

FishingFocus

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Reforming inshore fisheries

We're working on a range of initiatives to make the English inshore fleet more sustainable.

In August we held a consultation asking fishermen if they would be interested in receiving fixed quota allocations (FQAs) on a voluntary basis. This would enable them to leave the under 10 metre quota pool. We received 68 written responses to the consultation expressing both support and opposition, with a major concern being the impact on the pool if a significant amount of quota was removed. We also held three coastal meetings to discuss the proposal. We're now summarising the responses and plan to publish that summary, along with the Government's response setting out how we intend to proceed, in December.



We're currently preparing a consultation on how we can reduce latent capacity (licences and permits entitling fishing for quota species or shellfish but not currently used) within the inshore sector, covering both finfish and shellfish. We're planning to publish it by the end of this year

We'll soon be meeting Producer Organisations to discuss how we intend to carry out the final stage of the realignment of FQAs. This will involve making the transfer of FQAs for ICES Area VII Pollack, VIId sole, VIIa plaice, VIId cod, VIIb-k whiting, VIIe-f herring, North Sea Nephrops and North Sea lemon sole and witches from Producer Organisations to the under 10 metre pool permanent. We hope to do this in November 2014.

The needs of the inshore fleet will, of course, have to be taken into account in proposals to manage the implementation of the landing obligation for demersal species from 1 January 2016. We'll be including options for the inshore fleet when we consult on the landing obligation in the New Year.



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs



At this time of year attention focusses on next year's quotas and, once again, the Commission's proposals for some stocks are seriously challenging.

But it is important not to lose sight of longer term issues so, for example, you can read in this edition about the continuing work to help the inshore fleet and the proposals to simplify the licence system for all English fishing vessels. We are also working with the Advisory Councils and neighbouring Member States to be ready for the gradual introduction of the landing obligation, starting with pelagic fisheries on 1 January. These changes have major implications. And none of us should forget that Lord Smith's Commission (www.smith-commission.scot/) is working to identify heads of agreement between the five Scottish political parties in which we could all have an interest for the future.

Pretty much everyone wants change but many also fear it. Defra will therefore continue to listen, discuss and adapt to reduce the risks while securing the greatest benefits.

John Robbs
Director, Marine and Fisheries

News in Brief

Charges for marine licensing

From 1 October 2014 the MMO is charging for work carried out on marine licence cases after consent has been given. This includes work for licences issued before 1 October. The fees are for requests to change a marine licence once it has been granted (licence variations), and also to monitor activities carried out under the licence (post consent work). Recovering the MMO's costs for this work from industry will save taxpayers about £5m over 10 years. Fishing licences are not affected.

① You can read more on the [MMO website](#).

Scallops

More than 700,000 extra days at sea have been secured for UK scallop fishermen in Western Waters in 2014 after industry-led negotiations with France. Vessels in the UK over-15 metre scallop fleet have secured an additional 18 effort days each under the Western Waters regime for the whole of 2014.

The Marine Management Organisation (MMO) has issued fishing vessel licence variations allowing UK scallop fishing vessels to benefit from extra effort in the English Channel in exchange for them observing area closures.

① You can find out more on the Defra website.

Marine Conservation Zones

We're planning to consult on a second tranche of MCZs early in 2015.

① You'll find the consultation on the [Defra website](#).

Marine Strategy Framework Directive

In early 2015 we're planning to consult on UK programmes of measures for achieving good environmental status in our seas by 2020.

① You'll find the consultation on the [Defra website](#).

FISHERIES MANAGEMENT

Commission's proposals for December Fisheries Council

The Commission has now issued its proposals for 2015 fishing opportunities, which will be negotiated at the December Fisheries Council.

This year's negotiations are the first under the reformed CFP. We now have a legal commitment to fish at maximum sustainable yield (MSY) by 2015 where possible and 2020 in all cases. For some years, the EU has been moving towards achieving (MSY), with 27 stocks in the north east Atlantic, North Sea and Baltic



currently being managed at MSY, compared with just five in 2009. We've also seen an increase in the number of stocks with full MSY assessments. But there's more work to be done.

