



Fisheries

Introduction

Fisheries are national and international resources that require careful management. However, over-capacity of fleets, damaging fishing techniques, poor management and limited enforcement has led to widespread degradation of species and habitatsⁱ. The majority of the Welsh commercial fishing industry lies within 12 nautical miles of coastal baselines (inshore fisheries) where, since 1 April 2008, the Welsh Assembly Government has had direct control of fisheries management and enforcement.

- In 2006 there were approximately 800 regular commercial fishermen in Wales and another 350 involved on a part time basisⁱⁱ.
- Total landings throughout Wales in 2003 were valued at around £11 million, of which shellfish accounted for £6.8million and demersal fish (bottom-living species e.g. bass, hake and sole) accounted for approximately £4 millionⁱⁱⁱ.
- In 2003, 29 percent of open sea fisheries were in a state of collapse and projection of current trends suggests a collapse in all currently fished species before 2050^{iv}.

Current and proposed legislative competence of the Assembly

Under the *Government of Wales Act 2006*, the National Assembly for Wales can seek legislative competence through Acts of Parliament or Legislative Competence Orders (LCOs) to make a piece of law in the form of an 'Assembly Measure'. Measures can only be made in a specific policy area (or 'Matter') added to one of the 20 'Fields' (or broad subject areas) which are contained in Schedule 5 of the Act.

As "Agriculture, fisheries, forestry and rural development" is Field 1 of Schedule 5 to the Act^v, the National Assembly for Wales can seek Measure-making powers in this area. There are currently no Matters in this Field.

Forthcoming EU and UK primary legislation

- A *Draft Marine Bill*^{vi} was published on 3 April 2008. The deadline for responses was 26 June 2008. Key aims include strengthening the management of marine fisheries and reforming inshore, migratory and freshwater fisheries. The draft Bill also seeks to streamline and modernise enforcement powers.
- The vision for an *Integrated Maritime Policy for the EU*^{vii} was launched on 10 October 2007. Two of the Second Assembly's Committees sent responses to the preceding consultation. The European Council has invited the European Commission (EC) to report on the progress of the Action Plan at the end of 2009. As part of the Action Plan, the EC issued a communication on 11 April 2008 outlining an ecosystem-based approach to fisheries^{viii}.
- An EC communication on reducing unwanted by-catches and eliminating discards was published on 28 March 2007^{ix}. It proposes introducing legislation in this area in 2008.

EU policy

Fisheries management is highly regulated by the EU, through the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), limiting the extent to which Member States can develop their own fisheries measures. The Assembly Government is responsible for implementing this policy in Welsh waters. The CFP, which was reformed in 2002, aims to provide consistent rules concerning:

- Conservation, management and exploitation of living aquatic resources
- Limitation of the environmental impact of fishing
- Conditions of access to waters and resources
- Control and enforcement
- Common organisation of the markets and international relations.

Support is available for the fishing sector to modernise and adapt to the objectives of the CFP through the EU's structural funds. The European Fisheries Fund (EFF) will provide support for 2007-2013 and the UK Operational Plan for the use of EFF is under preparation.

Member States also have responsibilities under the EU *Habitats Directive* to promote the protection of biodiversity and to this end they must select and protect Special Areas of Conservation. This is implemented through a network of sites known as 'Natura 2000'.

The EU *Water Framework Directive* also has a bearing on fisheries, particularly water abstraction and discharge by land-based aquaculture operations.

Key Welsh Government strategy documents and action plans

- The *Wales Fisheries Strategy*^x was published on 29 July 2008. The Strategy looks at the future of the industry until 2020 across all sectors of aquaculture, commercial fisheries and recreational fisheries with the aim of supporting the development of viable and sustainable fisheries in Wales while safeguarding the environment.
- *Securing the Benefits*^{xi}, published jointly by the UK and devolved governments in 2005, is the UK strategy for achieving sustainable fisheries.
- *A Strategy for the Recreational Fisheries of Wales*^{xii} provides a framework by which interested parties can optimise the value of Wales' recreational fisheries.
- *The Integrated Coastal Zone Management Strategy for Wales*^{xiii} provides a management framework to facilitate integrated working on the coast and sustainable management of the coastal zone, including sustainable fishing and shellfish industries.
- *The Future management of Welsh Fisheries*^{xiv} finished its consultation on 04 August 2008. The consultation was seeking views on a proposal that the Welsh Assembly Government assumes full responsibility for the management and enforcement of sea fisheries around the Welsh coast.

Useful links

- The Welsh Government has a website covering marine and fisheries issues at: <http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/environmentcountryside/consmanagement/marinefisheries/?lang=en>
- UK Marine and Fisheries Agency can be found at: <http://www.mfa.gov.uk/>
- South Wales Sea Fisheries Committee can be found at: <http://www.swsfc.org.uk/home.htm>
- North Western and North Wales Sea Fisheries Committee can be found at: <http://www.nwnsfc.org/page/home.htm>
- The European Commission's Directorate-General for Fisheries and Maritime Affairs fisheries branch is located at: http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/index_en.htm

Further information

A research paper on the EU Common Fisheries Policy is available at:

http://www.assemblywales.org/03-004_the_reform_of_the_common_fisheries_policy.pdf

For further information on fisheries, please contact Victoria Paris (Victoria.Paris@wales.gsi.gov.uk), Members' Research Service, 029 2089 8602

ⁱ Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution, [Turning the Tide: Addressing the Impact of Fisheries on the Marine Environment](#), webpage [on 04 September 2008]

ⁱⁱ Marine Fisheries Agency, [UK Sea Fisheries Statistics 2006](#), webpage [on 04 September 2008]

ⁱⁱⁱ Defra, [Fish landings by port into England, Wales and Northern Ireland 2003](#), webpage [on 04 September 2008]

^{iv} Worm *et al.*, 2006. *Impacts of Biodiversity Loss on Ocean Ecosystem Services*, Science, 3 November 2006, 787-790.

^v Office of Public Sector Information, [Government of Wales Act 2006](#), webpage [on 04 September 2008]

^{vi} Defra, Marine and Fisheries, [Marine Bill](#), webpage [on 04 September 2008]

^{vii} European Commission, Maritime Affairs, [A Maritime Policy for the EU](#), webpage [on 04 September 2008]

^{viii} European Commission, Maritime Affairs, [Press release: Commission sets out position on ecosystem-based approach to fisheries, 11 April 2008](#), webpage [on 04 September 2008]

^{ix} European Commission, Fisheries, [Reducing by-catches and eliminating discards](#), webpage [on 04 September 2008]

^x Welsh Assembly Government, [Wales Fisheries Strategy](#), webpage [on 04 September 2008]

^{xi} Defra, [Securing the Benefits: the joint UK response to the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit Net Benefits report on the future of the fishing industry in the UK](#), webpage [on 04 September 2008]

^{xii} Welsh Assembly Government, [A Strategy for the Recreational Fisheries of Wales, 2003](#), webpage [on 04 September 2008]

^{xiii} Welsh Assembly Government, [Making the Most of Wales' Coast: The Integrated Coastal Zone Management Strategy for Wales](#), webpage [on 04 September 2008]

^{xiv} Welsh Assembly Government, [Proposal for the future management and enforcement of sea fisheries in Welsh waters](#), webpage [on 08 September 2008]