



Department
for Environment,
Food & Rural Affairs



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Proposed Celtic Sea and Western Channel Demersal Fisheries Management Plan

Strategic Environmental Assessment Environmental Report - Non-technical Summary

February 2026

Version: public consultation



© Crown copyright 2026

This publication is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0 except where otherwise stated. To view this licence, visit nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3.

Where we have identified any third-party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at:

FMPconsultations@defra.gov.uk

Non-technical Summary

The draft Celtic Sea and Western Channel Demersal Fisheries Management Plan (hereafter draft CSWCD FMP or this FMP) has been prepared to meet the requirements of [the Fisheries Act 2020](#). The plan covers 40 demersal species including cod, plaice, Nephrops, anglerfish, skates and rays and sharks. It sets out the policies and proposed actions that Defra and Welsh Government will use to manage the CSWCD fishing activities, so stocks are harvested within sustainable levels. Alongside these actions, the draft CSWCD FMP also sets out management to help support wider social, economic and environmental aspects of the fishery.

This environmental report (ER) has been produced in accordance with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (SEA Regulations 2004). The following issues (from Schedule 2, paragraph 6 of the SEA Regulations 2004) were scoped into the assessment:

- biodiversity
- fauna
- flora
- geology and sediments (soil)
- water
- climatic factors
- cultural heritage
- landscape and seascape

This assessment focuses on how the policies and actions in draft CSWCD FMP are likely to give rise to both significant positive and negative environmental effects. The findings of this assessment have been used to inform the development of the FMP.

This assessment was conducted against a baseline of existing evidence on the state of the marine environment set out in [updated UK Marine Strategy \(UK MS\) Part 1](#), published in 2019. Additional sources of evidence were used to establish the status of the environment in relation to issues not covered by the UK MS, such as climatic factors and cultural heritage. The historical impact of fishing activity on the marine environment has been considered part of the baseline. Our assessment used the best available evidence to reach a suitable judgement on the environmental effects of the draft CSWCD FMP.

This report sets out those plans, programmes and environmental protection objectives, both international and domestic that Defra and Welsh Government consider relevant to the draft CSWCD FMP.

This report considers and acknowledges the existing environmental effects of the CSWCD fisheries using demersal trawls, including beam trawls, otter trawls and

bottom pair trawls, as well as static nets and drift nets, on those issues scoped into this assessment, in relation to Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), the UK MS descriptors and the wider environment. The potential positive and negative environmental effects of the draft CSWCD FMP's policies and proposed actions alone and in-combination have also been assessed.

It is concluded within this Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) that current evidence shows the CSWCD fisheries have an impact on the marine environment primarily through seabed disturbance and bycatch risks. There are some impacts through reductions in prey for designated species and marine food webs, primarily through reductions in juvenile gadoids.

The impact of the CSWCD fisheries fishing in MPAs is managed by Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities (IFCAs) in the 0-6 nautical miles limit of English waters in close collaboration with Natural England. Management of English MPAs beyond the 6 nautical mile limit is in development, led by the MMO, with management in place for the highest risk gear-feature interactions. The MMO also works in close collaboration with Natural England in the 6-12 nautical mile area, and with the JNCC on the offshore aspect of the MPA byelaw programme, which is beyond the 12 nautical miles. Welsh MPAs are managed by the Welsh Government in close collaboration NRW and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC). The Marine Protected Area Management Steering Group provides strategic coordination for the management of all MPAs in Welsh seas. Further work is required to reduce the impact of the CSWCD fisheries on habitats beyond MPAs to ensure Good Environmental Status (GES) targets for seabed integrity (D6) are achieved. The contribution of the CSWCD fisheries to climate change related issues and its interactions with cultural heritage, through structural damage for example, were also identified as potential impacts.

The draft CSWCD FMP has considered these impacts and sets out proposals to monitor, and, where required, introduce mitigation to address these impacts. The assessment of likely negative effects identified a low risk of significant adverse effects on the environment from implementing individual policies and actions. The policies and actions, will, where appropriate, be developed to avoid any potential negative effects identified by the assessment progress. The environmental effects of implementing the draft CSWCD FMP policies and actions will also be monitored to identify unforeseen adverse effects at an early stage, so appropriate remedial action can be undertaken.

This assessment recommends the draft CSWCD FMP should consider the following additional points:

1. Future iterations of the FMP should consider how to develop the cultural heritage of each fishery and how fisheries management can contribute to

reducing potential negative interactions with submerged prehistoric landscapes or seascapes.

2. Future iterations of the FMP should consider how fisheries management can contribute to reducing potential negative interactions with submerged prehistoric landscapes or seascapes.