The UK supports the management of fish stocks at MSY by 2015 wherever possible. But we also realise that exceptions to this 2015 deadline will be needed, taking account of other provisions in the CFP including minimising discarding of by-catch in mixed fisheries. We won't support a cut in quota if it will simply lead to increased discarding.

In line with international scientific advice, the Commission is proposing cuts to catch limits for most stocks, including Celtic Sea cod (-64%); Irish sea herring (-8%); Celtic Sea haddock (-41%), skates and rays in the Celtic Sea (-20%), Channel (-20%) and North Sea (-20%); Eastern Channel sole (-60%) and Channel plaice (-14%).

One particular UK concern is the 20% TAC cut advised by ICES for North Sea cod. We know that the stock is recovering because of measures taken in previous years, but has further to go. We're looking at alternative management options that would take account of all the available science on getting fishing to sustainable levels. We also want to maintain current levels of effort (days-at-sea) in all areas of the Cod Recovery Zone, so that fishermen have the time to fish selectively.

We're also working to ensure that decisions on Celtic Sea stocks, including haddock and cod, are taken on the basis of mixed fishery advice, as well as the latest available data on the numbers of juvenile fish. To achieve both sustainable fishing levels (MSY) and effective implementation of the demersal landing obligation, which comes into force from 2016, we need to take strides towards effective regional mixed fishery multi-annual management plans.

In the run-up to December Council negotiations, we're listening to the priorities of the UK fishing industry and environmental organisations. It's more critical than ever that we work together to secure the best possible deal we can, consistent with all the available scientific advice, to secure sustainable fish stocks and a prosperous UK fishing industry now and for the future. It's essential to get these negotiations right, both for the fishing industry and for the sustainability of our fish stocks.

① You can see the [Commission's proposals](#).

FISHERIES MANAGEMENT

Making the landing obligation work

The landing obligation (or “discard ban” as it’s often called) is part of the new Common Fisheries Policy. It comes into force for pelagic species in January 2015 and for demersal species between 2016 and 2019. It applies to all quota species – both targeted and by-catch – and to all UK fishing vessels catching them.

We’ve been working with the fishing industry to identify ways of implementing the EU obligations and using the practical provisions in the Regulation in a way that makes sense for our fisheries.

Following regional discussions with other Member States which share our fisheries, discard plans for the pelagic landing obligation have been agreed and published by the Commission. These provide scientifically justified exemptions that will be available to the fleet. We’ve also been developing our approach for the parts of the Regulation on which England has yet to make decisions. Look out for updates soon on how our approach may affect you.

We’ve started work on the discard plans for the demersal landing obligation. We’d like fishermen to help us with the plans, particularly giving us views on the need for exemptions to the landing obligation. You can send us your views on exemptions directly or through your local fishermen’s organisations so that we can make the landing obligation work.

① You can email us at: cfp.consultation@defra.gsi.gov.uk or send a tweet to: @DefraFisheries.



Avoiding spurdog by-catch

Defra, Cefas, the fishing industry and the Shark Trust are leading the setting up of a pilot project to provide information on managing spurdog after the demersal landing obligation comes into force. With funding from the Fisheries Science Partnership, the NFFO organised workshops in London, Newlyn, and Lowestoft to help ensure the development of the project is driven by stakeholders.



The project would allow fishermen to adapt their fishing practices to avoid significant spurdog by-catch through the development of a tool to help fishermen avoid catching large amounts of spurdog. This will contribute to the recovery and conservation of spurdog in the north east Atlantic with the ultimate goal of returning the stock to levels that can support sustainable and economically viable use.

We’ve submitted a proposal, which includes a request for a dead by-catch allowance, for consideration by the EU Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) in November. We’ll continue to work with fishing and other marine interests in the build-up to the December Fisheries Council where we plan to table our proposal.

FISHERIES MANAGEMENT

Support for fisheries affected by Russian trade ban

The UK Government has been in the lead in securing a change to EU law to support fishermen affected by the Russian food export ban.



