



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Consultation on the proposed Seabass Fisheries Management Plan

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Introduction

The United Kingdom has some of the best wild seafood resources in the world. Our fish stocks are a public asset which generate food and create jobs in an industry with a strong sense of identity and pride for their communities. These fish stocks also form a vital part of our marine ecosystems.

Many of our fish stocks are under pressure from fishing and climate change. Fishing can also have impacts on our ecosystem, for example, through the accidental bycatch or the effect of fishing gears on the seabed. It is therefore important to consider both the positive and negative effects of fishing as part of our overall management of the marine environment.

Defra and Welsh government have set out their plans for protecting our environment into the future. Defra published its [Environmental Improvement Plan \(EIP\) 2023](#) that sets a plan for a decade of delivery with target-led actions towards leaving our environment in a better state than when we inherited it. Welsh government published the [Environment \(Wales\) Act 2016](#) that provides an iterative framework to ensure that managing our natural resources sustainably is a core consideration in decision-making. Central to the Environment (Wales) Act is the need to adopt a new, more integrated approach to managing Wales' natural resources to achieve long-term sustainability.

The [Joint Fisheries Statement \(JFS\)](#) sets out how the UK fisheries policy authorities (Defra, and the devolved administrations in Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales) will prepare and publish 43 Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs) by 2028. The plans will bring together the evidence on the state of the stocks and identify measures and actions necessary to improve the evidence base and manage our fisheries in a sustainable way. Policies in an FMP will set out both the short-term actions and longer-term vision for the management of the fishery. The plans must also consider relevant wider legal obligations including the environmental principles under the [Environment Act 2021](#) and the need for strategic environmental assessment under the [Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004](#) (SEA Regulations 2004).

Defra and Welsh government have learned lessons from the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) and recognised the fishing industry's strong desire to take greater responsibility for managing their fisheries.

Our first two joint FMPs – King Scallop and Seabass (bass) have been developed in close consultation with our Arm's Length Bodies (ALBs), delivery partners, fishers, and wider stakeholders.

The Bass FMP

The proposed Bass FMP covers English and Welsh waters.

This consultation is seeking your views on:

- The Bass FMP as required by Schedule 1, Part 3 of the Fisheries Act 2020 (the Act); prepared by Defra in collaboration with Welsh government and supported by Policy Lab; and

- The draft bass Environmental Report which describes the likely environmental impacts of the FMP, as required under the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. This has been drafted by Defra in collaboration with Welsh government.

Defra and Welsh government will prepare economic impact assessments when implementing the FMPs (see Regulatory Impact Assessment section later). Defra have produced a high-level de-minimis regulatory impact assessment to accompany this consultation. We would welcome additional economic evidence to produce full assessments for the publication of the final FMP.

This consultation is particularly relevant to:

- Individuals, groups, or businesses who are engaged in the fishing, seafood, or aquaculture sectors, including individuals, groups, or businesses from outside the UK who fish in UK waters
- Other individuals, groups or businesses who are sea users, for example, marine industries such as offshore renewables and sailing bodies
- National and local interest groups such as environmental and recreational non-governmental organisations, and industry federations

Consultations on the other joint draft FMP (see above) and four other Defra FMPs and their Environmental Reports are taking place at the same time.

Background: Fisheries Management Plans

Why are we publishing FMPs?

Internationally, FMPs are considered the best way to manage fisheries. Leaving the EU means the UK is no longer bound by the CFP and has an opportunity to reconsider how best the UK's valuable and diverse fisheries are managed. Continuing to champion sustainable fishing and adopting management measures to rebuild and maintain stocks in the long term is central to future management. Goal 6 in the EIP also sets out the importance of FMPs to English fisheries by sustainably managing the harvesting of stocks and supporting the delivery of the appropriate objectives from the UK Marine Strategy.

The publishing of FMPs is in line with the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 as they provide a more integrated approach to managing our fish stocks to achieve long term sustainability.

