinkedIn page.



Further updates on the project's progress will be included in the next sustainability update, but in the meantime keep an eye on Optimar's LinkedIn page for new videos and exciting updates.



FLAPPER SKATE

MEASURES

The Flapper Skate (*Dipturus intermedius*), commonly known as the common skate, is a critically endangered species found in UK waters, particularly off the coast of Scotland.



There are occasionally encounters between fishing boats and Flapper Skate, which is why we are helping explore appropriate management strategies to protect them. Heriot-Watt University, in Edinburgh, is conducting a study to assess the fishing industry's understanding of flapper skate. We are tapping into this knowledge to see if we can help minimise the harm caused to Flapper Skate if they are accidentally caught by our vessels.

The first measure we aim to develop is a grid above the hopper onboard M/FV Golden Ray, which would allow fish and Nephrops to pass through, while retaining larger marine life (e.g. a skate) on top. The grid would then be lifted at an angle, allowing the skate to be safely returned to the water. Secondly, we have reached out to Marine Scotland and will be receiving two tarp-lifting devices for trials, which will be placed aboard both the M/FV Golden Ray and the Wakeful. Further updates to follow!



SEAFISH



CARBON EMISSION

PROFILING TOOL

Whitby Seafoods have committed to using the Seafish Carbon Emission Profiling Tool (SCEPT) to calculate the CO₂e of all our products by 2026. This is a valuable tool designed by Seafish, which allows the industry to understand the greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) of seafood products and helps drive improvements.



Whitby Seafoods have previously used CarbonCloud to calculate our CO₂e/kg for our Breaded Scampi, but we feel that using SCEPT is a more efficient and cost-effective method, that ensures our methods of Life Cycle Analysis are harmonised with other UK seafood processors.



SCAN HERE to view the Seafish Carbon Emission Profiling tool for yourself.

seafish



SCAN HERE to watch the The Introduction of the Carbon Emissions Profiling Tool video on YouTube.

