



Department  
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Food & Rural Affairs



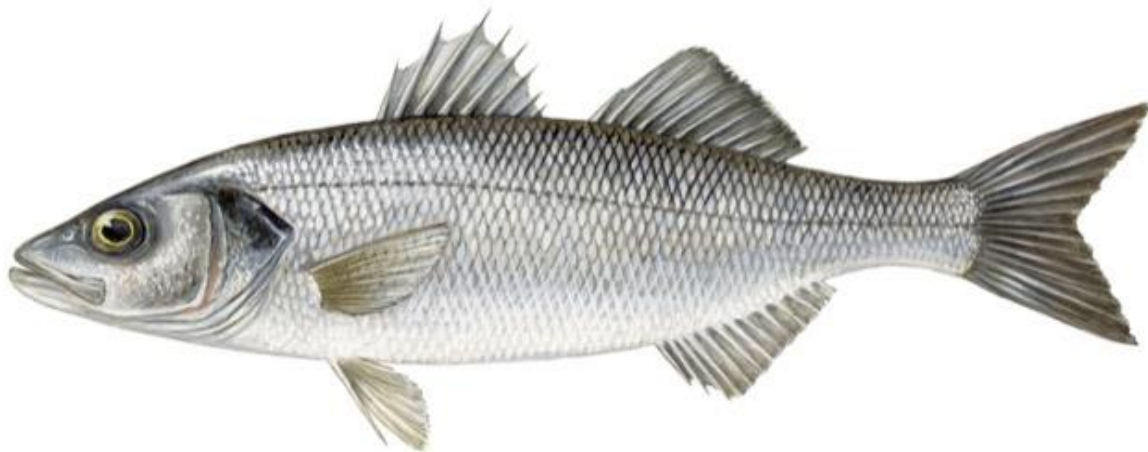
Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

# Proposed Fisheries Management Plan for Sea bass in English and Welsh Waters

## Strategic Environmental Assessment: Environmental Report – Non-technical Summary

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## Non-technical Summary

The draft Seabass Fisheries Management Plan (FMP) has been prepared to meet the requirements of the Fisheries Act 2020. It sets out the policies and proposed measures Defra and the Welsh Government will use to manage seabass fishing activity in their waters, so stocks are harvested within sustainable levels. Alongside these measures, the draft Seabass FMP also sets out management approaches 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, and cultural heritage. This report assesses the likely significant effects of the draft Seabass 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 current status of environment in relation to issues, such as climatic factors and cultural heritage that are not covered by the UK Marine Strategy (UK MS). The historical impact of fishing activity on the marine environment has been considered as 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 draft Seabass 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 Seabass FMP.

This report considers and acknowledges the existing environmental effects of seabass fishing using nets, towed gear and hook and line on those issues scoped into this assessment, in relation to Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), the UK MS descriptors of Good Environmental Status (GES) for the wider marine environment and climatic factors. The potential positive and negative environmental effects of the draft Seabass FMP's policies and proposed measures alone and in-combination have also been assessed.

This Strategic Environmental Assessment (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 seabass fishing in MPAs is managed in the 0-12nm zone in English waters. Management in MPAs beyond the 12nm limit is being developed in England. Interactions between seabass fishing activity and relevant MPA features in Wales are currently being assessed and appropriate management measures will be considered and implemented where necessary. Further work is required to reduce the impact of

## Proposed Sea bass FMP non-technical summary of environmental report

seabass 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 through net and line entanglement, for example, was also identified as a potential impact.

The draft Seabass FMP has considered these impacts and sets out proposals for the FMP to monitor, and where required, introduce mitigation to address these impacts.

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

This assessment recommends the draft Seabass FMP should consider the following additional points.

- Future iterations of the Seabass FMP should consider how it can develop the cultural heritage of each fishery and how fisheries management can contribute to reducing potential negative interactions with marine heritage assets.
- The draft Seabass FMP would benefit from providing more specific detail on how the FMP will interact with Marine Plans. Noting how the FMP could positively or negatively interact with this programme, would improve the in-combination assessment.