



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

PUBLICATION, DOCUMENT

# **Wales Sea Bass Advisory Group meeting: 4 February 2025**

Notes of the meeting held on 4 February 2025.

**First published:** 4 February 2025

**Last updated:** 4 February 2025

# Contents

**Attendees** (<https://www.gov.wales/pdf-optimised/node/72206#187782>)

**Notes** (<https://www.gov.wales/pdf-optimised/node/72206#187784>)

**Actions** (<https://www.gov.wales/pdf-optimised/node/72206#187786>)

# **Attendees**

## **Group**

Kevin Denman (KD)  
Mark Boulton (MB\*)  
Sion Williams (SW)  
Chris Davies (CD)  
Jim Evans (JE)  
Brett Garner (BG)  
Holly Kaiser (HK)  
David Curtis (DC)  
Simon Frobisher (SF)  
Sean Jukes (SJ)  
Richard Harrison (RH)  
Colin Charman (CC)  
Peter Elliott (PE)  
Hannah Rudd (HR)  
John O'Connor (JO)  
Mark Owen (MO)  
Andy Davies (AD)  
Kieran Hyder (KH)

## **Welsh Government**

Michelle Billing (MB)  
Julian Bray (JB)  
Seb Evans (SE)  
Nathan Wyer (NW)  
Matthew Sayer (MS)  
Barrie John (BJ)

## **Apologies**

Richard Strudwick (RS)  
Ian McCarthy (IM)

## **Notes**

### **Welcome and introductions, purpose of meeting**

JB welcomed everyone to the first meeting of 2025 and relayed apologies from Richard Strudwick and Ian McCarthy.

He set out the agenda and thanked Hannah Rudd (Angling Trust) and Kieran Hyder (Cefas) for offering to present in the meeting.

A member asked if he could raise some questions relating to the previous meetings minutes. These are addressed in the AOB.

### **Review and sign-off notes and actions of previous meetings**

MB confirmed the draft notes and actions from meeting 7 on 5 December had been circulated with the agenda prior to the meeting and noted the following:

- actions 1,2,6,8 have all been completed
- actions 3 and 4: still to obtain advice; roll these over to the next meeting
- action 5: drafting the socio-economic spec is ongoing; roll over to the next meeting

MO noted he had attended the meeting but was not included in the list of attendees.

MB confirmed the notes of meetings 3 to 6 are published on the WG website.

Action: follow up actions 3, 4 and 5 from meeting 7:

- obtain advice on how recreational bag limits might be varied
- speak to enforcement about the monitoring of recreational bass boats in South Wales
- share outline of approach to socio-economic survey with the group before contract is let

Action 1: update meeting 7 notes to include MO in the list of attendees.

## **Potential voluntary catch recording system (VCRS) update**

NW revisited discussions with the group regarding the potential development of a VCRS and sought input on how the system could be used to capture the location of where shore-nets are being used:

- local authority nearest to where the net is set: 15 authorities; simple method but not precise. A second part to the question could be added to allow a more specific location to be selected i.e. a list of beaches or boundaries between authorities' areas
- Welsh ports: approximately 50
- coastal towns/cities: These could be grouped in regions with a max. 25 options per drop box, i.e. north, mid, south, west with locations within each

NW confirmed location selections could be saved and automatically populate for further entries.

KH suggested ICES rectangles and possibly latitude/longitude for a more precise location, also that the purpose of the data for and resolution required might determine the method used.

NW explained using ICES rectangles had been considered but there are complications with how this displays on a mobile phone which can lead to inaccurate entries.

NW also explained using free text boxes to enter a location was not considered helpful due to mis-spelling and different spelling of some areas.

A member noted success using What3words to fix positions – the app is simple to download and is free.

One member believed the list of locations would be quite short as most shore-netters tend to use the same areas consistently. He also voiced concern about having to learn how to use yet another app just to fix location.

Another member felt that to get the largest buy in, it would be sensible to keep areas reasonably vague as fishers wouldn't appreciate their spots being publicised.

JB suggested that if there were no more than 25 beaches in the list, the option of local authority/beach name could work and data from the call for evidence could help identify the beaches being used.

KH noted that from experience, it is best to agree a granularity at which you want to report, then work out the best way of using technology to achieve it. He felt exact locations are preferable but reporting as ICES rectangles would also be suitable.