[The Fisheries White Paper, Sustainable Fisheries for Future Generations, 2018](#) sets out the UK's commitment to reshape fisheries management following our departure from the EU. The Act provides a legally binding structure to protect and recover stocks, support a sustainable fishing industry, and safeguard the environment. It sets out clear objectives to provide the basis against which the fisheries policy authorities of all four UK Administrations will manage their fisheries and a commitment to developing FMPs. This commitment was expanded upon in the JFS published in November 2022 which includes a list of 43 FMPs, setting out the lead authority, the stocks covered and a timetable for

publication. Through our commitment to FMPs in the Act, we will reform and redefine our domestic fisheries management.

What are FMPs?

An FMP is an evidence-based action plan that sets out the short-term actions and longer-term vision required to achieve sustainable fisheries. The Act requires each FMP to set out policies designed to restore the stock(s) to, or maintain them at, sustainable levels. Each plan will set out a vision and goals for the target fisheries, together with the policies and management interventions necessary to achieve these goals in the shorter term. The plans will apply to all those catching fish in the target stocks, be they from the commercial or recreational sectors. Developed in a collaborative and transparent way the aim is to ensure that FMPs are relevant to the fishery or fisheries and support a more practical and flexible approach to fisheries management tailored to species, locations, and fishing activities.

FMPs may also address wider environmental, economic, and social issues and where appropriate, include elements which go beyond the statutory requirements in the Act. The EIP notes that these plans will promote selectivity, reduce negative impacts on the ecosystem and help to deliver the recovery of stocks. In Wales, the plans will help support the delivery of the goals of the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#).

How FMPs work

Each FMP will set out goals and the actions needed to achieve sustainable fisheries. The approach needed will depend on the goals set out in each plan, our level of understanding and evidence as well as the nature of the stocks and fisheries. Whilst each FMP will focus on specific stock(s), it will also be important to ensure they work together and recognise the management needs of fishermen, or stakeholders who fish stocks covered by more than one FMP. To have an impact on how fisheries are managed, FMPs will need to be implemented.

Fisheries are a devolved competency, currently managed by each administration through a combination of regulation (Retained EU Law, and domestic law including statutory instruments), byelaws, licence conditions and voluntary measures. In some cases, this management framework may remain appropriate, at least for the time being. In others, the management may need to change. This might mean the law, byelaws or licence conditions will need to be changed. Or in some cases, new management measures will need to be brought in, either by law, byelaws, through licence conditions or through voluntary measures. Where appropriate, specific engagement and consultation will be carried out on measures to implement FMP actions.

National Fisheries Authorities (Defra and the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) for England, Welsh government in Wales) are legally required to act in accordance with the policies set out in the plans. Although, Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities (IFCAs) around England are not national fisheries authorities for the purposes of the Act, they will collaborate on implementation, and they may be bound by any legislation adopted to give effect to the plans if it covers their jurisdiction.

A key feature of FMPs is that they are adaptive. The actions required to implement the FMPs, and indeed the FMPs themselves, will iterate and build over time; this is particularly important where we need to gather additional evidence to inform the development of management measures. Each of the draft FMPs identifies a range of short and longer-term actions. There will therefore be a rolling programme of implementation over the lifetime of the FMPs. It will take some time to show benefits in terms of improving the sustainability of stocks and fisheries covered by the FMPs.

Each FMP must be reviewed within six years of its publication or sooner, if required. An FMP can also be replaced or amended at any time following a consultation. These processes allow the plan to be kept up to date and adapted as knowledge and evidence improves, management measures take effect and as things change.

We are keen to continue the collaborative and transparent approach used to develop FMPs into the implementation and review phases. We are keen to hear from fishers and stakeholders about how to achieve successful future participation in FMPs through this consultation.

FMPs and other coastal States

Whilst the UK, as an independent coastal State, has regulatory autonomy to manage our fisheries, the UK is committed to working with other coastal State partners to secure the sustainable management of shared fisheries resources. This commitment was reaffirmed in the JFS. Through annual fisheries consultations with the EU and other coastal States and negotiations in other multilateral and bilateral fora, such as regional fisheries management organisations (RFMOs) or the Specialised Committee on Fisheries established under the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA), the UK will seek to achieve, or contribute to the achievement of the fisheries objectives in the Act.

