

From: Fisheries Division
Sent: 31 March 2026 12:22
To:
Cc:
Subject: ATISN 26659 - Sea Fisheries Request

Dear ,

Further to our conversations, please find attached our response to your request for information relating to fisheries inspections, breaches, and vessel activity in Welsh waters. We have used the template provided by you and structured the response in line with your questions. We have included relevant methodology and caveats alongside each dataset within the template attached.

Request 1 – Suspected breaches

This provides the total number of suspected breaches detected on fishing vessels, broken down by year, vessel nationality, and vessel length group.

The figures relate specifically to breaches identified during vessel inspections only. Where multiple breaches were identified during a single inspection, each breach is counted individually. Breaches identified outside of formal vessel inspections, including those arising from follow-up activity (e.g. checks on VMS and sales notes), are not included.

Request 2a – Inspections

This provides the total number of inspections carried out on fishing vessels only, broken down by year, vessel nationality, and vessel length group, along with the number of inspections where at least one breach was detected.

The data covers inspections conducted both in port and at sea across two systems, reflecting a system change in April 2022. The figures do not include WFMC detections or breaches identified through follow-up checks after an inspection.

Request 2b – Fishing trips in Welsh waters

This provides the total number of commercial sea fishing trips associated with Welsh waters, by year and distance band.

These figures are derived from vessel position data and should be interpreted as a proxy for activity, rather than a definitive record of where fishing activity wholly occurred. Trips are included where at least one vessel position intersects a defined Welsh waters polygon, and where there is evidence of associated fishing activity within one of the ICES rectangles that fall either wholly or partly within the Welsh zone.

Distance bands have been aggregated into “Within 6nm” and “Beyond 6nm” to reduce duplication across offshore categories. However, trips may still be counted in both bands where activity occurs across the 6nm boundary within the same trip.

Request 3a – Vessels checked

This provides the number of distinct vessels inspected, broken down by year, vessel nationality, and vessel length group.

Each vessel is counted once per year regardless of how many times it was inspected. Some data has been redacted where necessary to protect vessel identity due to small sample sizes.

Request 3b – Vessels active in Welsh waters

This provides the number of distinct vessels associated with fishing activity in Welsh waters, by year and distance band.

As with request 2b, this is derived from vessel position data and linked fishing activity, and should be interpreted as an indicator of presence and activity rather than a definitive record of where vessels operated for the full duration of a trip. Distance bands have been aggregated into “Within 6nm” and “Beyond 6nm” to reduce duplication across offshore categories. Vessels may still be counted in both bands within a given year where activity occurs across the 6nm boundary.

Request 4 – Enforcement outcomes

We have provided a list of breaches that resulted in formal enforcement action, along with further detail where breaches resulted in prosecution.

To protect vessel identities, certain fields such as vessel identifiers, check IDs, and breach IDs have not been included, particularly as dataset sizes are small. Personal data has only been included where it relates to prosecutions and is already in the public domain. Exact vessel lengths have not been included where necessary to avoid potential identification.

If you are dissatisfied with the Welsh Government’s handling of your request, you can ask for an internal review within 40 working days of the date of this response. Requests for an internal review should be addressed to the Welsh Government’s Freedom of Information Officer at:

Information Rights Unit,
Welsh Government,
Cathays Park,
Cardiff,
CF10 3NQ

or Email: Freedomofinformation@gov.wales

Please remember to quote the ATISN reference number above.

You also have the right to complain to the Information Commissioner. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner’s Office,
Wycliffe House,
Water Lane,
Wilmslow,
Cheshire,
SK9 5AF.

However, please note that the Commissioner will not normally investigate a complaint until it has been through our own internal review process.

Thank you for making yourself available to clarify some of the points. Hopefully, everything will make sense, but if you have any questions on the methodology and limitations, or would like to discuss any aspect of the data further, please give me a shout.