## **Call for evidence update**

SE confirmed the call for evidence opened on 20 January and will run to 28 February. He thanked members of the group for their help in developing the document and asked members to continue to encourage as many responses as possible.

## **Recreational fisheries data**

MB reminded the group of the agreed evidence priorities for recreational data:

- increase participation in data recording, (e.g. sea angling diaries)

- explore ways to enhance existing recording systems or develop new ones
- encourage support from UK and EU partners for recreational data collection

MB emphasised the lack of available data leads to uncertainty on the impact of the recreational sector on stock health, and this needs to be addressed.

## **Sea angling data collection: presentation by KH and HR**

KH declared he has a vested interest in continuing to develop the sea angling diaries and had made the assumption this would continue to be the platform for capturing recreational angling data rather than developing a new system.

During the presentation and discussion the following points were noted:

- sea angling diaries are a UK-wide system, but it is possible to drill down to Wales-level detail to provide catch, participation and socio-economic data
- volunteers are relied upon to report catch each month and details about their demographic are known. This is combined with face-to-face survey data for accounting
- 1 to 2 snap surveys with diarists are carried out each year asking about specific things i.e. expenditure, and how fishing affects wellbeing and physical and mental health
- considers the economic impact of members driving to the coast, staying in a hotel and purchasing food and tackle from local shops as well as capital spend i.e. member who have bought a boat, boat rods etc
- computer modelling allows total spend to be predicted, taxes and imports removed and ultimately gross value added (GVA) to be predicted, although it is recognised that it is difficult to split this down into specific fish species i.e. what portion is due to bass
- Pembrokeshire bass lure tour: a 3-day bass specific event. Participants could be approached for specific bass data (approx. 130 participants in 2024)
- suggested that a comparison for the commercial fishery would be interesting in terms of commercial fishers' investment and its socio-economic impact and thus importance. KH explained the bass Fishery Management Plan (FMP) doesn't distinguish between commercial and recreational activity and

refers to the value of the fishery to local coastal communities

- online tackle sales: KH explained he had tried to look at where spend was happening in the tuna fishery (locally, nationally, internationally). Economic concept known as 'leakage': what of the spend goes into the local economy
- 'willingness to pay' (WTP): WTP under different management measures; looking at the management impacts on welfare value
- data from the census, effort and catches can all be modelled together and that the method has been shown to work well with the biases which exist within the diary
- catchwise: volunteers visited stretches of coastline around England and Wales to count the numbers of anglers and interview them to find out about what they caught. This is a gold standard method of data collection but is expensive. Used to compare diary catches to catches from catchwise
- acknowledged that to achieve a good comparison, the levels of bias in catchwise need to be better understood

Part 2 of the discussion focused on how to increase the levels of contribution in Wales. Questions for consideration are:

- how can we:
  - demonstrate the importance of anglers as stakeholders in Wales?
  - properly recognise the importance of data to encourage people to supply it?
  - increase the number of diarists in Wales?
  - get a broad range of diarists in Wales?
  - ensure complete data sets?
- are we happy to use the sea angling diaries as the vehicle for this?

HR suggested there is a sense of distrust within the angling community as to how data is used. Key to addressing this is the need to educate anglers on the importance of the data and how it influences management discussions.

The challenges of using social media as a marketing platform were discussed and some members volunteered to promote the angling diaries in online angling groups to try and help break down barriers.

A member noted achieving the primary objective of the FMP, the long-term

sustainability of the bass stock, means being able to accurately account for all mortality and recreational removals are significant.

HR suggested the Welsh Government and Defra need to be clearer on the importance of recreational angling data in the delivery of the FMPs and that recreational anglers are stakeholders.

HR suggested a statement could be published on the Welsh Government website recognising the recreational sector is integrated in the Fisheries Act 2020 and the link to the FMP. This could be used to explain the importance of the sea angling diaries as a main source of data on recreational angling and how this data would be used to inform the decision-making process. It was felt this is new territory and a statement from government to set the scene would be of benefit.

A member felt the lack of mention of recreational angling in the recently published strategic approach for fisheries and aquaculture added to the feeling that recreational angling was not important.

