



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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Bass fishing: 2024 guidance

The catch, retention, transshipment and landing of bass is subject to restrictions.

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Introduction

Those restrictions relate to:

- when and where you can catch bass
- how you can fish (gear type) and whether you have an authorisation to do so
- how much can be retained

When and where you can catch bass

You must not catch, retain, tranship or land bass caught from a vessel or the shore from the following 'prohibited' areas:

Sea area	International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) division
South West Approaches	ICES 7b, 7c, 7j and 7k
Irish or Celtic Sea	Outside the 12 nautical mile limit of UK waters in ICES 7g and 7a

During January and from 1st April until 31st December the catch, retention, transhipment and landing of bass in the restricted areas below, is only permitted if you have an authorisation from the Welsh Government to do so. Fishing for bass in any restricted area is prohibited during February and March.

Sea area International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) division

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North Sea	4b, 4c
Channel	7d, 7e
Celtic Sea	7f, 7g*
Irish Sea	7a*
South West Approaches	7h

(*Inside UK 12nm limit only)

How you can fish when operating in a restricted area

Subject to having an authorisation issued by your fisheries administration you are permitted to catch and retain bass with the following gears:

- fixed gillnets
- hooks and lines

All commercial fishing vessels are now already authorised to land bass caught by demersal trawls and seines and no written authorisation is required

You are not allowed to catch and retain bass with any other gears, including pelagic trawls, ring nets and nets that drift with the current or are capable of doing so.

You cannot catch, retain, tranship or land bass if you have not been issued an

authorisation.

Fixed gillnets

Fixed gillnets are considered by the Welsh Government as falling within the definition of 'static nets' in article 6(23) of Regulation (EU) 2019/1241 of the European Parliament and of the Council as being "any type of gillnet that is anchored to the seabed for fish to swim into and become entangled or enmeshed in the netting".

Fixed nets are defined as being fixed to the bottom of the sea in a permanent position by any method such as weights, anchors or stakes and it must be set so as not to be able to drift or move with any current.

Where a net is out of the water (i.e. on a fishing vessel) it must be immediately capable of being fixed to the bottom of the sea by any method such as weights, anchors or stakes either attached to the net or capable of being attached immediately prior to the net being deployed. In the absence of adequate means of fixing the net to the bottom of the sea being present the net will not be considered to be a fixed net.

For the avoidance of doubt, anchors, weights or other items attached to the net which do not fix it to the bottom of the sea or prevent it from drifting (regardless of the state of the current), will not be considered sufficient to consider the net as a fixed net.

How much can be retained

You can only retain and land bass subject to the limits below. Catch limits are

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not transferable between vessels.

	Demersal Trawls and Seines	Hooks and Lines	Fixed Gillnets Nets	All other gears (including drift nets)
Fishery Restrictions	Closed February and March	Closed February and March	Closed February and March	All bass catches prohibited
Maximum catch limit	Maximum 5% by weight of all marine organisms PER TRIP Unavoidable by-catch 3.8 tonnes (3800kg) per vessel per year.	6.2 tonnes per year	By-catch of 1.6 tonnes per year	All bass catches prohibited

Use of multiple gears

A UK fishing vessel may only carry one authorised fishing gear on a fishing trip when retaining bass on board. If you fish using more than one of the permitted gears in a single calendar month the lowest of the catch limits for the gears will apply.

Authorisations

Under The Sea Fisheries (Amendment etc.) (No. 2) Regulations 2021 all commercial fishing vessels are now authorised to land bass caught by demersal trawls and seines and no written authorisation is required.

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It is important to note that bass caught using trawls and seines remain subject to a 5% by weight of all marine organisms per trip. The Sea Fisheries (Amendment) Regulations 2021 ([legislation.gov.uk](https://www.legislation.gov.uk)) sets an unavoidable by-catch limit of 3.8 tonnes (3800kg) per vessel per year.

For clarification, ring nets are not included in the trawls and seines category. Bass landing are prohibited by vessels using ring nets.

