



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government



Marine Planning Technical Statement Recreational Boating – Sector Safeguarding

March 2023



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Introduction

The Welsh National Marine Plan (WNMP, <https://gov.wales/welsh-national-marine-plan-document>) provides a statutory policy framework to help guide decision making for the sustainable development of our seas. It sets out the Welsh Government’s vision and objectives for the Welsh marine plan area and policies to support their achievement. The Plan is supported by supplementary Implementation Guidance ([https://gov.wales/welsh-national-marine-plan-](https://gov.wales/welsh-national-marine-plan-implementation-guidance)

[implementation-guidance](https://gov.wales/welsh-national-marine-plan-implementation-guidance)) providing further detail on WNMP policies to help ensure their effective and consistent implementation.

The WNMP includes sector supporting and safeguarding policies for certain sectors which use Welsh seas. Supporting policies support the sustainable development of a sector. Safeguarding policies protect sector interests from inappropriate impacts from other activities.

Purpose of this Marine Planning Technical Statement

This Marine Planning Technical Statement is intended to support the effective and consistent implementation of WNMP safeguarding policy for recreational boating, as one of the key recreational activities taking place within the WNMP area. It should be read alongside the WNMP and the WNMP Implementation Guidance. Where there may be uncertainty over the requirements or implementation of the WNMP or any of its policies, decision makers should refer to the WNMP for the definitive policy wording and intent.

This Technical Statement should be used by parties involved in decision making with the potential to affect the marine plan area, for example:

- Project applicants;
- Public authority decision makers including marine and terrestrial planning authorities and regulators; and
- Other users of the marine plan area.

This Technical Statement also provides context for all marine plan area users to understand areas of importance to the interests of the recreational boating sector, which are safeguarded through WNMP policy. It sits alongside other non-statutory and plan-related policy, guidance and evidence, supporting marine planning for Wales, and may be updated periodically.

Tourism and Recreation – Recreational Boating

The WNMP recognises that tourism and recreation play a significant role in Wales’s economy and are fundamental to the economy of many of our coastal areas. It also recognises the significant health and well-being benefits which recreational activities in the coastal and marine environment can provide.

The Tourism and Recreation sector, as defined in the WNMP, is varied and diverse, covering recreational free-time leisure activities undertaken in the local environment, as well as encompassing activities, services and infrastructure associated with visitors and holidaymakers. Recreational boating forms an important part of the Tourism and Recreation sector and is an important recreational activity in the Welsh marine plan area, contributing to the overall character of our marine environment.

Recreational boating is also integral to many coastal communities, with Wales being home to approximately 90 clubs and training centres. There are notable clusters of clubs and training centres around Cardiff and Barry, the Swansea Bay area, Pembrokeshire, the Llyn Peninsula, Anglesey and the North Wales coast. Royal Yachting Association (RYA) General Boating Areas (sea areas identified for sailing, racing and other recreational activities) are associated with the clubs and training centres. The waters adjacent

to the Welsh coast are also valued for long distance sailing (cruising). Automatic Identification System (AIS) data, for craft of 20-25 metres and above, shows intensity of use along the Pembrokeshire coast and Milford Haven, the Llyn Peninsula, within Swansea and Cardiff Bays, together with the area north of Anglesey and the Menai Strait. A similar distribution is indicated for smaller recreational craft, such as dinghies and day sailing boats, by the RYA SafeTrx phone app data.

Safeguarding Policy SAF_01

Safeguarding for the Tourism and Recreation sector, including recreational boating activity, is provided through WNMP Policy SAF_01b, which relates to existing activity. Harbours and marinas, including those important to recreational boating activity, are safeguarded through WNMP Policy SAF_01a, as part of the Ports and Shipping sector. This Technical Note covers recreational boating activity only.

Policy SAF_01b is designed to ensure that existing activities are clearly and systematically taken into account in marine decision making, including with respect to any new proposals with potential to adversely impact upon them. Although activities such as recreational boating are mobile and temporary, it is important that they are carefully considered in decision making and that any needless or unacceptable displacement of the activity is avoided.

Policy SAF_01b recognises that, in some cases, significant adverse impact(s) upon established use may be unavoidable. In such instances, the policy establishes a hierarchy requiring proposals considered likely to have significant adverse impact(s) upon an established activity

to demonstrate how they will address any compatibility issues. If this is not possible, developers will be required to submit a clear and convincing case, when seeking authorisation for their proposed project, to justify proceeding with their proposals.

Submission of a case for proceeding does not mean that a proposal will be supported. It is at the discretion of the decision maker, when making a decision, to weigh up any case for proceeding (and the contribution of the proposal to other targets such as economic or social benefits) against the potential adverse impacts of the proposal and other relevant policies and legislation. Proportionate and rational application of the policy will help the recreational boating sector thrive alongside other activities and uses for the benefit of current and future generations.

SAF_01b: Safeguarding existing activity

Proposals likely to have significant adverse impacts upon an established activity not subject to a formal authorisation must demonstrate how they will address compatibility issues with that activity.

