

FishingFocus

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Protecting bass stocks

Bass are hugely important for both commercial and recreational fishermen. But stocks are in serious decline because of fishing pressures and limited numbers of young bass due to a series of cold winters from 2008 to 2012.

Last December, we pressed the European Commission to propose measures to reduce bass fishing to prevent the collapse of stocks. So we welcome the package of measures now agreed at EU level.



Restrictions on pelagic trawl fisheries to protect bass stocks during the spawning aggregation season this year are a good start. More recently, monthly vessel catch limits for bass across all commercial fishing gear categories have been agreed, alongside an increase to 42cm in the minimum conservation reference size for bass (the minimum size of fish commercial fishermen can sell or anglers can keep) which comes into effect from 1 September.

These measures are accompanied by a three fish daily bag limit for each recreational angler, which applies to the recreational sector in all affected Member States and which allows it to play its part in restoring stocks. We're now working mainly with the Angling Trust and Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities to make sure that anglers are aware of the bag limit.

We're also reviewing UK domestic measures and whether additional measures are needed to protect juvenile fish in bass nursery areas.

Regional multi-annual plans are also being prepared, for example for the North Sea, and will include bass management measures. We hope that all these measures will lead to the stock recovering in coming years.



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs



Following the retirement of John Robbs in June, I am delighted to have taken up the role of Interim Director, Marine and Fisheries.

Although I have only been in post for about four weeks it is clear that the work we do together contributes towards a number of key Defra priorities, such as a cleaner, healthier environment, which includes the second tranche of Marine Conservation Zones (see page 5); a world-leading food and farming industry, which includes implementing Common Fisheries Policy reform and rebalancing quotas to smaller locally-based inshore fishing communities (see pages 3 and 8); and protecting the country against natural threats and hazards, which includes non-native marine species (see page 4).

This is an exciting, if challenging, time and we have much to do. But I know that working in partnership we can collectively achieve what we need to. I look forward to working with you.

Tanya Arkle
Interim Director, Marine and Fisheries

News in Brief

Coastal Concordat

The Coastal Concordat aims to improve and simplify how the regulatory regime works at the coast. It sets out key principles which the main marine regulatory bodies, advisors and estuarine/coastal planning authorities will use to work together to enable coastal development in England.

The Coastal Concordat applies to all applications for coastal development, except where co-ordination mechanisms are already in place. Adoption of the Coastal Concordat by local authorities is voluntary. Feedback so far indicates that it has eliminated unnecessary overlaps between regulators, and duplications of information requirements.

① You can find out more about the [Coastal Concordat for England](#) or contact MarineProgrammeSupportOffice@defra.gsi.gov.uk.

Marine Strategy Framework Directive

We're currently analysing the 3,500 plus responses to the consultation on the programme of measures to implement the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive and achieve Good Environmental Status in our seas by 2020.

We're planning to publish the summary of responses alongside the UK Marine Strategy Part 3 by the end of this year and to submit the Strategy to the European Commission by the end of the March 2016. The programme of measures has to be implemented by December 2016.

① You can read the measures proposed in the consultation [here](#).

Steps towards sustainable fishing

At the heart of the reformed Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) is a legal commitment for Member States to fish sustainably. We must manage stocks at Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) by 2015 where possible and by 2020 at the latest.

The European Commission's recent Communication on 2016 fishing opportunities shows that we are continuing to make real progress towards more sustainable fishing, with more stocks than ever now being fished at MSY.



This year we have 32 stocks that are being fished at MSY, up from 26 in 2014. We're also continuing to improve our understanding of stocks, with MSY assessments for 62 stocks, up from 46 last year.

Fishing at MSY is good both for our stocks and the long term sustainability of our fishing industry. So it's important that we continue to build on this progress, moving as many species as possible to MSY next year. However, we recognise that some stocks may need to undergo a staged transition to MSY, particularly where this is needed to avoid discards of bycatch in mixed fisheries.

We now have the first tranche of the international stock advice from the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES), which provide the basis for the UK Government's negotiations to set 2016 fishing opportunities.

The advice has some positives including increases for Northern hake and North Sea cod and plaice. However, it also contains some challenges, including reductions to Celtic Sea cod and haddock and Dover sole.

Defra and the Devolved Administrations are analysing this advice and working with stakeholders to assess what it means for the UK. Earlier this month, Defra and Cefas hosted a stakeholder event, which was widely attended by representatives of the fishing industry and other marine interests, to discuss the advice.

The next step is the Commission releasing its detailed proposals for 2016 fishing opportunities in October. Defra will be hosting the annual UK Ministerial event to discuss the Commission's proposals with stakeholders at the end of October.

The final step will be the negotiations at the December Fisheries Council. Last year Fisheries Minister, George Eustice, secured a fair and balanced deal which supported our fishing industry and the long term sustainability of our fisheries. He aims to do the same this year. He will also work to agree important quota uplifts, which will help fishermen operate under the first stage of the demersal discard ban (see page 8).

① You can find out more about [2016 fishing opportunities](#).

SHELLFISH MANAGEMENT

Watch out for non-native lobsters and crabs

Fishermen have been reporting catches of lobsters and crabs which aren't native to the UK.

