

## UK Nephrops: Crew Welfare a Priority

Most of the UK *Nephrops* fleet have been involved in Project UK since 2019, a programme led by the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) making up a collection of fisheries as Fishery Improvement Projects (FIPs). The overall aim of these FIPs is to address and apply identified improvements for them to achieve MSC accreditation, or simply to become more sustainable. Alongside this, many of the FIPs are involved in meeting or maintaining social welfare requirements for the fishermen, both foreign and domestic.

Throughout the process of the UK *Nephrops* FIP, it was recognised by those involved in the fishery (the steering group) that a social risk assessment would be required, resulting from the large number of migrant crew working for the vessels involved.

Considering these requirements, the fishing industry is delivering positive actions toward change. The steering group covers a large section of the UK fishing fleet, and so the work to be undertaken to meet the social requirements requires significant resources of both time and money.

With some of the recent welfare concerns in the UK *Nephrops* fishing fleet in mind, and the imminent dissolution of the UK *Nephrops* FIP, industry representatives made the decision in February this year to set up a new FIP in the form of an In-Transition to MSC (ITM), which would further progress the extensive work going on under the Project UK FIP. The establishment of the UK *Nephrops* ITM is due to be launched in May this year, but discussions and organisation around this new initiative has been ongoing since February.

Disappointingly, there is no major social welfare element to the ITM initiative and therefore the catching sector and other industry partners have agreed to incorporate a social risk assessment (SRA) as part of the initial work. Under Project UK, the *Nephrops* fleet was due to initiate a full SRA as part of its work programme. The ITM and the rapid succession of moving the fishery onto this different platform has given industry the ability to focus on the welfare elements earlier than expected.

This process will no longer include any involvement with US-based Fisheries Progress, through their Human Rights and Social Responsibility (HRSR) policy but will involve the development of third party approved SRAs, which are more appropriate for this fishery; this initiative is supported by the British Retail Consortium (BRC) and the steering group members.

It must be noted, there is a myriad of work ongoing within the UK *Nephrops* fleet and indeed the wider catching sector regarding the social welfare, wellbeing, and safety of crew. Industry has previously involved the work of Human Rights at Sea (HRAS) and have fervently lobbied UK government for a sensible alternative to the transit visa system.

Projects underway are focused on delivering improvements across a range of areas including the Change on the Water project, partially funded through the Seafood Ethics Action Alliance, and are also developing several apps for crew to use, with the ability to anonymously record grievances with third party auditors both in Scotland and Northern Ireland. This is part of our worker driven social responsibility initiative, which is in

collaboration with the [Fair Food Programme \(FFP\)](#), the [International Transport Workers Federation \(ITF\)](#), and the [Focus on Labour Exploitation \(FLEX\)](#)

Like all sectors of the UK fishing fleet, those catching *Nephrops* take crew welfare and wellbeing very seriously and remain fully committed to ensuring both the best standards possible for all our crew.

**UK catching sector**, including the Northern Ireland Fish Producers Organisation, the Anglo-North Irish Fish Producers Organisation, the Scottish White Fish Producers Association and other industry representatives.