



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

MEETING, DOCUMENT

Wales Sea Bass Advisory Group meeting: 23 January 2024

Notes of the meeting held on 23 January 2024.

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Attendees

Emma Boyd (EB) - NQS team at Defra
Colin Charman (CC) - Natural Resources Wales (NRW)
David Curtis (DC) - Bass Angling Conservation
Kevin Denman (KD) - South Wales and West Fishing Communities
Andy Davies (AD) - Bass Anglers' Sportfishing Society
Jim Evans (JE) - Welsh Fisherman's Association
Simon Frobisher (SF) - recreational angler
Rich Harrison (RH) - British Spearfishing Association – South West Wales
Holly Kaiser (HK) - Seafish
John O'Connor (JOC) - Angling Cymru Sea Anglers
Hannah Rudd (HR) - Angling Trust
Richard Strudwick (RS) - recreational angler
Sion Williams (SW) - Llyn Pot Fisherman's Association

Welsh Government (WG) attendees:

Julian Bray (JB) (Chair) - Head of Domestic Fisheries Policy & Management
Michelle Billing (MB) - Fisheries Policy Manager
Alun Mortimer (AM) - Fisheries Policy Manager
Bekah Cioffi (BC) - Head of Fisheries & Aquaculture Science
Tim Croucher (TC) - Head of Shore-based Fisheries Operations

Apologies

Ian McCarthy (IM) - Bangor University
Brett Garner (BG) - Llyn Fishermen's Association
Mark Bolton (MBn) - fisher

Notes

1. Welcome and introductions

JB welcomed everyone to the group, set out the purpose of the group and today's meeting and explained the ground rules for virtual meeting communications.

Each member introduced themselves.

JB highlighted the six-year delivery timeframe for the Sea bass Fisheries Management Plan (FMP) sounds like a long time but there is a lot to do, there will be challenges ahead and resources are tight.

In response to a question about the level of divergence possible between the Welsh Government and Defra, JB emphasised that the Minister for Rural Affairs and North Wales, and Trefnydd is the decision maker for Wales and any legislation will be made by the Senedd. The UK Government and Welsh Government are implementing the same Sea bass FMP so there will be similarities and collaboration. There is room for divergence of delivery but the greater the difference the more carefully it will need to be considered.

2. Overview of Bass FMP

MB presented an overview of the bass FMP and lead a discussion on the direction, short-term objectives and priorities for Wales.

There was broad agreement that the overview statement is a good start. Several amendments were suggested.

ACTION 1: In 'Priorities for Wales' section, remove "to anglers" from the second priority by next meeting.

Questions on several topics were raised, including: shore netting, introducing a catch reporting system and reviewing existing regulations.

JB confirmed these topics and others will be subjects for discussion at future meetings but noted that it highlights the need to review the evidence and legislation regarding all removals of sea bass from Welsh seas and this is something the group membership can help with.

JB advised that there may occasionally be information which it is not appropriate to share with the group but officials will work as transparently, closely and collaboratively with the group as possible.

ACTION 2: Circulate draft version of the Overview with tracked changes for agreement with the group.

3. Terms of reference

MB led the group through the draft terms of reference and asked for questions by section.

Several points were raised about section 3.1. It was agreed that officials would consider redrafting this section to remove numbers in group composition and to name members and specify their organisation.

ACTION 3: Change section 3.1 in ToR to specify membership of group by next meeting.

The following points were also addressed:

- Meetings will not be open to the public. Members of the group will represent their sector.
- Stakeholders or government officials to represent the perspective of economic impact of tourism may be invited where appropriate but not as permanent members of this fisheries management advisory group.

- Meeting notes will be made available as soon as possible after meetings following all mandatory internal procedures.

4. Discussion on next steps – including next meeting date

JB set out some high-level next steps which it is anticipated will include addressing evidence needs and reviewing existing regulations in future meetings.

MB proposed Tuesday 20 February and Tuesday 19 March were proposed as dates for the next two WSBAG meetings.

Members requested the option to nominate a deputy if they are not able to attend a particular meeting. It was agreed named deputies could be nominated and attend.

The issue of resources was raised. JB confirmed that there are well known budgetary pressures at the moment. Efficiencies will need to be considered to minimise costs. Cooperation from stakeholders to gather evidence of removals across the sector would certainly help with this. Whatever the advice from the group, decisions on committing resources will need to be authorised.

5. AOB and close

Enforcement of any new rules introduced was raised. JB explained that while enforcement is an important consideration in making new rules that are easier to enforce, it is not in of itself the focus of this group.

Actions

Actions and owners

1 In Priorities for Wales section, remove “to anglers” from the second priority by next meeting - MB.

2 Circulate draft version of the Overview with tracked changes for agreement with the group - MB.

3 Change section 3.1 in ToR to specify membership of group by next meeting - MB.

4 Circulate draft version of the ToR with tracked changes for agreement with the group - MB.

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