American lobsters (*Homarus americanus*) and Dungeness crabs (*Metacarcinus magister*) were released near Brighton in June and the MMO and Cefas would like to thank fishermen for their help in catching them. It's illegal to release non-native species into our seas.



There's a risk that such non-native species could spread quickly, establishing populations. These could threaten native lobsters and crabs by out-competing them for food and shelter; by introducing diseases to which they have little resistance; or by compromising genetic integrity of our stocks through cross-breeding. Any loss of our native lobsters and crabs could seriously affect commercial stocks and

local businesses and disrupt the wider marine ecosystem.

If you catch non-native lobsters or crabs anywhere around the UK, please don't release them back into the sea (regardless of size) – it's illegal. They can be landed but not be re-immersed – unless held in facilities which are compliant under the Lobsters (Control of Deposit) Order licence.

① Please report the catch (where and how many caught, species and sex) to your [local MMO office](#) or to the Fish Health Inspectorate on 01305 206 700 or by email to fhi@cefass.co.uk. You can find out more [here](#).

Scallop management

Following an industry-led agreement which secured additional scallop fishing effort days for UK fishermen from France, the first transfer of 50,000 kilowatt days at sea to the UK took place at the beginning of July. Another mechanism for seeking a sustainable future for the industry is the Scallop Sustainability Working Group. It has now extended its membership to include representatives of the under 15 metre scallop sector. The Group enables industry and UK Fisheries Administrations to work together to find potential solutions for issues facing our scallop stocks or industry.

Western Waters crab management

In agreement with the crab industry, Defra and the MMO have been able to increase the annual days at sea effort limit for this year from 150 to 190 days in ICES Area VII from 1 August 2015.

MARINE PROTECTED AREAS

Fisheries in Marine Protected Areas

We're continuing to work with the UK and EU fishing industries and other marine organisations on fisheries management measures in Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) – European Marine Sites and the 27 designated Tranche 1 Marine Conservation Zones – both inshore and offshore.

We're building on progress made to date, with fisheries measures now in place for inshore 'high risk' sites. The Environment Agency, MMO and Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities (IFCAs) are currently screening the remaining sites to assess whether management of fishing activities is required to ensure that site features are conserved. Where management is required, we expect that the Environment Agency, MMO and IFCAs will prepare and consult on byelaw proposals, then implement them throughout the rest of 2015/2016.



We're also developing management proposals for offshore MPAs under the reformed CFP. This requires the initiating Member State to work out a joint recommendation for fisheries management measures together with Member States with direct fisheries interests within the MPA. Following consultation with stakeholders and scientific advice, we've developed draft fisheries management proposals for the Haig Fras Site of Community Importance – an offshore Marine Protected Area in the Irish Sea. We'll soon be circulating these draft proposals for the North West Waters Advisory Council, fishing representatives and others to consider. The proposals are aimed at protecting the bedrock reef from demersal towed gears and dredges and will need to be agreed through the CFP before coming into force.

We held a workshop with representatives from the fishing industry, environmental organisations and other interested parties in May to discuss fisheries management measures for sites in the southern North Sea. At the workshop we shared current management options and heard and discussed a range of viewpoints. We're now working on management proposals, taking account of the discussion at the workshop. We're also developing our proposals for other offshore UK sites (in the Irish Sea and Channel and South West approaches) and will be sharing these with fishing industry representatives and other interested organisations later this year and early next year.

Marine Conservation Zones

The public consultation on the second tranche of Marine Conservation Zones closed in April. We're currently considering all the responses we received. We'll be publishing a summary of the responses, together with a Government response and decisions on which sites will be designated by January 2016.

These sites will form an important contribution to the Blue Belt of protected areas which the Government has committed to delivering around our coasts.

① You can find information on the consultation and the sites proposed for designation in the second tranche [here](#).

SEAFISH UPDATE

New Seafish Corporate plan

The Seafish Corporate Plan 2015-2018 looks to a sustainable future for the UK fishing industry.

Developed in partnership with the three Seafish Sector Panels, the Plan sets out the Seafish vision, mission and work programmes for the next three years. At its heart sit the three high level objectives to promote consumption, enhance reputation and inform decisions. The Seafish mission has been amended to 'support a profitable, sustainable and socially responsible future for the seafood industry' to reflect the focus of the new Plan. You can find out more about the [plan](#).



Seafish has been discussing its new Corporate Plan with the fishing industry across the UK. Following events in the South West, Scotland and Grimsby, events are planned in Northern Ireland, Wales and London. There's more information on the [Seafish website](#).

Responsible Fishing Scheme

One flagship project for Seafish during the life of the Corporate Plan is the development of the



Responsible Fishing Scheme (RFS). RFS accreditation guarantees compliance with best practice for responsible catching and for areas such as crew welfare. This summer has seen the relaunch of RFS with a new website and introductory video at www.seafish.org/rfs/. The RFS team are visiting fishing communities around the UK to promote the benefits of the scheme and to encourage more skippers to sign up.

