

MARINE AND FISHERIES

MARINE USER STAKEHOLDER UPDATE

NOVEMBER 2019

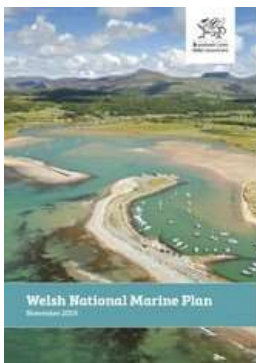
Introduction

The Wales Marine Action and Advisory group (WMAAG) provides a forum for discussion and debate, and the provision of support and advice to the Welsh Government, on strategic marine and coastal policy. It is the overarching stakeholder group for the work of the Marine and Fisheries Division of the Welsh Government, sitting alongside the Welsh Marine Fisheries Advisory Group (WMFAG), the lead Welsh Government fisheries industry forum in Wales.

The WMAAG is comprised of 33 stakeholder leads who represent the interests of all sectors with an interest or investment in the Marine in Wales. Details of sectors and lead organisations can be found within the group's [Terms of Reference](#).

This publication is an update from the Welsh Government Marine and Fisheries Division.

Welsh National Marine Plan



On 12 November Lesley Griffiths AM, Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs published the first ever [Welsh National Marine Plan](#), setting out our vision for the sustainable development of our seas over the next 20 years. The plan was published on the tenth anniversary of the Marine and Coastal Access Act which set the legislation for Marine Planning in the UK.

We also published a number of supporting documents with the plan:

- [Habitats Regulation Assessment](#) - An independent report to understand how our marine plan might affect wildlife.
- [Sustainability Appraisal](#) - An independent report to ensure our marine plan meets sustainability and well-being goals.

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- [Summary of changes following consultation](#) - Lists the changes made to the draft WNMP following the consultation.
- We've also updated our [Marine Planning portal](#) which presents the best available evidence for the Marine Plan area.



Focus will now be on implementing the plan and we are producing a suite of documents to support implementation including implementation guidance and a monitoring and reporting framework. Now the plan is published, Relevant Public Authorities (RPAs) must have regard of it when taking any decisions affecting the Welsh National Marine Plan Area (WNMPA), and all authorisation and enforcement decisions must be taken in accordance with it. We have set up a [Marine Planning Decision Maker's Group](#) to help RPAs consider how they might meet their statutory responsibilities (for example, for decisions taken on land or across borders that may affect the UK marine area), and in doing so enable the effective, efficient, timely and consistent implementation of the Marine Plan.

We would again like to thank members of WMMAG for their invaluable input throughout the planning process. Since consultation ended in March 2018 and we have worked closely with key stakeholders to ensure the plan is fit for purpose and we were pleased to have such positive feedback from stakeholders since the plan adoption.

[Sign up to our newsletter](#) to hear more about the plan and keep updated on progress.

UK Marine Strategy

Following a consultation earlier in the year, the updated UK Marine Strategy Part One has now been published. The strategy provides the latest assessment of Good Environmental Status (GES) in our seas.



The strategy covers 15 environmental components from marine biodiversity to marine litter and includes a range of targets and indicators which are used to measure the assessment of GES.

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The latest assessment offered the opportunity to revise and introduce more robust targets and indicators to support achievement of GES and to take into consideration specific environmental and human pressures.

Work to update part two of the strategy (monitoring programme) has begun and is expected to be published late 2020.

A link to the UK Marine Strategy Part One can be found here – <https://gov.wales/uk-marine-strategy>

Aligned with the publication of the strategy is the development of the Marine Online Access Tool (MOAT). This website underpins the UK marine strategy assessments and provides a comprehensive overview of each indicator and methodologies used. This website was produced collaboratively between each administration and we believe this to be the only kind in Europe, specifically focussing on the strategy. It is anticipated that this website will remain regularly updated as and when new information becomes available.

We would encourage members to view this website - <https://moat.cefas.co.uk/>

Any questions please contact – Mark Bloomfield (Mark.bloomfield@gov.wales)

Marine Biodiversity and Conservation

MPA Management

At the beginning of August 2019, the MPA Management Steering Group published the 2019-2020 Action Plan. The plan contains 25 prioritised actions for delivery by Management Authorities and partner organisations that can improve management of the MPA network and, therefore, improve or maintain network condition. Delivery of the actions in the previous Action Plan (2018-2019), including their reported outputs and outcomes was detailed in the published 2018-2019 Annual Report. WMAAG members were sent an email (01 August) to bring the publication of these documents, along with a Ministerial Written Statement, to their attention. A three month Call for Actions for the next Action Plan (2020-2021) was opened 13 November at the inaugural WMAAG Marine Resilience Sub-group meeting.

