

MARINE AND FISHERIES OPERATIONS BRANCH REPORT

JANUARY 2018 – MARCH 2018

OPENING / CLOSING / PERMITS & AUTHORISATIONS

Andy Bradick

- The Welsh Scallop fishery remained open during the period.
 - 32 Authorisations issued to fish within the 6nm limit.
- The North Wales cockle fisheries of Traeth Melynog, Traeth Lafan and Red Wharf Bay remained open during the period.
 - 117 Permits issued.
- The Conwy Bay and Estuary Mussel fishery
 - 7 Authorisations issued 10th September.
- The Three Rivers cockle fishery, temporary closure has been extended until 31st December 2018, subject to ongoing cockle abundance assessment, to determine if there is sufficient stock to open the fishery.
- Recreational razor clam fishery at Llanfairfechan and Penmaenmawr has been temporary closed until 31st December 2018.
 - This decision was taken in light of new information from Bangor University which suggests the stock may be at risk of collapse as a result of the current levels of harvesting and in order for the commissioning, completion and review of an appropriate survey.

MAIN FISHERIES

1. Cockles

Barrie John / Greta Hughes

The North Wales cockle fisheries opened on 1 September with healthy Total Allowable Catches (TAC) at Traeth Melynog (283 tonnes), Traeth Lafan (195 tonnes) and Red Wharf Bay (59 tonnes). Activity has been centred on Traeth Melynog with 6 cocklers intermittently collecting for the live market. Approximately 9 tonnes have been removed and there have been no minimum landing size or permit issues. One gatherer was seen to take 100kg from Red Wharf Bay. No evidence of any activity was seen on Traeth Lafan.

The Three Rivers fishery has remained closed throughout the period. The beds have been subject to routine patrols which have helped prevent numerous attempts by the gatherers however there remains sporadic poaching activity. There is now a shortage of cockle and processors are actively looking for sources of cockle. Inflated prices have encouraged a recent spate of illegal activity. Several cases have been prosecuted in recent weeks with the outcomes listed at Para 20.

2. Bass

Barrie John

The TAC & Quota reg again prevented fishing for European Bass during February and March and more stringent measures have been introduced for the remainder of the year, including a reduction in the quantities allowed by the various metiers (see Para 18 below). Authorisations have again been issued to qualifying vessels for the 2018 season.

3. Crustaceans

Greta Hughes

Lobster potting increased with the deployment of more pots as the season progressed. Catches were typically intermittent and increased as the weather improved towards the end of the period. There was a good initial run of edible crab in March.

Reasonable catches were achieved in the Cardigan Bay, Llŷn and Anglesey prawn fisheries.

4. Scallops

Barrie John / Greta Hughes

Throughout the second half of the season, half a dozen vessels continued to fish the “Kaiser Box” and around the edges of the SAC within Cardigan Bay and catches remained fairly constant with an expected drop off reported in recent weeks. We did not see the influx of visiting vessels this year.

North Llŷn and North Anglesey fisheries have been confined mainly to local vessels and reasonable catches were seen. North Llŷn based vessels capable of scalloping mainly preferred to fish for whelk during the period. Visiting scallopers also landed through Holyhead.

5. Queen Scallops

Greta Hughes

Trawling for queen scallops off North Anglesey yielded satisfactory catches during the period and there is increased interest in this method of fishing. Some trawled queen scallops were landed at Aberdyfi by vessels working approximately 20 nautical miles offshore.

6. Whelks

Barrie John

Whelk fishing continues as one of our most prolific fisheries. In the first quarter of 2018, 30 Welsh vessels have been engaged in the fishery with combined landings of 634 tonnes being recorded with a value of £778,000. Along side our own vessels, we have a small number of visiting vessels which predominately fish outside the 12 mile limit. Officers have carried out numerous checks at landing and at the processors to ensure compliance with minimum landing size legislation.

ASSETS AND RESOURCES

7. Fishery Patrol Vessels

Mark Pole / Paul Rowley

RIB based enforcement patrols have been undertaken, targeting fisheries as directed by the Operations Room at Milford Haven. Crews have been undertaking training and commissioning duties on board FPV Catrin at Conwy. Vessel crews have been assisting shore based officers in intertidal and vessel landing monitoring duties where required.

8. Vessel Procurement

Craig Jones

FPV Catrin (Rapid response cabin RIB) has been delivered, undertaken extensive sea trials and now in service.

Progress on the two larger vessels is well underway and Mainstay Marine are still on target to be delivered both vessels by September 2018.

9. Review of Health and Safety

Tim Croucher

Work to implement the Divisions Health and Safety Action Plan is continuing including the further development of Risk Assessments and Safe Systems of Work. The Division has recently been audited under the BS OHSAS 18001:2007 standard and has received some positive feedback regarding the work that has been undertaken.

CONTROL AND COMPLIANCE

10. Compliance with Control Regulation

Barrie John

One significant area of work carried out during the past quarter has been our participation in the UK program on engine power verification. Article 41 of the Control Regulation requires member states to conduct regular checks on their fleets. Several Welsh vessels have been subjected to initial checks so far with no issues to report. We have also been in dialogue with several vessel owners where discrepancies in their engine power have been noted and have worked with them to resolve the issue. This will continue during 2018.

