



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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A Guide to The Cockle Fishing Management and Permitting (Specified Area) (Wales) Order 2024

Guidance on new management rules in our managed public cockle fisheries.

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The Cockle Management and Permitting (Specified Area) (Wales) Order 2024 2024 No. 767 (W. 112)

This guidance explains how the public cockle fisheries (those not under a Regulating Order) will be managed by the Welsh Ministers. This follows the coming into force of [The Cockle Fishing Management and Permitting \(Specified Area\) \(Wales\) Order 2024](#) on 10 July 2024

1. Explanation of some terms you will find within the Order which may not be familiar to you

- *Cockles (Cerastoderma edule)* – a type of edible shellfish also called a ‘bivalve mollusc’ and can be found in sandy beaches around the world.
- *Cockle bed* - an area of sand or fine sediment where a collection of cockles is present.
- *Environmental assessment* –undertaken when a cockle bed is within an environmental protected area. The aim of the assessment is to ensure that any decision made when opening a cockle bed does not have a harmful effect on the environment.
- *Harvestable surplus* – amount of cockle available for gathering on a cockle bed, allowing for some to be left to grow on for the next year and leaving some for overwintering birds to feed on.
- *Intertidal safety training course* - a course that teaches attendees to become familiar with assessing risks, tidal information, position fixing, danger of crossing water and soft areas, commercial boat use legislation and how to request assistance in an emergency.
- *Live weight* – weight of live cockles when weighed in woven mesh sacks.
- *Relevant protected site* – a designated area where rare or important species

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live and are protected by law.

- *Single permit period* – if you are applying for a permit, you will be able to send your application any time between 1 June and 31 May the following year. You will be expected to pay the full permit fee whatever time of the year you apply. However, you will not be able to get a permit for a period of less than one month.
- *Specified area* – an area (or public fishery) which has been mentioned in the new Order where cockles are harvested for commercial reasons and is managed by us.
- *Vessel* – this refers to a vessel used to carry cockles fished for or taken from a cockle bed. (The permit conditions will explain what method of transport can be used to access and remove cockle from specific beds e.g. this may be a boat or a quad bike).
- *Daily Catch Limit* – In order to conserve stocks, it may be necessary to limit the amount of cockle permitted gatherers may take in a single day. A permit holder will be notified if this happens and how much cockle (in weight) they will be allowed to take each day.

2. When will I be able to gather cockles from a cockle fishery or cockle bed?

All public cockle fisheries managed by us will stay closed until they are officially opened. Each cockle fishery will open once it has been assessed and it is confirmed there is enough cockle available to be gathered. All permit holders will be notified prior to the opening of each fishery.

3. How are the cockle beds assessed?

At least once a year we will survey each public cockle fishery to assess the

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abundance of cockle. If there is sufficient cockle, a 'harvestable surplus' (the maximum amount that can be taken by gatherers without impacting the health of the stock or the environment) will be calculated for the fishery. This will ensure sufficient cockle is left as broodstock for future years and to feed overwintering birds.

4. How does Welsh Government know when to open a cockle fishery or cockle bed?

From the results of the survey, our officials are able to calculate when it is the best time for the cockle to be gathered. They will then open the fishery or bed once the cockle has reached the right size and there is plenty available to be gathered. Conditions will be imposed to ensure any gathering of cockles is done in a safe manner and does not impact the environment.

5. How does Welsh Government know when to close a cockle fishery or cockle bed?

There are a number of reasons why a cockle fishery or cockle bed may be closed. Normally it will be closed once all the 'harvestable surplus' has been gathered. Or it may be closed to assess whether there is a risk of taking more than the harvestable surplus. It may also need to close if there is a risk of damage to the fishery/cockle bed and surrounding environment.

6. Why do I need a permit and who can apply?

If you intend to gather cockles commercially, you will need a permit to gather on

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a public cockle fishery. A permit can be issued to anyone who has accurately filled out the application form, satisfied all the eligibility criteria and paid the fee. The permit can then be used on any of our managed public fishery that has been officially opened. Only the permit holder will be able to use the permit. It must not be used by anyone else.

7. What are permit conditions and why do I need them?

When a permit is issued, a set of rules (conditions) will be issued at the same time. These conditions will apply to each cockle fishery or cockle bed that has been officially opened. They will need to be read carefully as not all conditions will be the same, depending on the area the cockle is being gathered. All permit conditions will contain details, coordinates and maps of the area where gathering can take place and the harvestable surplus for that season. *(Please also see No.15 below)* On some occasions, it may be necessary for Welsh Government to amend the conditions due to a change in circumstances. Changes to permit conditions may include the following:

- any change in harvestable surplus
- a daily catch limit (if management has decided this is needed)
- a specified minimum landing size
- specified dates, times or tides during which fishing for and taking cockles is not permitted
- specified methods or equipment that may be used when fishing for or taking cockles
- specified means of access to the specified area or a cockle bed (for example this could mean by boat or quad bike etc depending on the area and environment surrounding the fishery)

Where possible permit holders and sometimes other stakeholders will be notified

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of any changes before they take place.