Web Links to MPA Network Management Action Plan 2019-2020:

<https://gov.wales/marine-protected-area-network-management-action-plan-2019-2020>

Web Links to MPA Network Management 2018-2019 Annual Report:

https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-07/marine-protected-area-network-management-annual-report_0.pdf

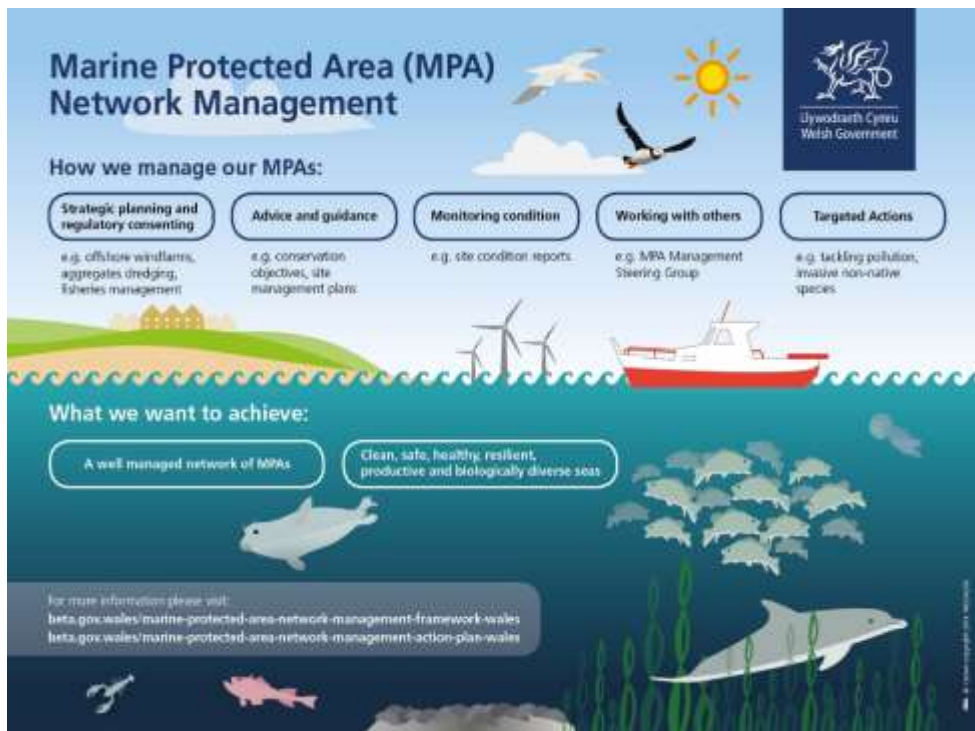
A note of the last MPA Management Steering Group meeting held 02 October 2019 is available on the Welsh Government website:

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<https://gov.wales/marine-protected-area-mpa-management-steering-group-2-october-2019>

A note of the first Marine Conservation Zone Task and Finish Group meeting 09 April 2019 is available on the Welsh Government website:

<https://gov.wales/marine-conservation-zone-task-and-finish-group-9-april-2019>



UK Seabird Bycatch Plan of Action

A UK Seabird Bycatch Plan of Action is being developed by UK Governments, SNCBs and stakeholders. A UK stakeholder workshop organised by JNCC was due to be held in London 20 November 2019 but has been postponed due to the Pre-Election Period. This will be rescheduled, along with further engagement, with a view to publish the Plan of Action next year. WMAAG members who are interested in being involved & not had communication from JNCC, please contact Wendy Dodds: wendy.dodds@gov.wales

UK Dolphin and Porpoise Conservation Strategy Consultation

The UK Dolphin and Porpoise Conservation Strategy was due to be going to a public consultation at the end of November. The consultation is being led by Marine Scotland on behalf of the UK administrations and SNCBs, and was due to run for a period of 14 weeks.

As Marine Scotland were unable to gain sign off by UK Ministers prior to the dissolution of Parliament for the upcoming election, the consultation is now delayed until after the general election.

The strategy has been developed in collaboration with all the UK authorities and is designed to ensure effective management and to achieve and/or maintain favourable conservation status for the nine most commonly found cetacean species in UK waters. These are:

- Harbour porpoise
- Short-beaked common dolphin
- Atlantic white-sided dolphin
- Bottlenose dolphin
- White-beaked dolphin
- Risso's dolphin
- Killer whale
- Long-finned pilot whale
- Minke whale

WMAAG Marine Resilience Sub Group

The WMAAG Marine Resilience Sub-group held its inaugural meeting on the 13 November at the Welsh Government offices in Aberystwyth.