At the October EU Fisheries Council, Member States agreed that fishermen could 'bank' 25% of the 2014 quota for some pelagic species including mackerel and herring. This 'banked' quota can now be used in 2015. This replaces the standard 10% which can usually be rolled forward to the next year. As a result of this new flexibility, Producer Organisations can now potentially reserve up to 72,500 tonnes for catching next year.

Last year, 18% of UK mackerel exports went to Russia, for a total value of £16 million. In addition to this new banking provision, the UK is both exploring new international markets and working to increase its share in others. Recent Government-led trade visits to Vietnam, Japan and Hong Kong have promoted UK mackerel to buyers from Asia, with promotion in China planned for November.

Fisheries management in Marine Protected Areas

We're working with the UK and EU fishing industries and other marine interests to extend the work of the Fisheries management in Marine Protected Areas project to offshore European sites (Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas).

We're developing measures to protect these sites over the next two years and aim to have them in place by the end of 2016. We've held workshops in Ireland and The Netherlands to discuss measures in the Irish and North Seas respectively and we're planning further workshops next year.



FISHERIES MANAGEMENT

EU action on bass stock management

Bass are highly valued by both commercial and recreational fishermen, so the latest scientific advice on stocks makes effective management even more pressing.

We've been pushing for EU-wide conservation measures to ensure that bass stocks recover and become sustainable. All interested Member States (UK, Belgium, France, Netherlands, Ireland, Spain and Portugal) have agreed the need for urgent management measures to conserve bass stocks in the Celtic sea, English Channel, Irish Sea and North Sea. Such measures should aim to reduce the recent high levels of catches and take account of the low numbers of young bass joining the stock – which have both contributed heavily to the decline of the stock.

The agreement by interested Member States reflected the UK's advocated approach that: a total allowable catch (TAC) isn't the best option; areas where bass spawn need protection; the socio-economic impact of measures should be taken into account; beyond immediate action, a management plan is needed. This general agreement paved the way for interim action to be proposed for 2015.

The Commission has now issued its proposal for 2015. This is a one fish daily bag limit for the recreational sector, and for the commercial sector effort and catch limits (at levels to be set), which would apply to pelagic trawlers using particular gear (e.g. pair trawl) in Area VIIe (western Channel) during January to April inclusive. This proposal will require further development and negotiation however. For example, we believe that to ensure proper restraints on the pair trawling spring fishery on groups of spawning bass, other known spawning areas need to be included to avoid boats moving to them and appropriate measures to limit bass catches by other boats are required.

Any proposal to set a bag limit for recreational fishers, as an EU standard, must be part of a balanced package of measures to reduce catches in both sectors.

① You can see the [Commission's proposal](#).

Drift net fishing

The UK Government strongly opposes the European Commission's proposed blanket ban on driftnet fishing in EU waters.

We're arguing for regional fisheries management measures under the reformed CFP. These should be used to control the use of driftnets where there is evidence that their use has a harmful impact on fish stocks and the wider marine environment (see Fishing Focus Summer 2014, page 5).

The Commission's proposal requires co-decision from the Council and European Parliament before it could be adopted. Both institutions have roundly criticised it and called for its withdrawal or radical amendment. That hasn't happened yet, but the Commission has now asked Member States for further information about the nature of their driftnet fisheries. We expect the proposal to be the subject of further scrutiny and debate over the coming weeks.