If you want to catch and retain bass by other gears you must have a written authorisation from the Welsh Government to do so. Commercial fishermen will be authorised to catch and retain bass with certain gears. Authorisations are being issued to vessels with a track record of landing bass during the reference period of 1st July 2015 to 30th September 2016 subject to any successful transfer requests.

Once you have been issued an authorisation you will be authorised to catch and retain bass with the gear types listed on your authorisation, subject to the specific limitations for each gear.

Landing obligation

The landing obligation does not apply to sea bass. Therefore any catches with unauthorised gears and catches with authorised gears over the authorized limit must be discarded.

During February and March all bass fishing is prohibited and bass catches must be returned to the sea. Fishers should take all reasonable measures to avoid and minimise bass discards.

Vessel replacement and transfer of authorisation

If you are replacing a vessel that has a bass authorisation a transfer of authorisation will be considered providing the replacement vessel is no larger in engine size and tonnage. Where the single hulled replacement vessel is 8 metre or under in overall length the provision of no increase in engine size and tonnage does not apply. It is the responsibility of any vessel owner to seek relevant approvals from the Welsh

Government prior to making a commitment to purchase a new fishing vessel, where they are wanting to transfer any existing authorisation.

Owners intending to sell vessels being replaced should also make the purchaser aware that the vessel being sold will lose its authorisation to catch bass once the transfer is completed (written evidence from the purchaser to confirm their understanding may be required).

Where a vessel is lost at sea and/or is damaged beyond repair a transfer of authorisation will be considered providing the replacement vessel is no larger in engine size and tonnage. Individuals wishing to transfer an existing authorisation to a new/replacement vessel should contact milfordhavenfisheriesoffice@gov.wales as soon as practicable, providing evidence that their circumstances meets the above mentioned criteria.

Authorisations will transfer to a new owner of the vessel when the ownership of the vessel is transferred. The current catch uptake by that vessel will also be

transferred – i.e. the catch limits will not be reset. For example, if a vessel has used all of its hooks & line annual catch limit then the new owner of the vessel will not be permitted to catch and retain further bass using hooks and lines.

Recreational and charter vessels

Within ICES divisions 4b, 4c, 6a, 7a to 7k from 1 January to 31 January and 1 April to 31 December if you do not have a licensed fishing vessel, not more than two specimen of European seabass may be retained and landed per recreational fisherman per day in the restricted areas.

If you have a fishing vessel with a licence but without a bass authorisation you could still take recreational fishermen out to fish. From 1st January to 31st of January and 1st April to 31st December not more than two specimen of European seabass may be retained and landed per recreational fisherman per day in the restricted area. However, no bass may be sold in relation to any recreational fishing.

Minimum Conservation Reference Size (MCRS)

The MCRS ('minimum size') for bass is 42cm.

You must not retain, tranship, land, transport, store, sell, display or offer for sale specimens below the MCRS, but must return them immediately to the sea.

Commercial shore fishing for bass

No bass, other than by-catch, can be taken by shore-based fixed gillnets (gear

codes GTR, GNS, GNC, FYK, FPN and FIX)

(No Bass by-catch, to be retained between 1st February and 31st March)

No other commercial bass fishing from shore is permitted with any gear.

For further information please see The Sea Fisheries (Amendment etc.) Regulations 2021 and The Sea Fisheries (Amendment etc.) (No. 2) Regulations 2021.

Recreational bass fishing

Recreational fisheries, including from shore, in ICES divisions 4b, 4c, 6a, 7a to 7k are limited to catch-and-release only during 1st February to 31st March.

From 1 January to 31st January and 1 April to 31 December not more than two seabass may be retained per fisherman per day.

In recreational fisheries in ICES divisions 8a and 8b, a maximum of two seabass may be retained per recreational fisherman per day throughout the year.

The minimum size of European seabass retained shall be 42 cm.

For further information please see The Sea Fisheries (Amendment etc.) Regulations 2021 and The Sea Fisheries (Amendment etc.) (No. 2) Regulations 2021.

No bass can be taken by fixed nets.

These rules apply if you are fishing from a boat or from the shore.

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