Action 2: prepare a statement on the role of recreational angling and importance of recreational data in delivery of the bass FMP.

A member asked if Welsh participation in the diaries was to be increased what would be considered a good level of participation.

KH said this would require a power calculation to determine the sample size as, while sample sizes are relative to confidence, a small sample can give good data if the sample is representative and depending on how you analyse it.

KH noted that a few thousand participants is the best participation achieved globally.

Action 3: arrange meeting with KH to explore how a power calculation could be conducted to determine the optimal sea angling diaries participation figure to act as a target.

The pros and cons of methods of promoting the sea angling diaries/need for data capture and how success is quantified were discussed, including:

- leaflets in tackle shops: needs the buy-in of tackle shops to distribute the leaflets; hard to quantify benefit/success
- facebook: many angling groups have pages which could promote the diaries; good reach across the angling community; need the buy-in of page administrators; posts disappear
- ambassadors: possibly a celebrity to promote the diaries and need for data; raises the profile

JB asked if work had been done on identifying barriers to anglers using the diaries.

KH said analysis in 2018 showed 50% of anglers asked were willing to provide data but only if it was not going to be used against them.

JB brought the discussion to a close noting it had been useful but needed to go further to determine what actions could be taken.

A separate meeting with HR and KH was suggested to draft a package of actions to bring to the next meeting.

Action 4: explore potential use of ambassadors to promote sea angling diaries.

Action 5: arrange meeting with KH and HR to develop package of actions aimed at improving the quality of recreational data.

## **Next steps; AOB; date of next meeting**

JB reminded members of the commitment to review the Terms of Reference and group membership annually, but felt this was not the right time. Instead JB suggested this was changed to every 2 years. There were no objections.

Action 6: amend commitment to review the Terms of Reference and group membership from annually to every two years.

A member asked if they could raise some AOBs:

1. Has the overview document been published on the website?

MB confirmed it was, however, this was an error. The shore-based netting review has been published not the overview.

The bass FMP overview will be published at the same time as the king scallop FMP overview. Members will be notified when this happens.

2. It was noted that recreational angling was omitted from the DFM written statement “Strategic Approach to Welsh Fisheries and Aquaculture”.

3. Has the conversation on shore-netting happened with the SFC?

MS explained the timetable was still being scheduled. The technical discussions are scheduled for 10 February but bass was not on the agenda.

4. Is enforcement activity reported? This would provide reassurance that enforcement is taking place.

BJ stated nothing is currently published but this could be looked at in the future.

5. Is there an update on the alternative harvest strategies work?

NW said work was ongoing and hoped to be able to share more at the next meeting.

6. With the recent decision to shrink stock by 3% it would be a good time to discuss fishery management sustainable yield (FSMY).

JB asked the member to put this AOB in writing as time was short.

JB closed the meeting with thanks to all for their contributions.

## **Actions**

### **Outstanding actions from previous meetings**

#### **Meeting 5: 17 September 2024**

1. Desk-based study addressing potential evidence gaps to enable consideration of alternative management objectives. NW: completed 26 August 2025.

## Meeting 7: 5 December 2024

1. Obtain advice on how recreational bag limits might be varied. MB: ongoing.
2. Speak to enforcement about the monitoring of recreational bass boats in South Wales. MB: ongoing.
3. Share outline of approach to socio-economic survey with the group before contract is let. MB: completed 6 June 2025.

## New actions from this meeting

1. Update meeting 7 notes to include MO in the list of attendees. SE: completed 4 March 2025.
2. Prepare a statement on the role of recreational angling and importance of recreational data in delivery of the bass FMP. SE/HR: ongoing.
3. Arrange meeting with KH to explore how a power calculation could be conducted to determine the optimal sea angling diaries participation figure to act as a target. KH: completed 14 October 2025.
4. Explore potential use of ambassadors to promote the sea angling diaries. MB: ongoing.
5. Arrange meeting with KH and HR to develop package of actions aimed at improving the quality of recreational data. MB: completed 24 February 2025.
6. Amend commitment to review the Terms of Reference and group membership from annually to every two years. SE: completed 7 February 2024.

**This document may not be fully accessible.**

For more information refer to our [accessibility statement](/accessibility-statement-govwales) (/accessibility-statement-govwales).