FISHERIES MANAGEMENT

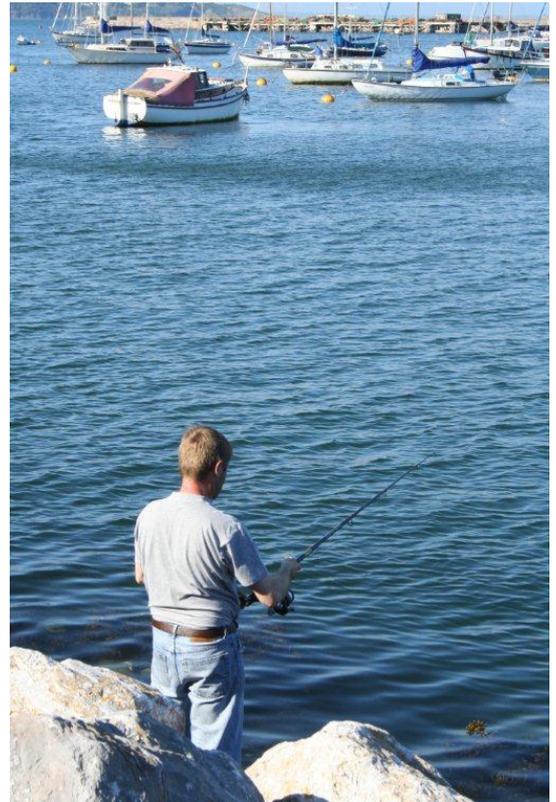
Angling Summit

Sea angling and freshwater angling interests took part in an Angling Summit last month.

The Summit, organised by the Angling Trust, focused on how to make further progress on improving fisheries and delivering the *Fishing for Life* National Angling Strategy. This Strategy was prepared by the Angling Trust on behalf of all angling interests and aims to increase the social and economic benefits of angling, boost participation and improve habitats for fish.

The state of bass stocks was high on the agenda and Fisheries Minister, George Eustice, agreed that, as well as pushing for EU-wide action, he would review the introduction of a minimum landing size for bass.

The discussion also covered how Defra, the Environment Agency, Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities and the angling community could work together to achieve shared goals in a financially challenging environment.



① You can read *Fishing for Life* on the [Angling Trust website](#).

Shellfish Research Symposium

As part of Defra's work to ensure sustainable shellfisheries, we want to increase collective understanding of the current state of evidence and research on non-quota shellfish stocks.



This was the focus of a symposium organised by Defra in mid-October and attended by over 60 scientists, government, shellfish industry representatives and other organisations with shellfish interests including from other EU Member States. The discussions provide a platform for collaborative action to explore gaps in our knowledge and to find ways of filling them.

Actions agreed included setting up an [online communication forum](#) and a steering group focused on how research and data collection can better support fisheries management. A Defra-owned Huddle space, which people need to be invited to join, is also being set up. If you would like to join this, please email: Shellfish@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Discard ban trial

Following a simulation trial of a landing obligation (discard ban), Cefas (Centre for Environment, Fisheries & Aquaculture Science) has published a report setting out recommendations for future work to support its implementation in England.

The study was conducted by Cefas and funded by Defra and the European Fisheries Fund. Cefas scientists worked with fisheries managers, policy makers, the fishing industry, and fish markets. The study assessed the reasons for discarding in the sample fleet, evaluated current practice on the handling, storage and transport of their catch and looked at the possible economic impact from an obligation to land all catches.

Cefas Project Lead, Tom Catchpole said: “This discard ban trial is the first of its kind in Europe, and provides the fishing industry with a practical demonstration of what a landing obligation would mean for them. The trial results will assist in the implementation of the new CFP.”



The report sets out ten recommendations to assist in the implementation of the discard ban:

1. Ensuring that the safety of fishermen is not compromised by the discard ban.
2. Work by those who manage the uptake of fish quotas is needed to identify mechanisms that will ensure the highest levels of flexibility in quota usage and allow fishermen to best match their catch to quotas, both internationally and domestically.
3. Analysing in real-time catch data from vessel operators, registered buyers and sellers and independent scientific observations to monitor quota uptake and identify potential quota shortages early.
4. Consideration should be given to how discrepancies between skipper reported catches, independently observed catches and forecast catch rates based on the fish stock assessments should be dealt with, if they arise, during the implementation of the discard ban.
5. Having a designated role, at least at the start of the discard ban, to ensure that storage bins for material for non-human consumption are available at ports and to coordinate the transport of the material.
6. Preparation by industry for the likelihood that greater amounts of small but legally sized fish enter the human consumption market.
7. The feasibility of collecting species-specific sales data from non-human consumption markets should be explored, and for industries receiving this material to be included within the registered buyers and sellers system.
8. Robust testing of the e-log system should be conducted to ensure that vessel operators can accurately record their full catch, including catches destined for human consumption, for non-human consumption and those released back to the sea.
9. Work should be done to see how new self-reporting tools, independent at-sea observations and registered sales data can be integrated to deliver full documentation of catches.
10. The extent to which the current scientific observer programme can provide a reference fleet to validate skippers' self-reported catches and registered sales data should be evaluated.