Proposals unable to demonstrate adequate compatibility must present a clear and convincing case for proceeding.

Under SAF 01b, compatibility should be demonstrated through, in order of preference:

- Avoiding significant adverse impacts on those activities, and/or
- Minimising significant adverse impacts where these cannot be avoided; and/or
- Mitigating significant adverse impacts where they cannot be minimised.

Recreational Boating safeguarding: Policy SAF_01b

Policy SAF_01b applies to all proposals from all sectors (including new Tourism and Recreation sector proposals) with the potential to impact upon **existing recreational boating activity**.

Proposals for marine activities and development should consider their potential impacts on recreational boating. These may include risks related to:

- Navigational safety, including effects on small craft navigation and communication equipment and increased collision risk of vessels with fixed structures or gear associated with the operation of a marine activity; and
- Impacts on access to navigational and cruising routes, general boating and racing areas, potential displacement of recreational boating into commercial routes, loss of anchorages or ports of refuge.

Whilst most tourism and recreation activity takes place within 3nm of the coast and some activity may be seasonal in nature, a number of more experienced sailors regularly operate further offshore all year round when weather conditions allow. These users value these areas highly, and applicants and decision makers will also need to take activities such as these into account. It should

be noted that long distance cruising routes across the Irish Sea and Bristol Channel converge in offshore areas (3-10nm) off of Pembrokeshire, Swansea Bay, Anglesey and to a lesser extent the Llyn Peninsula.

Proposals should take into account the safety, nature, intensity and value of established recreational activity in the proposed development area and the implications of any likely interruption or displacement, with an emphasis on both commercially and recreationally important activities, the extent to which the effects are cumulative or interacting and on their permanence. Proposals that have a potential negative impact on navigational safety are likely to require a formal Navigation Risk Assessment (NRA) to ensure appropriate consideration can be given to the potential impact of a proposal.

When a proposal has the potential to impact on recreational boating activity or supporting areas, the applicant is strongly encouraged to engage with relevant sector operators and their representative groups, for example the [RYA](#) and clubs adjacent to General Boating Areas, at the earliest stages of concept, planning and design.

The RYA has produced a number of resources to assist developers and decision makers to identify and understand potential impacts of proposed development on recreational boating activity and to minimise or mitigate potential adverse impacts.

The [UK Coastal Atlas of Recreational Boating](#) presents areas of importance to recreational boating, which can be used by developers in designing new development proposals and in discussions over navigational safety. This Atlas presents a GIS dataset of recreational boating activity around the UK, comprising spatial data including indicators of intensity of boating activity in coastal waters, general boating areas, offshore routes, as well as the locations of clubs, training centres and marinas. Datasets from the UK Coastal Atlas of Recreational Boating relating to the Welsh marine plan area can be viewed on the [Wales Marine Planning Portal](#).