The Group covered two major topics for its first convening:

- **MPA Network Management – Developing the next action plan**

During the MPA Network Management section, stakeholders learned about the process used by the MPA Management Steering Group to score and prioritise actions to be included in the annual Action Plan.

Attendees participated in a group exercise in which they applied the scoring and prioritisation process to a hypothetical scenario to gain a better understanding of the process and help strengthen actions that might wish to submit in the future.

Following this, a three-month Call for Actions for the next MPA Network Management Plan 2020-2021 was opened for stakeholders to submit actions. The Call for Action will close on the 17th January 2020. Please note the Call for Actions has since been circulated to the whole of WMAAG. Any questions on the Call for Actions, please contact Wendy Dodds, Welsh Government: wendy.dodds@gov.wales.

- **SoNaRR 2**

During this session, stakeholders heard about the upcoming timetable for the 2019 Interim Report and SoNaRR 2 due 2020; and the role for stakeholders to engage in the process was discussed.

The 2019 Interim Report will contain emerging key messages from Sustainable Management of Natural Resources (SMNR) evidence work, including Area Statements; newly identified evidence gaps; and plans for dealing with gaps in evidence needs. It will be published on NRW's website, via printable, accessible webpages, using clear and engaging language.

SoNaRR 2 will include: current state and trends; future changes; assessment of how SMNR is being achieved; assessment priorities and opportunities for action; outcome indicators for SMNR; and Assessment of biodiversity.

During the session, the role for stakeholders to contribute to the assessment of SMNR in the marine ecosystem was discussed and explored. Roundtable discussions then covered 2 areas:

1. **Ecosystem state and trends**; Pressures, threats, issues and future prospects, Assessment of state, trends and future prospects, Assessment of ecosystem resilience considering extent, condition, connectivity and diversity
2. **Ecosystem services for well-being**; Assessment: Towards a Circular economy with more efficient use of natural resources, Assessment: Healthy places for people, protected from environmental risks

Further collaboration and engagement on these topics, and SoNaRR2 more widely, will continue. Any questions on the presentation and how to engage, please contact Dan Crook, Natural Resources Wales: daniel.crook@cyfoethnaturiolcymru.gov.uk.

Fisheries Policy and Management

In September 2019, we realigned our staff resources in the Marine and Fisheries Division to enable us to better deal with priority work areas. As part of this we have consolidated our domestic Fisheries Policy and Fisheries Management capability in one branch. The new branch will cover the following areas:

- Domestic Fisheries Policy and Legislation
- Permitted Fishery Management
- Freshwater Fisheries Policy
- Aquaculture Policy and Several Orders

For the marine fisheries work areas shown above, in the first instance the focus of the new branch will be to deliver current fisheries policy priorities. In addition, we will build on the substantial improvements we have made in the way permitted fisheries are managed over the last 2 years. In the longer term, we will develop a strategic approach to the delivery of all our fisheries policy and management work areas to ensure we sustainably manage our natural resources.

A key part of this work will be the introduction of flexible fisheries management measures which can be adapted in response to changes in stock levels and environmental conditions. These flexible powers will allow Ministers to bring forward legislation to introduce authorisations with associated conditions for specific fisheries where managers can control catches, numbers of boats, areas fished or other aspects of the fishery in response to changes in circumstances and evidence.

Over the next quarter we will be integrating the different work areas of the new branch into one business plan.

Whelk - Officials are continuing to work with lawyers to draft a further statutory instrument (SI) needed to manage Wales' whelk fisheries.

Fixed Administrative Penalties (FAPs) – New FAP legislation introduced March 2019, applies to EU and UK offences, increasing maximum penalty to £10k.

Assessing Welsh Fisheries Activities – management of mobile fishing gears on sensitive EMS habitats. WG management proposals are being developed for consultation in early summer 2020.

Cockle Management Plan – Policy area is to improve cockle management in Wales. Consultation expected in early 2020.

Fisheries Science and Evidence

As of 2nd September 2019 we realigned our staff resources in the Marine and Fisheries Division to enable us to better deal with priority work areas. As part of this

we have consolidated our Fisheries Science and Evidence capabilities in to one branch.

The new branch will cover the following areas:

- **Conduct Operational Fisheries Science** (opening and closing fisheries);
- **Provide Science-Policy Advice** (EU Exit, fisheries policy, quota negotiations, Several Orders, HRAs and dispensations/exemptions);
- **Address Fisheries Science and Evidence gaps** (contracting and coordinating data collection on priority Welsh marine fisheries and fishing grounds); and
- **Attend Relevant Fisheries Science and Evidence Forums** (to ensure Welsh evidence needs are represented at a regional, UK and international-level).

