

## Fisheries

### Introduction

Fisheries are a national and international resource 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 habitats<sup>i</sup>. The majority of the Welsh commercial fishing industry lies within 12 nautical miles of coastal baselines (inshore fisheries) where the Welsh Assembly Government is jointly responsible for fisheries management with the Sea Fisheries Committees, the Environment Agency Wales and DEFRA, subject to EU regulations.

- ◆ In 2005 there were approximately 800 regular commercial fishermen in Wales and another 340 involved on a part time basis<sup>ii</sup>.
- ◆ 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 million<sup>iii</sup>.
- ◆ 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<sup>iv</sup>.

### Overview of current statutory powers of the Assembly

Fisheries are included in Field 1 of Schedule 5 of the *Government of Wales Act 2006*. This means that the Assembly can seek Measure-making powers over fisheries through Legislative Competence Orders. The Welsh Assembly Government is responsible for promoting Welsh fishing interests, implementing sea and inland fisheries legislation, protecting the variety and quality of marine species and monitoring fish health and welfare<sup>v</sup>. Responsibility for fisheries, marine policy, nature conservation and biodiversity will transfer to Welsh Ministers in the Third Assembly.

### Forthcoming EU and UK primary legislation

- ◆ A Marine Bill White Paper was published on the 15<sup>th</sup> March 2007. One of the key aims is to modernise inshore fisheries management and strengthen fisheries enforcement powers.
- ◆ A European Maritime Policy is currently under consultation – a joint response was sent to it by two of the Second Assembly's Committees. Initial conclusions are expected in October 2007 followed by a White Paper in 2008.
- ◆ A European Commission communication on reducing unwanted by-catches and eliminating discards was published on 28 March 2007. It proposes introducing legislation in this area in 2008.

### EU policy

Fisheries management is highly regulated by the EU, through the Common Fisheries Policy, 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. Common Fisheries Policy, 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 Common Fisheries Policy 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.

## Key Assembly Government strategy documents and action plans from the Second Assembly:

- ◆ *Securing the Benefits*<sup>vi</sup>, published jointly by the UK and devolved governments in 2005, is the UK strategy for achieving sustainable fisheries.
- ◆ *Development of the Welsh Fisheries and Aquaculture Sector – Strategic Action Plan*<sup>vii</sup> released in 2003 provides strategic direction to the development of fisheries and aquaculture in Wales.
- ◆ *A Strategy for the Recreational Fisheries of Wales*<sup>viii</sup> provides a framework by which interested parties can optimise the value of Wales' recreational fisheries.
- ◆ *The Integrated Coastal Zone Management Strategy for Wales*<sup>ix</sup> provides a management framework to facilitate integrated working on the coast and sustainable management of the coastal zone, including sustainable fishing and shellfish industries.

An All Wales Fisheries Strategy integrating the above strategies is currently being developed.

## Legacy issues from the Second Assembly

The Environment, Planning and Countryside Committee's legacy paper highlighted the following legislative issues for the attention of the Third Assembly:

- ◆ The Marine Bill
- ◆ The European Commission's Green Paper on maritime policy

## Useful links

1. The Welsh Assembly Government has a website covering marine and fisheries issues: [http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/environmentcountryside/env\\_cons\\_management/marine\\_fisheries/?lang=en](http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/environmentcountryside/env_cons_management/marine_fisheries/?lang=en)
2. UK Marine and Fisheries Agency can be found at: <http://www.mfa.gov.uk/>
3. South Wales Sea Fisheries Committee can be found at: <http://www.swsfc.org.uk/home.htm>
4. North Western and North Wales Sea Fisheries Committee can be found at: <http://www.nwnwsfc.org/page/home.htm>
5. The European Commission's Directorate-General for Fisheries and Maritime Affairs fisheries branch is located at: [http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/index_en.htm)

## Further information

Research papers are available on the EU Common Fisheries Policy at <http://assembly.presidingoffic/mrs/briefings/agriculture-rural-affairs-e.htm>

For further information on fisheries, please contact:

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<sup>i</sup> Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution, *Turning the Tide; Addressing the Impact of Fisheries on the Marine Environment*, 2004 <http://www.rcep.org.uk/fishreport.htm>

<sup>ii</sup> Marine Fisheries Agency UK Sea Fisheries Statistics 2005 <http://www.mfa.gov.uk/statistics/ukseafish.htm>

<sup>iii</sup> Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, *Fish landings by port into England, Wales and Northern Ireland 2003* <http://statistics.defra.gov.uk/esg/publications/fishports/default.asp>

<sup>iv</sup> Worm *et al.*, 2006. *Impacts of Biodiversity Loss on Ocean Ecosystem Services*, Science, 3 November 2006, 787-790.

<sup>v</sup> [http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/environmentcountryside/env\\_cons\\_management/marine\\_fisheries/?lang=en](http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/environmentcountryside/env_cons_management/marine_fisheries/?lang=en)

<sup>vi</sup> *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*, 2005 <http://www.defra.gov.uk/fish/sea/pdf/securingbenefits.pdf>

<sup>vii</sup> Welsh Development Agency, *Development of the Welsh Fisheries and Aquaculture Sector - Strategic Action Plan*, 2003 <http://www.countryside.wales.gov.uk/fe/master.asp?n1=5&n2=433&n3=435>

<sup>viii</sup> Welsh Assembly Government Independent Working Group, *A Strategy for the Recreational Fisheries of Wales*, 2003 <http://www.countryside.wales.gov.uk/fe/master.asp?n1=5&n2=433&n3=440>

<sup>ix</sup> Welsh Assembly Government, *Making the Most of Wales' Coast: The Integrated Coastal Zone Management Strategy for Wales*, 2007 [http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/environmentcountryside/env\\_cons\\_management/countryside\\_coastal\\_access/iczm/?lang=en](http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/environmentcountryside/env_cons_management/countryside_coastal_access/iczm/?lang=en)