Our FMPs will set out a long-term framework of policy and measures to manage fishing activity to secure the sustainability of stocks and a healthy marine environment. Where appropriate, this will inform the approach to the development of multi-year strategies for conservation and management of shared stocks proposed by the UK and EU under the TCA, and any similar long-term plans with other coastal States. Our FMPs may also be updated to reflect any agreements negotiated in these international strategies.

All regulatory measures to implement the FMPs will be binding on all vessels fishing in UK waters. Under the TCA any measures to be applied to EU vessels fishing in UK waters must be based on best available evidence and applied to both EU and UK vessels. The UK is also required to formally notify the EU of any changes to fisheries management measures likely to affect EU vessels. Defra will also ensure that other States affected by measures introduced through FMPs will be duly notified.

Approach to the development of the FMPs

The UK administrations gathered evidence and met fishing and other stakeholders in 2020 to consider what stocks and fisheries should be prioritised in the JFS. Defra and Welsh government agreed to prioritise joint FMPs for King Scallops and bass for publication in 2023.

Bass are a non-quota stock (NQS) not subject to a Total Allowable Catch (TAC). NQS are often high value, potentially vulnerable and data poor species. We have limited data on NQS, and limited management, so are therefore unable to accurately assess the health and sustainability levels of all NQS that are targeted in English and Welsh waters. The Act sets out the precautionary objective in which the absence of sufficient scientific information is not used to justify postponing or failing to take management measures to conserve target species, associated or dependent species, non-target species or their environment.

Importantly, the fishing industry has also recognised these issues and has been keen to put in place better management to ensure the long-term sustainability of the stocks. One of the major requests from the fishing industry post-EU Exit has been to have closer involvement with fisheries management with a view to moving over time to 'co-management'. It will take some time for government, regulators, fishermen and wider stakeholders to adapt to enable co-management, which means taking joint responsibility for setting goals and delivering actions.

The ambition for closer partnership working was recognised in the 2018 Fisheries White Paper, and subsequently the JFS set out the vision that industry should play a greater role in managing fisheries. To support this ambition and recognising that there is no blueprint for developing FMPs, particularly for such complex fisheries as exist around the UK, our FMPs have trialled different approaches. A range of different organisations and groups have led the development of the first FMPs, with differing approaches taken to wider engagement in their development. As a result, whilst all FMPs are designed to meet the legal requirements set out in the Act, each looks different. We are seeking feedback through this consultation on the differing engagement processes to shape the development of these and other plans in future phases and our future policy.

To support the development of FMPs views of industry and other interested parties have been collected through a series of coastal visits, meetings, and online engagement. These have been used to inform the content of FMPs and to identify the actions and measures with most support as well as identify those which can be progressed quickly and those requiring further consideration. The consultation is an opportunity to seek wider views on the output of this process. Responses to the consultation will be analysed and used to inform any changes to the draft FMPs ahead of the publication of final plans.

Summary of Seabass FMP

This FMP applies to European bass (*Dicentrarchus labrax*) in English and Welsh waters, which contributes culturally, socially, and economically to coastal communities through, for example, employment and recreational fishing interests. However, a combination of overfishing and poor year class strength (the number of individuals spawned each year) saw a sharp decline in bass stock levels from 2010. In response, a joint UK/EU management approach was implemented in 2015, which has been amended annually. These measures include a Minimum Conservation Reference Size (MCRS), domestic authorisations required to fish for bass, seasonal closures for both commercial and

recreational fishers, catch/bycatch limits for commercial and recreational fishers and only three gear types are permitted for catching bass.

Since these measures were introduced in 2015, there has been a significant increase in spawning stock biomass. Although recruitment remains low, bass is currently fished within sustainable limits aligned with International Council for the Exploration of the Seas (ICES) advice. This FMP sets out a roadmap for future management of bass in English and Welsh waters to ensure bass stocks are maintained at sustainable levels and the benefits of bass fishing can be realised by the communities that depend on them.

Stakeholder engagement and co-design for the Bass FMP was facilitated by Policy Lab, a multi-disciplinary team of policy makers, designers and researchers based at the Department for Education. Policy Lab took a collaborative mixed-method approach, engaging with over 1400 bass stakeholders across England and Wales via interviews, online debates, pop-up port visits, workshops and surveys to co-design a set of potential solutions for managing bass. Policy Lab presented the results of their extensive exercise to Defra and the Welsh government in early 2023. This work informed the drafting of the Bass FMP, alongside a parallel evidence workstream (with an independent evidence synthesis project led by Bournemouth University, in addition to contributions from ALBs) and conservation advice from Natural England, JNCC and Natural Resources Wales.