The Operations Room continues to monitor all vessel movements within the Welsh Zone via VMS technology and through electronic data submissions via the ERS hub. Ensuring that submissions are made within the required time frame continues to be a challenge and significant draw on MEO time.

11. Foreign Vessel Landings

Barrie John

The first quarter of the year traditionally sees an influx of OMS vessels as the new quota year begins. 2018 has been no exception with 48 landings by Belgian vessels. The Enforcement team have conducted several full inspections on these landings to ensure compliance with current regulations. No significant issues to report.

We have also seen a small number of landings by the Anglo Spanish sector as vessels look to make Licence Condition Visits, again a number have been subjected to full compliance checks.

12. Fish Buyers Inspections

Barrie John

We have continued to work with industry to ensure the smooth delivery into the new Electronic Hub for sales note submission process. Officers continue to make regular visits to main fish/shellfish buyers to ensure compliance with this statutory obligation and offer help and guidance where required. As there are a significant number of small scale occasional buyers within Wales and officers have prioritised calls to these around other operational priorities.

13. Marine Licencing

Phil Marshall

The first quarter of the year is always a seasonally busy time as coastal communities make preparations for the spring and summer season. The most notable work which takes place at this time is the dredging of ports, harbours and marinas before stakeholders put their boats in the water. The dredging process is helped by the exceptionally low tides around the spring equinox. Ports with marine licences for this work include Conwy, Aberystwyth, Tenby, Saundersfoot, Neyland Marina and New Quay. The large deep water ports of Holyhead and Milford Haven have also been licensed for maintenance dredging.

Renewable energy work also requires marine licences, particularly so in the Pembrokeshire Demonstration Zone a 90 square kilometre area approximately 10 miles south of Pembrokeshire where it is hoped to site various test devices for generating electricity. Other similar test sites are also under consideration closer to the coast and in Milford Haven waterway. These sites may be competing with commercial fishing grounds and navigable routes for shipping highlighting the importance of marine planning. With the completion and delivery of new Welsh Government offshore patrol vessels coinciding with Welsh Ministers taking responsibility for marine licensing in the offshore region (beyond the 12 mile limit) we hope to do more seagoing inspections and monitoring in the future.

14. Project work

Tim Croucher

Export Catch Certificates

The Marine and Fisheries Division alongside the other Devolved Administrations are preparing for Day 1 readiness in relation to the export of fisheries products from the UK to European Member states. Assuming the UK will become a 3rd country upon EU exit there will be a requirement for export certificates to accompany fisheries products when being exported to the EU. The current demand for these certificates is low and relies on a paper based system however following EU exit the demand for this documentation will significantly increase to a level where it is not feasible to continue managing in the current format. The UK Government and Devolved Administrations are developing an operational policy and system so that exporters of fish and fish products will be able to obtain catch

certificates for export to EU countries after exit. The Welsh Government is closely involved in this work, is involving Welsh exporters in user research and testing, and will communicate and support the industry to prepare for change

EMFF- Control and Enforcement

The Marine and Fisheries Division has now received approval to proceed at risk in relation to their European Maritime and Fisheries Fund Control and Enforcement application submitted in January. Work is now underway on a number of projects both working individually and collaboratively with other Devolved Administrations. Specific projects which are currently being progressed include:-

- **Inshore Vessel monitoring system** - To be rolled out to the U12m fleet. Further consultation with the industry will be carried out as the project progresses. A formal consultation is expected in the Autumn.
- **Under 10m Catch recording** - As well as providing valuable data to assist with the sustainable management of stocks within Wales this project may also be critical to facilitate trade with the EU following EU exit. Export Catch Certificates (mentioned above) may be reliant on the availability of up to date catch information before they can be generated. Further consultation with the industry will be carried out as the project progresses. A formal consultation is expected in the Autumn.
- **Marine Enforcement Officers Mobile working** - Developing IT and communication systems to assist MEOs working in the field.
- **Vessel Monitoring System UK Hub replacement** - Replacement of platform for the viewing of VMS data which will take into account the increased demands following the implementation of inshore vessel monitoring systems.

In addition to the above work streams the Operations branch are also engaged in further projects managed at a UK level to investigate solutions for Aerial Surveillance as well as developing Innovative Technological Solutions for Sea Fisheries Control and Enforcement.

DIRECT ENFORCEMENT

15. Investigations & Prosecutions

Barrie John

As mentioned elsewhere, significant progress has been made during the past quarter in clearing cases through the magistrates courts.

The current picture is that we now have 20 live Investigations underway. Of these, 4 are due to be heard at Haverfordwest Magistrates at the end of May. A further 9 have been submitted for consideration and 7 are currently being worked on by MEO's.

Work continues on the move to introduce Fixed Administrative penalties and it is hoped that a consultation on this will be launched in the near future.

