



Terms of Reference

English Bass Management Group & Task and Finish Working Groups

Context

The purpose of this document is to set out the Terms of Reference for the operation of the Bass Management Group (BMG) for England. Defra is now seeking to formalise a structure for the group, to oversee progress on respective task-and-finish groups to deliver the short-term actions as set out in the bass Fisheries Management Plan.

Introduction

The “establishment by Government of bass management group(s)” was a key commitment set out in the Bass Fisheries Management Plan, published in December 2023 to manage bass stocks in English and Welsh waters.

Welsh Government have established a Welsh Sea Bass Advisory Group (WSBAG). The Bass Management Group and Welsh Group will meet separately but will maintain close collaboration, with officials from Welsh Government and Defra attending both groups and meeting separately to ensure join-up.

Group Purpose/Objectives

The Bass Management Group will provide a forum for industry (including both the commercial and recreational sectors) to discuss future bass management measures in England, alongside policy makers, scientists, regulators and environmental representatives.

The key objective of the group is to deliver the short-term actions set out in the bass Fisheries Management Plan, namely:

- Improving the evidence base,
- Reviewing the current authorisation system,
- Reviewing the timing and duration of the closed seasons,
- Considering gear developments to reduce bass bycatch and discards,
- Reviewing the practice of shallow inshore netting to ensure sufficient protection for sensitive species.

The group will meet quarterly (or as needed) for face to face/online meetings. Views and recommendations from task-and-finish groups will be brought to the group for review, with all final decisions taken by Defra.

Participation of the wider stakeholder community

Minutes from groups meetings will be distributed to its members following each meeting and published. Members should support distribution to other interested stakeholders as they see fit.



Where changes of policy and management are proposed, informal consultations will provide wider stakeholders with opportunities to feed in their views for consideration.

Group Organisation

- Defra will chair the group and provide a secretariat function for the first year. After this point the position of Chair and Secretariat will be opened to other members of the group.
- Meetings will primarily be held over Microsoft Teams, with face-to-face events kept to a minimum.
- Task and finish groups will be established as required to develop key products.
- Task and finish groups will meet as necessary to deliver their products to the agreed timeline. Responsibilities for chairing and secretariat functions will be agreed between working group members.
- Task-and-finish groups will provide updates regarding their meetings through the group.
- The group will be responsible for approving all task and finish group products and recommendations.

- Minutes and transparency
 - Defra secretariat will organise meetings of the bass management group and will take minutes of each meeting. Task-and-finish groups will be expected to organise their own secretariat to carry out these functions.
 - The names of all attendees and (if relevant) the organisation(s) that they represent will be publicly available.
 - External queries regarding the group or its task-and-finish group meetings will in the first instance be directed through Defra.
 - The members of the groups will be expected to declare any conflicts of interest they may have.

- Engagement and Participation
 - Group members should nominate a designated deputy to attend the meeting in their absence. This should be confirmed prior to any meeting, to the respective secretariat.

- Accountability
 - Delegates attending any group meetings should note the GOV “Unacceptable Behaviour Policy and Procedure” guidelines (which can be viewed [here](#))

- Expertise
 - Wherever necessary, expert knowledge and scientific expertise may be brought into discussions to help inform and further the approach of the group. All group members may propose the involvement of experts and should do so within the group meetings.



Annex 1

Structure and composition of the BMG

Organisation	Role/Remit/Interest	Name of representative
Defra	Chair & policy ownership	Martin Underwood Phil McBryde Grant Horsburgh
Defra	Secretariat	Peter Elliott
Welsh Government	Advise BMG of effect of measures in Wales as well as inform wider group of experience in Wales.	Nathan Wyer & Seb Evans
Cefas	Provide scientific insight into discussion for the wider BMG.	Kieran Hyder Deputy: Gwladys Lambert
MMO	Operational delivery & advise on practical enforcement considerations.	Chris Collins & Callum Williams
Sussex IFCA	Advise on practical enforcement considerations and how management proposals will interact with regional byelaws.	Rob Pearson Deputy: Matt Mander
NE	Advise on the wider environmental impacts of topics discussed, with particular reference to relevant conservation legislation.	Libby West Deputy: Mark Duffy
Environment Agency	Advise on the wider environmental impacts of topics discussed, with particular reference to the Environment Agency's statutory obligations.	Simon Toms
e' NGOs (RSPB)	Represent the perspective of environmental eNGOs.	Bernadette Butfield Deputy: Jean Duggan
Recreational sector		
Represent the views of the wider recreational bass fishing community, including advising on possible impacts of management changes on the sector.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Angling Trust 		Hannah Rudd Deputy – Stuart Singleton-White
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional Boatman's Association 		Rob Thompson



		Deputy: Edgar Moxom
• Bass Conservation		David Curtis
• UK Bass		Sean Jukes Deputy: Andy Davies Deputy: Steven Pitts
Commercial Sector		
Represent the views of the wider commercial fishing industry, including advising on possible impacts of management changes on the sector.		
• UKAFPO		Chloe Rogers
• CFPO		Chris Ranford
• South Coast Fishermen's Council		Richard Stride
• NFFO		Mike Cohen
• Fisherman		Neil Witney
Wider supply chain	Advise on the effect of any proposed measures/regulations on the wider supply chain related to bass fishing in England and Wales.	Contact to be confirmed. This will be decided on by the members of the group in the first meeting.

Annex 2

Proposed task-and-finish groups of the Bass Management Group

The group will decide on the composition and size of any respective task-and-finish groups, as well as the order in which these groups may be formed and frequency of them meeting.

Members will appoint a chair to provide updates to the group at each quarterly meeting.

Task-and-finish proposals:

(1) Evidence

Purpose - Consider Goal 1 of the bass FMP

- How to fill/prioritise FMP evidence gaps
- How best to monitor and reduce discarding in the commercial sector,

(2) Authorisations

Purpose – Consider Goal 2 and Goal 8.1 of the bass FMP.

- Review the current authorisation system with consideration to current figures relating to bycatch of sensitive species and discard as well as economic impacts on coastal communities and fishers.



(3) Closed Season

Purpose - Consider Goal 7 of the bass fisheries management plan.

Reviewing the most suitable timing and duration for the closed seasons, including:

- Considering whether additional evidence is required, e.g. on implications for the stock of having different closed seasons both between UK and EU waters and within UK waters.
- Considering impacts of any proposed changes on fishers/industry membership.

(4) Gear

Purpose - Consider Goal 3 and Goal 8.1 of the bass fisheries management plan.

- Considering potential gear developments to reduce bass bycatch and discards from nets and trawls, including e.g. mesh sizes aligned with the MCRS.
- Consider potential gear modifications and engagement with relevant schemes to help reduce the bycatch of sensitive species associated with bass fishing.

(5) Netting

Purpose – Consider Goal 8.1 of the bass fisheries management plan

- Review the practice of shallow inshore netting to determine whether additional protections are needed to prevent migratory fish and sensitive species bycatch.