For the work areas shown above, the focus of the new branch will be to develop a Fisheries Evidence Plan that aligns with the recently published Welsh Marine Evidence Strategy 2019-2025, and establish an Evidence Contract Framework, whilst continuing delivering existing fisheries science-policy priorities. The current policy priorities are varied encompassing domestic, national and international fisheries management and policy, aquaculture policy and future funding schemes.

In addition, we are working closely with the Marine Science and Evidence team to discuss how we can develop an Evidence Governance Board to oversee and review future evidence plans and projects. In the longer term, we are working with colleagues across the Marine and Fisheries Division, to develop a long view of emerging and expanding fishing opportunities to ensure that the appropriate fisheries science and evidence is available when needed to support policy development and decision-making.

Over the next quarter we will be integrating the work areas of the new branch into a business plan, delivery operational science and science-policy advice as detailed above and developing the, currently marine, Fisheries Evidence Plan to include the priority evidence needs for freshwater and diadromous fish, and Welsh aquaculture. Once approved by the minister, we would welcome feedback from members on the delivery of this plan and the projects entailed.

£2.4m additional funding and EMFF Successor Scheme

Welsh Government officials are developing a standalone complementary scheme using the £2.4m additional funding, however there is a need to be mindful of what is currently available through EMFF but not being utilised.

EMFF successor Scheme

The current European Maritime Fisheries Fund (EMFF) is a European funding project to support fisheries and Aquaculture, its programme started in 2014 and is due to end December 2020. It is Welsh Government's intention to replace this scheme with a domestic programme which will continue to support the fishing and aquaculture industries in Wales.

Welsh Government officials are currently gathering evidence to use as a basis for proposals for a new scheme. Officials will use this evidence to develop proposals and then engage with the industry via formal public consultation planned for early next year. We will need to consider the degree of integration of any new scheme in Wales with other parts of the UK. There will also need to be consideration of scope and targeting of support.

Control & Enforcement Brexit challenge

When the UK leaves the European Union and becomes a Coastal State, there will be a number of challenges to overcome to ensure we are properly prepared to manage our seas and support our industry to continue to trade. While negotiations will govern a significant role in where our fleets, and EU fleets are able to fish, access to primary data such as VMS and Elogs could be disrupted. This would leave us vulnerable to incursions by fishing vessels from third countries going undetected.



We foresee that the main control and enforcement challenges in relation to Brexit will be encountered at sea and a considerable amount of work is being undertaken to ensure our at sea assets are prepared and ready to react. This has included the recruitment of additional resource to ensure the vessels can get to sea.

Plans have also been developed to manage this risk by coordinating assets held by Welsh Government, other Fisheries Administrations and enforcement partners to ensure we have a cohesive UK approach to policing our seas.

We have been successful in securing a significant amount of additional staffing resource to deal with the Control and Enforcement challenges which will arise as a result of EU Exit. This includes a number of additional Marine Enforcement Officers which will be operational throughout the coast.

Fisheries and Brexit

All the latest news on Brexit for the Fisheries Trade and Industry can be found in the Brexit Bulletin. These bulletins are available on our website or you can subscribe to receive directly to your inbox.

<https://gov.wales/subscribe-fisheries-and-brexit-bulletin>

Future Fisheries Policy – Brexit and Our Seas

- The Brexit and our Seas consultation closed on the 21st August. Thank you for the responses we received from members of this group.
- We received 57 responses in total with a wide range of views. We are considering the responses and the Minister will be making a statement later in the autumn.

UK Fisheries Bill

- The UK Fisheries Bill was included in the last Queen's speech, however, following the announcement of a UK General Election we await the formation of a new UK Government which will need to set out its legislative agenda in due course. We would expect to see a UK Fisheries Bill taken forward by the next incoming UK Government.
- Our red line on the UK Fisheries Bill remains the extension of the legislative competence of the Assembly in matters relating to fishing, fisheries or fish health to the Welsh offshore region. This will enable us to bring forward a comprehensive Wales Fisheries Bill for Wales and the Welsh zone.
- We continue to work with colleagues from across the UK to put in place a UK framework which acknowledges the devolved nature of fisheries management and supports the sustainable fisheries.

EU Exit Legislation

- Fisheries is managed through a large number of very detailed and complex EU regulations. It is important that rug isn't pulled from under the industry on day 1. Therefore a huge legislative programme has been undertaken to ensure we have a functioning legislative framework when we exit the EU, minimising disruption as far as possible.