Do you have any comments on the process for developing the Bass FMP?

Evidence

This FMP has been developed based on the current biological, social and economic evidence available on bass life history, stock assessment and fishing and management practices.

Bass have a complex lifecycle, with a pelagic larval phase, juveniles then occupying nursery grounds in inshore areas, before migrating out to join the adult population. Bass are distributed across the northeast Atlantic and around all UK waters, but abundance varies between areas and seasons. Approximately 99% of bass landed within all UK waters is landed within the FMP area. Most commercial bass landings by UK vessels are caught by English vessels (82%-90% of landings between 2016 and 2021), with Welsh vessels landing most of the remainder. Vessels predominantly use hook and line (handline) fishing gears, followed by bycatch from fixed nets and demersal trawls. Bass are also an important target species for recreational fisheries, with recreational removals for all countries exploiting the northern stock estimated to be in the region of 27% of total removals.

ICES provides annual catch advice on fishing opportunities for the northern stock of bass relevant to this FMP. The assessment model that covers the northern stock is treated as Category 1, with a full analytical assessment and forecast. However, evidence gaps remain. These include limited data collection on discarding, recreational catch and limited understanding of bass stock structure and recruitment to feed into improving stock assessment estimates. Improving the evidence base on the social, cultural and economic importance of bass fishing to local coastal communities, as well as levels of compliance

and the impacts of fishing on the wider environment, will also support progress towards more sustainable bass fisheries management.

What are your views on the evidence presented on the current state of the bass stocks in English and Welsh waters and can you provide any other evidence which supports or differs from ours?

Goals for the management of bass fisheries

To ensure effective management of bass stocks in English and Welsh waters over the next six years, the Bass FMP identifies nine goals focused on domestic management priorities. These are:

1. Inclusive stakeholder engagement structures to inform management of the bass fishery
2. Equitable access to the commercial bass fishery, while prioritising stock sustainability
3. Minimise discarding of bass bycatch where survival rates are low
4. Encourage and facilitate full compliance with bass regulations
5. Maximise the benefits of bass fishing for local coastal communities
6. Sustainable harvesting of the bass stock in line with scientific advice
7. Protecting juvenile and spawning bass
8. Minimise the impact of bass fishing on the wider marine ecosystem
9. Mitigate against and adapt to the impact of climate change on bass fishing

While there are multiple complex interactions, synergies and tensions between these goals, the overarching aim of the FMP is to ensure stocks are harvested sustainably, whilst benefiting a diverse range of environmental, commercial, recreational and social interests.

Do you agree that the goals are appropriate goals for domestic management priorities within the Bass FMP?

Short-term actions:

Short-term actions to achieve the goals above are set out in the FMP. These actions can be summarised as:

- **Improved stakeholder participation**, including the establishment by government of bass management group(s) with balanced representation of stakeholders, policymakers, scientists and regulators to facilitate participation in management decisions
- **Consider which existing management measures should be reviewed**, in collaboration with the bass management group, to determine whether adjustments to the existing approach, alternative approaches or additional measures could better align with FMP goals. Priority measures for early consideration could include:
 - The current bass authorisation system and reference period

- The timing and duration of the closed seasons
- **Adaptive management approaches:** Exploring opportunities to develop more adaptive management systems which protect the stock and allow fishers to take advantage of any increases in stock abundance
- **Improving the evidence base** to inform future management, including collating additional evidence on discarding, recreational removals, and the social, cultural and economic benefits of bass fishing to local coastal communities

Do you agree that these actions are appropriate short-term priorities for the Bass FMP?