FLEET MANAGEMENT

16. Vessel Licencing

Barrie John

The licencing of Welsh Fishing Industry remains a key priority. We currently licence 28 >10m and 383 <10m vessels. We have continued to see delays with registration which in turn impacts on our ability to licence vessels in a timely manner. We continue to support our industry by ensuring those affected are able to work while these delays are resolved.

There were 129 licence transactions carried out over the last quarter, 17 of which were licence dis-aggregations.

17. Quota Management

Mike Jones

Following agreement on 2018 allocations amongst the 4 UK administrations the Quota team have been negotiating for extra quota with the POs and the MMO for the under Welsh under 10m fleet. Overall Welsh under 10m vessels have access to equal if not more monthly quota for a number of key species than their English counterparts. We are currently negotiating for extra plaice, sole, cod and skates and ray in our coastal waters.

18. Sea bass

The original proposal from ICES and the European Commission to ban all catches of sea bass was rejected at December Council and following very difficult negotiations annual catch limits for hook and line fisheries annual and an unavoidable by-catch allowances for gill nets for 2018 were agreed. Although these will be lower than those set last year the limits agreed were made despite very strong opposition and the scientific advice that the bass stock in the wider European waters continues to be in a very serious position.

The following catch restrictions for quantities of Sea bass unavoidably caught by commercial vessels will apply in 2018:

- Using demersal trawls – a maximum of 100 kilograms per month and 1% of the weight of the total catches of marine organisms on board in any single day.
- Using seine nets – a maximum of 180 kilograms per month and 1% of the weight of the total catches of marine organisms on board in any single day.
- Using hooks and lines – a maximum of 5 tonnes per vessel per year.
- Using fixed gillnets – a maximum of 1200 kgs per vessel per year.

In all recreational fisheries, including angling from shore, only catch-and-release fishing for Sea bass shall be allowed. However, at the December Council the European Commission gave a specific undertaking for a review of the Sea bass stock assessment to be complete by the end of March of this year. Once the outcome of the re-evaluation is known the Welsh Government will publish an update on its website. No update has been issued by Brussels.

19. **Wrasse**

Mike Jones

Please see Emerging fisheries in the summary of key work streams.

20. **Prosecutions**

Barrie John

The past quarter has seen substantial progress in the progression of investigation files through the courts. There have been 17 cases taken all with Guilty Pleas which is testament the quality of the investigations undertaken. Cases have covered a broad spectrum of different fisheries covering EU, UK and Welsh legislation. A summary is included for your information:

Name of Vessel or Defendant	Offence Committed	Total for case
Providing Star - FD366	Scallop fishing in a prohibited area	£20,643.5
Providing Star – FD366	Scallop fishing in a prohibited area	£27,243.5
Michael Hough	Gathering cockles from a closed bed	£4,670
Brian Arthur – M50	Retention of lobsters below minimum size	£2080
Anne Marie B – FD536	Illegal fishing within the six mile limit	£12,630
Searcher - unreg	Byelaw 30 – excess lobsters plus undersized crabs.	£320
Terry Butchers, Ryan Butchers, Joshua Harry, Luke Dark, Stefan Swistun	Gathering cockles from a closed bed	£6766
Our Heritage – MT127	Illegal scallop fishing within Welsh 6 mile limit	£11,740
Bonnie Lass III – MT126	Illegal scallop fishing within Welsh 6 mile limit	£10,740
Celtic – M509	Landing undersized whelk	£1,824
Karima – N96	Celtic Sea offences	£7,328
Mathew Dean	Removal of cockles from a closed bed	£2,029
Steffan Gibbon	Removal of cockles from a closed bed	£2,229
Simon Harding	Removal of cockles from a closed bed	£2,029
Chad White	Removal of cockles from a closed bed	£2,029
James Davies	Removal of cockles from a closed bed	£2,029
David Thomas	Removal of cockles from a closed bed	£2,029

Further dates are set with the Magistrates in late May for 4 further cases.

21. **Web Pages**

Marged Jones

- The structure and content of the *Sea Fisheries* section of the *Marine and Fisheries* web pages are being reviewed with an aim to improve accessibility to key information.
- The [Llanfairfechan and Penmaenmawr Razor Clam Fishery](#) page has been updated to reflect the extended closure.

Appendix 1. Fisheries Operations Performance Indicators for January 2018 – April 2018

Work Area	Activity	January 2018	February	March 2018	April 2018
Enforcing Marine Fisheries legislation	Patrols at sea	0	0	3	1
	Inspections at sea	0	0	9	2
	Inspections in port	19	9	4	9
	Ports visited	72	54	60	41
	RBS checks	5	3	5	12
Investigating Marine Fisheries Crime	Infringements detected	0	2	1	0
	New investigations	0	2	1	0
	Live investigations	32	34	35	23
	OWW	0	0	0	0
	Successful prosecutions	5	0	11	0
Enforcing the Marine Licensing regime	Active Marine Licenses	82	89	92	95
	% of Marine Licenses Checked	3	5	9	10
	Infringements	0	0	0	0
	Live Investigations	0	0	0	0