① You can read the [report](#) and contact Thomas.catchpole@cefas.co.uk for more information.

FISHERIES DATA COLLECTION

Fishermen collect data for self-sampling trial of catches

Thirty South coast skippers of under ten metre vessels have completed a self-sampling trial of catches where they collected their own data during daily fishing operations.

Working closely with Cefas scientists, the skippers have produced a database of the level of catches and discards in the inshore fleet across South East and South West England. The self-sampling in the inshore sector trial was conducted by gill, trammel and tangle netters, and hand liners and was funded by Defra and the European Fisheries Fund.

Cefas' Stephen Mangi said: "The trial has increased the amount of information on the fishing patterns of the inshore fleet (including what they catch and where they fish) for scientists, industry leaders and policy makers. It also showed that self-sampling could be a viable technique to monitor compliance with the discard ban in the inshore sector, as the data collected by the fishermen was comparable to that recorded by trained observers".



The project has not only enabled skippers to work closely with scientists to generate some of the data required to improve stock assessments, but also improved contact and relations between scientists and skippers that should increase understanding of fishing practices in the inshore fleet.

The experience of the self-sampling trial has led to the following recommendations which can be seen as guidelines for best practice in industry-led data collection:

- Standardisation in reporting: there is need for compromise between meeting the science objectives and using data collection methods that are practical to the skippers. In this trial, skippers were allowed to use any measure of weight that was familiar to them to collect the catch data.
 - Strict protocols for data collection: these are needed to ensure the data collection has scientific rigour. In this trial, skippers were required to submit data from 100 consecutive fishing trips to ensure that they could not choose which trips to submit data for.
 - Communication: good communication is required throughout the project between the skippers and the project team. In this trial, this was mainly facilitated by two observers (one for the south east vessels and the other for the south west vessels). Liaison between the project team and skippers was used to manage skippers' expectations, especially regarding data confidentiality and what can and cannot be achieved with the data.
 - Adequate financing: having a financial incentive at the start of the project enabled this project to recruit a large number of vessels. Sufficient finances are also required to fund quality control methods (observers' time) and the scientific analyses and project management.
 - Project steering committee: the committee of key stakeholders played an important role in agreeing the forms to be used, selection of vessels, and other practicalities related to the trial.
- ① You can see the [report](#) and contact Stephen.mangi@cefas.co.uk for more information.

FISHERIES STATISTICS

Annual sea fisheries statistics

The MMO has published the latest fisheries landings and other figures for the industry online.

The report gives a comprehensive picture of commercial fishing activity for 2013, including the size of the UK fishing fleet, the number of fishermen and the quantity and value of landings.

Figures include:

- UK vessels landed 624,000 tonnes of sea fish (including shellfish) into the UK and abroad with a value of £718 million – a 1% decrease in quantity and a 7% decrease in value compared with 2012.
- Landings of demersal fish (e.g. haddock, cod and whiting) increased by 10% between 2012 and 2013 to the highest level seen for over ten years.
- Landings of haddock – the highest caught demersal species – have risen by a third in two years to 40,000 tonnes.
- Pelagic (e.g. mackerel) landings fell by 3% and shellfish by 6% from 2012 to 2013.
- Pelagic fish accounted for the largest share in terms of landings (47%) but the lowest share in value (25%). Demersal fish accounted for the largest share in terms of value (38%), slightly higher than shellfish (37%).
- The Scottish and Northern Irish fleets caught mainly pelagic fish, while demersal fish account for the highest share of the English fleet's catch and shellfish are predominately caught by the Welsh fleet.
- The UK fishing fleet fell from being the sixth to the seventh largest in the EU in terms of vessel numbers, with the second largest capacity and fourth largest power. Around 6,400 fishing vessels were registered with a total capacity of 197,000 GT and total power of 798,000 kW.
- 68% of the quantity landed by the UK fleet was caught by vessels over 24 metres in length; 4% of the total number of UK vessels. These vessels tend to catch lower value pelagic fish and their share of the value of the UK catch is 54%.
- About 12,150 fishermen were reported as active in the UK, with about 1,800 being part-time.
- Scottish vessels accounted for 59% of the quantity of landings by UK vessels while English vessels accounted for 31%.
- Peterhead remained the port with the highest landings – 113,000 tonnes with a value of £112 million. This is more than double the level seen in the second most active port, Lerwick.
- Brixham had the highest quantity of landings in England – 13,500 tonnes with a value of £24 million – closely followed by Plymouth with 11,600 tonnes at a value of £13.5 million.
- 739,000 tonnes of fish and processed fish were imported, 2% lower than in 2012. Over the same period, exports decreased by 3% to 453,000 tonnes.