Strategic Investment Fund

Seafish has recently launched its new Strategic Investment Fund (SIF), which replaces previous funding, such as the Industry Project Fund. A total of £750,000 is available for projects supporting the Seafish high level objectives. The Fund has been designed to provide a flexible means of commissioning research and development, helping Seafish to respond to the changing industry environment. Each call for proposals will be made against a few, well defined areas of work and applicants asked to tender by proposing solutions to each area. The process, designed to be simple and transparent, is open to any entity with the principal applicant based in the UK. There's more information on the [Seafish website](#).

World Seafood Congress

September 2015 sees Seafish host the 2015 World Seafood Congress in Grimsby. 'Upskilling for a sustainable future' is the theme, which will be portrayed through expert panels, special interest meetings and workshops. There will be interactive sessions on skills in the seafood sector, seafood sustainability, seafood innovation, seafood markets, seafood integrity, global export and trade, as well as training programmes. The Congress, in the state-of-the-art Grimsby Institute from 5-9 September, features 96 speakers from 12 countries, representing some of the biggest names in the seafood industry as well as academic establishments and NGOs. You can find out more [here](#).

Working with the fishing industry

The MMO has the difficult task of maximising the quota available to non-sector fishermen, while ensuring quota limits are not exceeded. The MMO involves fishermen in decision-making to achieve this balance.

Quota surgeries around the country complement daily discussions between fishermen and MMO Marine Officers. These quota surgeries allow the MMO to understand the position on the ground and to discuss its decisions with those who are most affected by them.

Having spoken to about 650 fishermen last year, so far this year MMO Quota Managers have held surgeries in Eastbourne, Poole, Portsmouth and Plymouth. These have been well-attended and the MMO is planning further quota surgeries on the East Coast.

Every month the MMO invites over 2000 fishermen to comment on catch limit proposals for the month ahead.

In addition, the quarterly MMO Fisheries Panel gives senior members of the NFFO, NUTFA and LIFE the opportunity to discuss fisheries matters with senior members of the MMO and to represent the views of their members. The MMO now issues a fisheries newsletter after each meeting to ensure fishermen are aware of the discussions and informed about the MMO's fisheries management.

MMO Head of Fisheries Management, Martyn Youell, said: "Only by working with the fishing industry can we achieve sustainable and balanced fisheries management. We appreciate the willingness of the industry to share their views and experience with us whether via surgeries, consultations, the Fisheries Panel, social media, a telephone call, letter or email. All views are welcome, considered and appreciated."



Funding for the fishing industry

The MMO expects to open the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund to applications this autumn, subject to final agreement with the European Commission.

The top UK priorities for the Fund are supporting sustainable economic growth in the catching, processing and aquaculture sectors, and the implementation of CFP reform. There will be a particular focus on meeting the requirements of the landing obligation (discard ban), and on assisting the industry to move to more sustainable practices and methods e.g. through more selective gear. Support will also be available for a wide range of measures, including the promotion of innovation, technology, improved marketing of products, health and safety, and protecting and enhancing the marine environment.

Demersal discard ban consultation

Earlier this month, we published the summary of responses to our consultation on the implementation of the demersal landing obligation (discard ban) in England.

We'd like to thank everyone who took the time to respond to our consultation and/or attended one of the regional meetings. The responses we received have been really helpful and we were able to use that feedback in the regional negotiations on how the landing obligation should be introduced in 2016 and agreeing appropriate exemptions.

Those negotiations have now been completed and the Joint Recommendations for both the North Sea and the North Western Waters were submitted to the Commission in June. These recommendations list the species and gear types which will be subject to the landing obligation in 2016 and can be found [here](#).

We're also using the consultation responses to inform national decisions. This includes developing the policy for quota management, onshore management of unwanted fish and control and enforcement. We understand and fully appreciate that the implementation of the landing obligation is the biggest change in fisheries management in a generation so plan to give the industry as much time as possible to familiarise and adapt to the new policy. Therefore, we're aiming to publish the full implementation policy and accompanying guidance in the autumn.

① You can read the [summary of responses](#) and if you have any queries, please email: cfp.consultation@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Reducing latent capacity in the English inshore fleet

We also published the summary of responses to our consultation on reducing latent capacity in the English 10 metre and under fishing sector in early July. Again, we'd like to thank respondents and also confirm that we appreciate the importance of fishing opportunities for the inshore fleet.

We received mixed views on whether latent capacity should be addressed, with some respondents suggesting alternative approaches to control the pressures on stocks. The Government believes that latent capacity remains an issue that will need to be addressed. The responses are useful and are one of a wide range of factors to be taken into account as we develop measures to address latent capacity in a balanced way.

We plan to publish the Government response to the consultation by late autumn. This will outline how we intend to proceed.

① You can see the [summary of responses](#) and if you have any queries, please email: FisheriesReform@defra.gsi.gov.uk

FishingFocus – Your views

If you have any comments on Fishing Focus, please email: fishingfocus@defra.gsi.gov.uk or write to: Fishing Focus, Defra Marine and Fisheries, Nobel House, 17 Smith Square, London SW1P 3JR. You can read previous issues of [Fishing Focus](#).