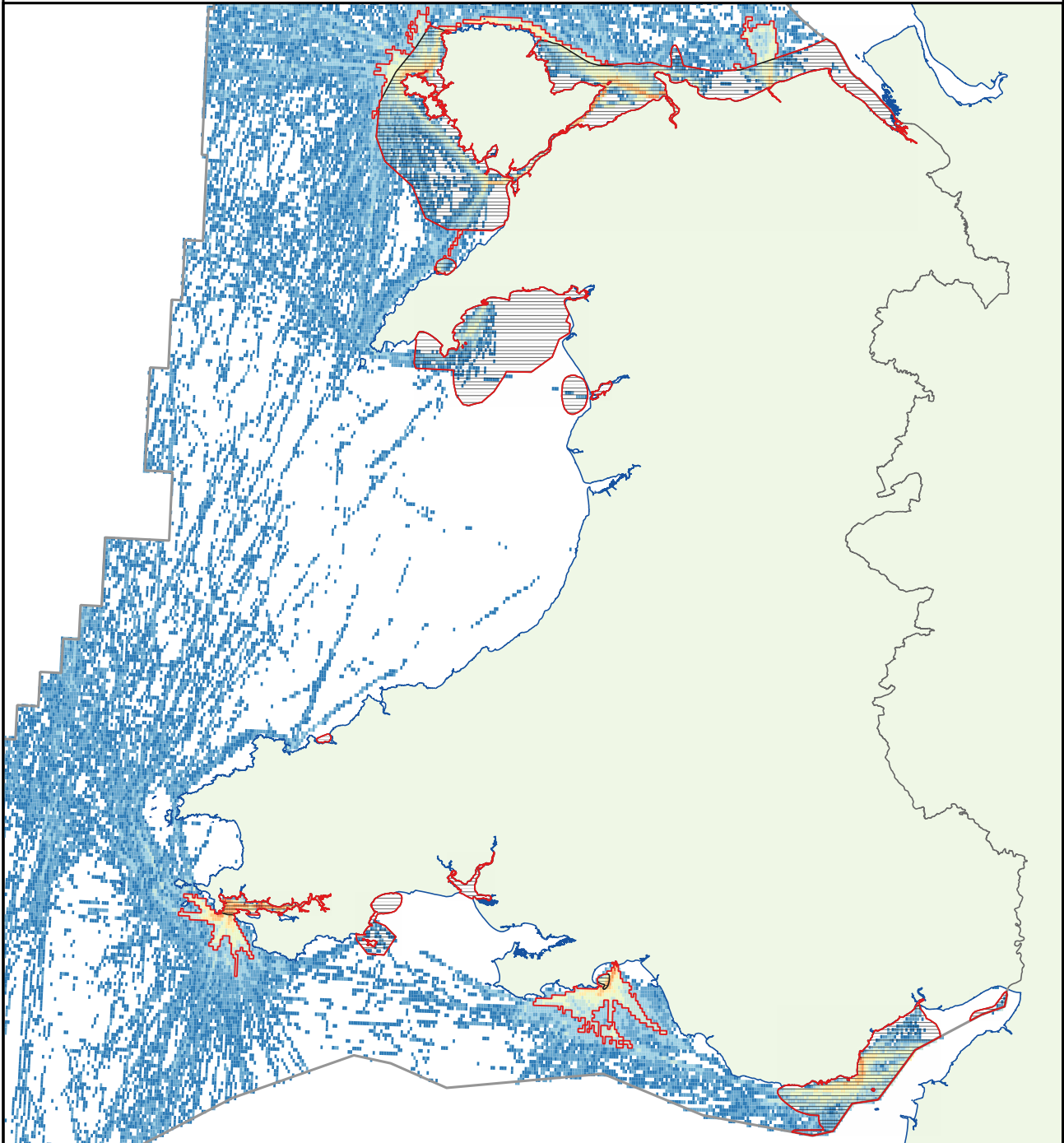
The RYA has also developed a number of '[position statements](#)', setting out its position in relation to new renewable energy developments, fishing and aquaculture. These 'positions statements' are aimed at securing navigational safety and ensuring recreational boating interests are not disproportionately affected by new developments in these sectors. The 'position statements' outline the potential impacts and key issues to be taken into consideration in relation to navigational safety, the location of new developments and the end-of-life dereliction/ decommissioning phase of any installations or infrastructure. Where possible, the position papers also set out potential management or mitigation measures for these impacts. Position papers are currently available in relation to:

- Fishing and aquaculture
- Offshore renewable energy developments – Wind Energy
- Offshore renewable energy developments – Wave Energy
- Offshore renewable energy developments – Tidal Energy
- Offshore renewable energy developments – Tidal impounds

The following map shows the focus area for policy SAF_01b area for recreational boating activity (i.e. the areas which are most significant for sector activity), which applies at the date of the publication of this Technical Statement in March 2023. Developers and decision makers should refer to current maps on the [Wales Marine Planning Portal](#).

Recreational Boating

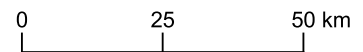
Areas safeguarded by policy SAF_01b



- Focus Area for policy SAF_01b for recreational boating activity
- General Boating Areas

RYA AIS Intensity

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0.3 to 0.46 0.46 to 0.76 0.76 to 1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 to 1.24 1.24 to 1.5 1.5 to 1.75 1.75 to 2.05 2.05 to 2.41 2.41 to 3.03 3.03 to 3.46 |
|--|---|



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 Marine & Fisheries, Welsh Government. February 2023.

The focus area for policy SAF_01b for recreational boating activity (i.e. the areas which are most significant for sector activity) was derived from the RYA UK Coastal Atlas of Recreational Boating (2019).

The RYA dataset utilises AIS data from recreational vessels for May to September of 2014 and 2017 to determine the intensity of boating activity in coastal waters around the UK. The RYA Atlas uses a 0.25km by 0.25km resolution grid, with the intensity of boating activity for each grid cell expressed on a relative, logarithmic scale. Within the Welsh marine plan area, relative intensity ranges from 0.3 to 3.4 on a logarithmic scale. The focus area was identified based on a minimum intensity of 1 on this scale, indicating areas of medium to high intensity boating activity. To provide a more complete picture of recreational boating activity, the map also shows activity at less than an intensity of 1 on the scale.

To provide a more complete picture of recreational boating activity, the focus area for policy SAF_01b for recreational Boating also includes General Boating Areas as defined in the RYA Atlas. The General Boating Areas were based on information provided by RYA Clubs on their boating activities, as well as existing datasets held by the RYA. The General Boating Areas help to reduce gaps in data coverage where AIS data is limited, and in inshore and estuarine areas.

Small, isolated patches of apparent boating activity were removed from the focus area for policy SAF_01b. Additionally, smaller recreational craft, such as dinghies and day sailing boats, may not use AIS. Boundaries of the focus area were simplified to help ensure that the main recreational boating areas were represented while allowing a clear area to be defined.