8. Who can apply for a permit?

You can apply for a permit if you:

- are aged 16 years or older
- you have attended an intertidal safety training course in the last 3 years and have received a certificate from the provider of the course
- you have not been convicted of a fishery related offence within the last 12 months. If you are under 18, you should not have been convicted of a fishery related offence within the last 6 months.

9. What information do I need to be able to complete the application for a permit?

Since June 2024 if you want to apply for a permit you will need to make an online application through the “apply for fisheries permit Wales” page. This is available at GOV.WALES. You will need to ensure you have all the information ready so you can accurately complete all parts of the application. Incomplete applications will not be processed and will be automatically deleted from the system after seven days.

Before completing the application, you will need to ensure you have the following proof to hand:

- your identity (driving licence or passport)
- your name and address (some form of identity which confirms these details e.g. utility bill)

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- number and/or certificate obtained from an intertidal safety training course.
- national Insurance number or Unique Taxpayer Reference Number (if self employed)

If you are going to use a boat to carry cockles from the cockle fishery/bed you will need the following proof:

- Vessel (Boat) Master qualification. (There are a number of qualifications you can obtain for this proof. It is best to check with the Welsh Government that your qualification will be accepted before applying).
- Information on the vessel (boat) being used, including the number of the Maritime and Coastguard Agency certificate of coding.

You will also need to ensure you are able to pay the fee online at the time of the application.

10. Why do I need to pay a fee for a permit?

The permit fee will be used to cover the cost of managing the public fisheries including any administration and scientific costs.

11. Are there any exceptions to the need to have a permit?

You do not need a permit if you are picking up to 5kg of cockle each day for your own personal consumption.

You also do not need a permit if collecting cockle for scientific purposes. However, you will need to ask our permission beforehand and provide evidence

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of the scientific need for collecting the samples of cockle.

12. What happens to the cockles if someone has been found collecting more than 5kg without a permit or permission?

The cockles will be put back as quickly and as close as possible to where they have been collected and spread thinly and evenly to ensure their survival.

13. How will I know when a cockle fishery or cockle bed is open?

There are a number of ways you can access this information – as follows:

- If you hold a permit, you may be informed via email (or other means of communication) that the fishery/cockle bed is open.
- An announcement will be published on the GOV.WALES webpage. (Permit holders have to check the webpage every day before they go to gather cockles to be sure of getting up to date information and ensure the cockle bed is open)
- A public notice will be displayed close to the cockle fishery or cockle bed giving details of the opening.

14. What are the coordinates referring to in the Order?

The coordinates refer to the 'Specified Area'. This area contains all public cockle fisheries managed by us in Wales. The Order contains details of coordinates for the following cockle fisheries:

- Three Rivers fishery (this fishery contains five cockle beds i.e. Llansteffan, Llanybri, St Ishmaels/Tanylan, Ferryside and Gwendraeth)
- Whiteford
- Burry Inlet*
- Traeth Lafan
- Traeth Melynog
- Red Wharf Bay

Maps of these areas can be found on the GOV.WALES website at: [Specified Area Maps](#)

* The Burry Inlet is currently managed by Natural Resources Wales under a Regulating Order. This Regulating Order will cease in June 2025 and the fishery will revert to a public cockle fishery and will be managed by Welsh Government. The details of the Burry Inlet have been included in the Order for this reason.

15. What is expected of me when I get my permit?

When you get your permit, you will also be sent permit conditions. You will need to read these conditions carefully as they include information which will help to ensure your safety when gathering cockle on the fisheries. The conditions will also contain the following information:

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- The need to check the website every day to ensure the cockle fishery/cockle bed is open before gathering.
- There must be NO gathering of cockles at night i.e. between half an hour after sunset on any day and half an hour before sunrise on the following day.
- When using a boat to access a cockle bed it must be less than 10 metres in length.
- If using a boat you must ensure you notify Welsh Government of any changes, e.g. new boat, new boat name, updated MCA coding information etc.
- You **MUST** submit a daily catch return. This catch return must include details of the date the cockles are gathered, the weight of the cockles gathered that day and details of the cockle bed gathered from that day.
- The type of equipment you will be allowed to use to gather the cockles from each cockle fishery/cockle bed. This may vary depending on the conditions of the fishery and local environment.

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