



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

WRITTEN STATEMENT BY THE WELSH ASSEMBLY GOVERNMENT

Title: Scallop dredging in Wales

Date: 8 October 2009

By: Elin Jones, Minister for Rural Affairs

Scallop fishing has been established within Cardigan Bay and other parts of Wales for over 30 years. Most of the prime scallop beds are within the Cardigan Bay Special Area of Conservation (SAC) which was designated in 2002 although there are smaller pockets of scallop beds in other areas of the Welsh coastline. It is not possible to predict with any degree of certainty where the smaller scallop beds would exist.

There has been a significant increase in the weight of scallops landed (248 tonnes in 2005 to 3836 tonnes in 2008) and the number of vessels (6 Welsh vessels in 2005 to 18 vessels in 2008, plus an increase from 8 to 60 vessels from the rest of the UK) that use the fishery in Wales over the last three years.

In February this year, as a result of increased concerns about scallop dredging in Cardigan Bay, I made a statement that explained that I had asked my officials to work with the Countryside Council for Wales, the Welsh Federation of Fishermen's Associations and other fisheries managers to review the current management arrangement for the Scallop Fishery.

In July I announced the Groups findings had been presented to me and that a formal consultation would be launched seeking views on a proposed Scallop Fishing (Wales) Order 2009 and on proposals for the future management of the scallop fishery, with the aim of ensuring its longer term sustainability.

The measures proposed in the consultation will take 3 – 4 months to implement due to the legal requirement that they need to be lodged with the Commission (under the EC Technical Standards Directive) for a minimum

'stand still' period of three months. Scallop fishermen will also need time to adjust their gear to meet the new requirements. This has meant that it is not possible to introduce a detailed technical regulation before the beginning of the scallop season on 1st November whilst adhering to the Technical Standards Directive.

However, there is a need to introduce interim measures to avoid a repeat of the intensification of scallop dredging activity in Welsh waters (which was seen during the last "open season"). In light of this I have taken the very difficult decision to extend the closed season until the 28th February 2010 under the Prohibition of Fishing for Scallops (Wales) Order 2009.

The extension to the closed season enables the Welsh Assembly Government to comply with the EC requirements under the TSD. I hope to shortly announce the details of a new Welsh Scallop Order to be introduced as of 1 March 2010. The purpose of the new technical Order will be to manage the scallop fishery in Wales in such a way as to secure the long term sustainability of the fishery as part of a healthy marine ecosystem. This regulation will include proposals from within the consultation document on technical measures to regulate the fishery and identification of geographic locations where the fishery will not be permitted to take place for the protection of important marine species and habitats.

I will be writing to Welsh based scallop fishermen and Ministerial colleagues in England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Isle of Man to inform them of my decision.