Medium-long term actions:

Over time, as both the evidence base and monitoring of management effectiveness improves, the process of implementing additional management will be developed. The Bass FMP proposes an adaptive, iterative management approach in which management decisions are implemented, reviewed, and refined with new data, to deliver long-term sustainability. The combination of measures to achieve this and how they are prioritised and sequenced will evolve as the evidence base improves and considering available resources. However, initial priorities for this phase of work outlined in the Bass FMP include:

- Consideration of:
 - Appropriate size limits for the bass stock (for example, a MCRS or slot sizes)
 - Regulation of shallow inshore and shore-based netting, to determine whether additional protections are needed to minimise the bycatch of migratory fish and juvenile bass
 - The possibility of re-defining bass bycatch for net fishers as a % catch composition definition
 - The feasibility of a model whereby all bass caught are landed, but profits are not retained upon sale
 - Implementation of a requirement that unwanted bass must be immediately discarded, to facilitate enforcement at sea not just upon landing
 - Benefits of moving away from a bycatch approach to a catch limit or quota approach
 - Possible alternative harvest strategies for bass such as Maximum Economic Yield, large stock strategy
- Improving collaboration between MMO/IFCAs on targeted enforcement and alignment of powers to ensure consistency in how both regulators enforce legislation
- Encouraging participation in Remote Electronic Monitoring early-adopter programmes where appropriate to improve data collection on sensitive species bycatch and discards

- Improving sector equality so that regulations apply to all those fishing for bass

Do you agree that the actions are suitable medium-long-term priorities for the Bass FMP?

Implementation

Once formally published, the plan will need to be implemented. This will be an incremental process, and Defra and Welsh government will be working closely with stakeholders to develop a more detailed implementation programme including timings and milestones for delivery. We will engage with all stakeholders again before any changes or new measures are introduced. These measures will not be introduced upon publications of the FMP but will be implemented through existing processes such as byelaws and license changes.

Publishing the FMP is the start of a multi-year process, and we will need to ensure that the plans strike the balance between building momentum for short-term actions and setting direction for the longer-term which can be further iterated as the evidence base is improved. The plans must be reviewed at least every six years and any amendments proposed will be consulted on as required by the Act.

One of Defra and the Welsh government's key aims has been to work closely with stakeholders to develop these first FMPs. Cross regulator, government and industry groups have been central to the development of the draft FMPs and Defra and the Welsh government want stakeholder involvement to continue beyond their publication. The successful delivery of FMPs will depend on this on-going collaboration.

How would you like to be involved in the delivery of the plan and the future management of the English and Welsh bass fishery?

Are there any important connections with or links to other fisheries that we should consider when finalising this FMP or during its implementation process?

Conclusion

In summary, the Bass FMP describes existing management measures and the available science and evidence to assess the status of bass stocks around England and Wales in 2023 and determine a sustainable level of exploitation. The FMP highlights where knowledge and evidence gaps exist to be able to establish sustainable bass fisheries. The management objectives and associated evidence and research plan guide those seeking to fill those gaps over time. The proposed management interventions seek to apply a precautionary approach to managing harvesting whilst our evidence improves. This Bass FMP aims to deliver a step change in moving us towards the long-term sustainable management of bass fisheries in English and Welsh waters.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

Defra and Welsh government are legally required to consider the environmental impact of policies, plans and programmes. The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 and the Environment Act 2021 establish frameworks to ensure that managing our natural resources sustainably

is a core consideration in decision-making; the Environment Act sets out environmental principles to guide policy making. SEA Regulations 2004 require any qualifying public plans, programmes, and strategies to undergo Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) during their preparation and prior to publication if they are likely to have a significant effect on a European marine site (either positively or negatively). FMPs are plans or programmes for the purposes of the SEA Regulations 2004. Defra and Welsh government have concluded that the proposed policies within the draft Bass FMP are likely to have significant environmental effects and, therefore, has completed a SEA. Our initial results are documented in the draft Bass FMP Environmental Report (ER) included within the current consultation. A final version will be published alongside the Bass FMP, revised to account for comments and/or further information provided during the consultation and to reflect the final form FMP published.

What is the Environmental Report and how was it developed

The SEA considers the likely significant environmental effects of implementing the policies set out in the draft Bass FMP. The ER sets out the findings of this process. The report describes the current state of the environment (the baseline) and the likely significant effects of the proposed policies in the draft Bass FMP to the baseline. The assessment identifies where the draft Bass FMP could make a positive impact on the baseline and hence our marine environment. Where the FMP may have negative effects on the baseline, the report suggests potential actions to mitigate and/or monitor these effects.