① You can find the report at: www.gov.uk/mmo

Marine planning update

Work continues on marine plans for the South coast – from Folkestone to the River Dart in Devon – and the MMO has held a number of workshops recently in Eastbourne, Southampton, Weymouth and Exmouth.

The workshops offered a chance to help shape and discuss the plan areas' vision for the next 20 years, and also the objectives that will help us get there. Fishing industry representatives – including NFFO, Offshore Shellfish, South Western Fish Producers Organisation, the Southern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority, the Swanage Fishermen's Association and many others – made sure fishing interests were fully considered.



A total of 14 possible objectives were discussed with those attending, and a consultation on the vision and objectives after the workshops received more than 2,000 comments from 60 separate responses. Further workshops are planned for early 2015.

Marine plans and the Marine Policy Statement will guide those who use and regulate the marine area to encourage sustainable development while considering the environment, industry activities and economic opportunities, coastal communities and leisure uses.

We also have implementation officers based in the South plan areas who recently met the South Coast Fishermen's Council and attended Fishstock in Brixham to talk about the plans.

In the East, where England's first marine plans are already in place between Flamborough Head and Felixstowe and further out to sea, we're regularly meeting fishermen and others in the industry to make sure the plans are understood and in use wherever needed.

MMO has recently completed a survey of people in the East who are using marine plans or may do in the future, and any feedback we receive will also help shape how we roll out plans in other areas, including the South.

① You can find more information on marine planning on the [MMO website](#).

Fisheries grants

The European Fisheries Fund (EFF) programme for England is closing to new applications on 30 November 2014. This gives the MMO time for formal EFF programme closure procedures and for working with UK administrations to prepare for the launch and implementation of the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund in early 2015.

YOUR VIEWS

Points system for fishing vessel masters consultation

We'd like your views on our proposal to introduce a points system for fishing vessel masters convicted of serious fisheries offences.

We already have a points scheme for fishing vessel licences, which is set out in the EU fisheries control regulation. This new points system will work in a similar way and will ensure that convicted masters can't simply switch to another vessel if their vessel's licence is suspended.

Under the proposed new system, masters convicted in court of fisheries offences would receive a number of points, in addition to any penalties applied by the court. A series of points thresholds would lead to progressively longer periods when an individual couldn't be the master of a fishing vessel. At the extreme, there could be a permanent ban. Minor fisheries infringements not resulting in conviction in court but dealt with in other ways, such as warning letters or financial administrative penalties, won't attract points.



The proposed system would apply in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Scotland plans to implement similar measures.

① You can find the consultation, which closes on 19 November, on the [Defra website](#).

Simplifying vessel licensing consultation

We'd like your views on proposals to simplify fishing vessel licensing in England to ensure that it remains fit-for-purpose. This includes removing outdated and unnecessary rules.

Our proposals in this consultation take account of a pre-consultation discussion with industry in 2013, which identified several outdated requirements that place unnecessary burdens on business. We've also taken into account changes to the way in which fisheries will be managed following the implementation of the CFP reform package and especially the new landing obligation.

The devolved administrations of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are reviewing vessel licensing separately but we're working closely together to reduce difficulties which may be caused by differing rules.

Following the consultation, we'll update the English fishing vessel licensing system and provide new guidance on the MMO website.

① You can find the consultation, which closes on 26 November, on the [Defra website](#).

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](#).