Seafood Crisis Intervention Scheme:

In the aftermath of a no deal Brexit, the imposition of tariff and non-tariff barriers on the Welsh food industry is expected to severely disrupt trade in fishery products. The Welsh fishing industry is particularly vulnerable. Over 80% of fish exports from Wales to the EU are shellfish products. The industry is based on a 48 hour turnaround time for live and fresh produce. Therefore, any delays in getting produce to market could have an immediate and catastrophic impact on what are mainly micro and small businesses with little resilience to financial shocks.

Welsh Government have worked with Defra and the other Devolved Administrations to develop a financial intervention scheme for the fisheries sector that will provide a contribution towards the working capital of vessel owners during a period of market disturbance as a result of a no deal Brexit.

COMMON FISHERIES POLICY

Landing Obligation/Discard Plan

[Joint Recommendation \(JR\) from the North West Waters Regional Group.](#)

The EU Commission have now produced a draft Delegated Regulation which reflect the scientific review of the NWW JR undertaken by the Scientific and Technical Evaluation Committee for Fisheries (STECF).

The Commission has taken exception to a number of exemptions, either novel or extensions of those already established, proposed by Member States following STECF advice where the evidence, in their opinion does not meet previously agreed standards or extent and where, according to the Commission, sufficient progress in the implementation of the Landing Obligation is not achieved. Member States are faced with the prospect of a complete rejection of the JR and so the Commission requirements have been accepted.

In the event a final draft of the Delegated Regulation emerges in time for the WMFAG meeting, it will be included in the papers.

By Catch Reduction Plan (BCRP)

Members may recall that, in the face of zero-catch advice for five stocks in the NWW region, namely Celtic Sea Cod, Whiting and Plaice plus Irish Sea Whiting and West of Scotland Cod, at the EU Council in 2018 the agreement to allow quotas to be set to allow bycatches and avoid 'choke' scenarios required the establishment of a BCRP for the stocks concerned.

Whilst Welsh fishers have peripheral involvement in the fisheries concerned, where we do hold fishing opportunities, we will need to be vigilant to ensure our local, sustainable fishing practices which do not generate bycatches, are not unreasonably impinged upon by alternative proposals brought forward.

Technical Conservation Measures



The new Technical Conservation Measures Regulation (EU) 2019/1241 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on the conservation of fisheries resources and the protection of marine ecosystems through technical measures entered into force in **July 2019**. For clarification to WMFAG members the prohibition on berried lobsters and crawfish only applies in the Mediterranean.

A link to the Regulation can be found at:

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32019R1241&from=EN>

Control Regulation

Discussion continues on the Commission proposals. The level of concern/opposition within Member States regarding the details has effectively delayed progress in 2019. It is hoped the new Finnish Presidency will be able to restore momentum and some clarification may emerge in the autumn.

European Fish Quotas for 2020 and the UK Approach

The policy currently taken by the UK administrations in their approach to all discussions and negotiations related to the CFP is that we have a role to play in the decision making process and therefore until such time as we leave the EU we will undertake daily business as usual.

To that extent we continue to contribute to the UK position on the key quota issues of the following:

- The lead in to the 2019 EU December Fisheries Council
- Discussions on quota and catching opportunities for 2020
- The EU Landing Obligation and the Discard plans in North West Waters for 2020 and beyond

Welsh Quota uptake in 2019

It appears the quota allocations allocated to the Welsh Government at the beginning of the year (and the numerous swaps made to bring in extra quota) will allow Welsh under 10m vessels to fish all species until the end of the year.

Proposals for 2020

ICES have produced their 2020 advice for the major commercial species and the overall situation is favourable for Wales for its key species.

Substantial increases for sole and plaice in both the Irish Sea and Bristol Channel areas are likely with a probable roll over for pollack. Unfortunately cod and whiting stocks continue to crash and so fishing for these will be very restricted with the potential for zero quota (except for a very small by catch) for these species. Haddock will only fare marginally better.

There is no indication the Commission will ease the current prohibition on catches of spurdogs.

Sea Bass fishing in 2020

The ICES advice for 2020* has been issued and the stock remains in a poor state with the Spawning Stock Biomass (SSB) still below what is regarded as a satisfactorily safe level. Additionally we will consider supporting a reassessment of seasonal closures and 'bag limits' for recreational anglers.

The ICES advice does seem to indicate a conservative 7.8% increase of the total EU catch for 2020 which is mainly due to above-average recruitment in 2013 and 2014. We continue to receive reports of an abundance of juvenile bass in Welsh inshore waters this year. Sea bass does not fall under the landing obligation so undersized fish or catches taken in excess of current restrictions can be discarded.

ENDS