Defra and Welsh government developed the ER for the draft Bass FMP. The scope and level of detail was informed through an early consultation with our statutory Consultation Bodies: Natural England, Environment Agency, Historic England, Natural Resources Wales and Cadw together with further advice from the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC), as an advisor to the UK government and devolved administrations on UK-wide nature conservation. We drew on published information on the state of the environment and the potential impact of bass fishing on environmental features.

Summary of Seabass Environmental Report

The Seabass ER has been produced in accordance with the 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. This report assesses the likely significant effects of the proposed policies in the draft Bass FMP on these issues.

The assessment was conducted against a baseline that primarily used existing evidence on the state of the marine environment set out in the updated [UK Marine Strategy Part 1](#) published in 2019. Additional sources of evidence were used to establish the status of the environment in relation to climatic factors and cultural heritage that are not covered by the UK Marine Strategy. The historical impact of fishing activity on the marine environment has been considered part of the baseline. The assessment has been undertaken using the best available evidence to reach a suitable judgement on the environmental effects of the proposed policies in the draft Bass FMP.

Existing environmental effects of bass fishing in relation to Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and the UK MS descriptors of Good Environmental Status (GES) for the wider marine environment and climatic factors have been acknowledged and considered in this report. The potential positive and negative environmental effects of the draft Bass FMP's policies and proposed measures alone and in-combination have also been assessed.

Our SEA concluded that current evidence shows the seabass fishery has an impact on the marine environment primarily through bycatch of marine mammals, seabirds, and fish. The impact of bass fishing in MPAs is managed in the 0-12nm zone in English waters and is being assessed in Welsh waters. Management in MPAs beyond the 12nm limit is in development in England. Further work is required to reduce the impact of bass fishing beyond MPAs to ensure GES targets for seabed integrity (D6) can be achieved. The contribution of seabass fishing to climate change related issues and cultural heritage was also identified as a potential impact. The draft Bass FMP has considered these impacts and sets out proposals to monitor and where required introduce mitigation to address these impacts.

The environmental effects of implementing the Bass FMP policies and measures will be monitored to identify unforeseen adverse effects at an early stage, ensuring appropriate remedial action can be undertaken.

Is there any additional evidence we could consider, to inform our environmental baseline?

Are there any other positive or negative environmental effects associated with the policies and actions of the draft Bass FMP that we could consider?

Do you have any comments on the proposed actions set out in the Environmental Report to monitor and/or mitigate any likely significant (negative) effects on the environment of the FMPs?

Do you have any additional comments in relation to the Environmental Report which you have not been able to provide in response to the previous questions?

Regulatory Impact Assessments

The Bass FMP is a joint plan with the Welsh government. Fisheries management is devolved, and the implementation of specific measures will be taken forward by respective national fisheries authorities as appropriate. Any assessment of impacts for specific measures will also be completed by the relevant national fisheries authority, in line with each authority's individual assessment processes.

Wales

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 provides a framework for Welsh governments approach to impact assessments within the seven Well-being Goals and five ways of working.

The Welsh government will carry out any necessary impact assessments before any measures are implemented. An Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) will be conducted to

enable the Welsh government to undertake a comprehensive assessment of the impact of any changes in management, with a view to maximising economic, social, cultural and environmental well-being, not just for now, but for the long term. The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 also sets out national priorities which must be considered as part of the IIA process when setting new policy.

If new measures result in the introduction of subordinate legislation, Welsh government will ensure compliance with requirements of the Welsh Ministers' [Regulatory Impact Assessment Code for Subordinate Legislation](#) when they are implemented.

England

We recognise our commitment to balance the economic, social and environmental aspects of sustainable fisheries and have considered the [Better Regulation Framework](#) guidance and the better regulation principles of robust evidence, transparency and proportionality when preparing FMPs. Defra is completing regulatory impact assessments to assess the economic impacts of FMPs on businesses and the fishing sector.

For the purposes of the Bass FMP consultation, we have drafted a de-minimis assessment (DMA) that outlines our rationale and approach to assessing the potential impact of the plan on business. This DMA is a supporting document to the present consultation.

Whilst the Bass FMP identifies measures that could be introduced post-consultation, these proposed measures will be developed further and do not currently have sufficient detail for any economic analysis. These proposed measures could be regulatory or deregulatory with positive or negative effects business, hence it is not possible to estimate economic impacts at this time.

When individual measures are specifically implemented, the statutory or non-statutory mechanism through which these will be implemented will have their own impacts assessed in the appropriate manner.

How to respond to this consultation

The consultation will run primarily via the Citizen Space online portal. However, we will accept email and hard copy responses for those unable to access the online survey. A response form to use for email and hard copy responses is included as a related document on the Citizen Space website.

The consultation questions are in bold throughout this document. They also appear in the response form and citizen space portal. Space is also provided for general comments.

Large print and braille versions of this document are available on request.

Duration of the consultation

The consultation starts on 17 July 2023 and will end on 1 October 2023. Responses must be received by 23:59 on 1 October 2023.

Responses

Responses can be:

- Submitted via the [Bass FMP Citizen Space online portal](#).
- Sent via email to: FMPconsultations@defra.gov.uk
- Sent via post to:

Consultation - Bass FMP
FMP team – Marine and Fisheries
Seacole Building, 2 Marsham St
London
SW1P 4DF

At the end of the consultation period, we will summarise the responses, and place the summary on the UK government's website.

Confidentiality and Data Protection information

A summary of responses to this consultation will be published on the UK government and Welsh government websites at: www.gov.uk/defra and www.gov.wales/consultations. An annex to the consultation summary will list all organisations that responded, but will not include personal names, addresses or other contact details.

Defra and Welsh government may publish the content of your response to this consultation to make it available to the public without your personal name and private contact details (for example, home address, email address, etc).

If you answer 'Yes' in response to the question asking if you would like anything in your response to be kept confidential, you are asked to state clearly what information you would like to be kept as confidential and explain your reasons for confidentiality. The reason for this is that information in response to this consultation may be subject to release to the public or other parties in accordance with the legislation on access to information (this is primarily the [Environmental Information Regulations 2004](#) (EIRs), the [Freedom of Information Act 2000](#) (FOIA), the [General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018](#) (DPA)). We have obligations, mainly under the EIRs, FOIA and DPA, to disclose information to recipients or to the public in certain circumstances. In view of this, your explanation for requesting confidentiality for all or part of your response would help us balance these obligations for disclosure against any obligation of confidentiality. If we receive a request for the information that you have provided in your response to this consultation to be kept confidential, we will take full account of your reasons for requesting confidentiality of your response, but we cannot guarantee that confidentiality can be maintained in all circumstances.

If you answer 'No' in response to the question asking if you would like anything in your response to be kept confidential, we will be able to release the content of your response to

the public, but we won't make your personal name and private contact details publicly available.

There may be occasions when Defra and Welsh government will share the information you provide in response to the consultation, including any personal data, with external analysts. This is for the purposes of consultation response analysis and provision of a report of the summary of responses only.

This consultation is being conducted in line with the Cabinet Office 'Consultation Principles' and can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/consultationprinciples-guidance>.

Our privacy notice is uploaded as a related document alongside our consultation document.

If you have any comments or complaints about the consultation process, please send them to consultation.coordinator@defra.gov.uk

Consultation questions

Defra and Welsh government have a statutory requirement to separately seek public views on the draft FMP and its accompanying Environment Report.

The consultation survey has four parts:

1. Personal details and confidentiality (required)
2. Questions on the Seabass FMP
3. Questions on the Seabass FMP environmental report
4. Consultee feedback on the Online Survey (required)

You only need to respond to the questions that you wish to. However, all respondents must complete the required 'Consultee Feedback on the Online Survey' and 'personal details and confidentiality' sections before you are able submit your response to the online survey.

If you have an active interest in both documents, Defra and Welsh government encourage you to complete part 2 and 3 in full.

Enquiries

If you want to submit a consultation response, please contact:

FMPconsultations@defra.gov.uk

If you have any general enquiries, please contact: FMPs@defra.gov.uk

The JFS can be found here: [Joint Fisheries Statement \(JFS\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statements/joint-fisheries-statement-jfs)

The Act can be found here: [Fisheries Act 2020 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2020/12)