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Wales Marine and Fisheries

Strategic Action Plan

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Introduction

A Vision for Marine and Fisheries in Wales

1. On 18 June 2013, the Minister for Natural Resources and Food, Alun Davies, made an oral statement to the National Assembly of Wales setting out a vision for the development of the marine and fisheries policy in Wales. The Minister undertook then to publish a Marine and Fisheries Strategic Action Plan for Wales in November. This Plan fulfils that commitment and aims to provide a framework for clean, healthy, safe, productive and biologically diverse seas. The elaboration of this Marine and Fisheries Strategic Action Plan is timely, not only to reflect the reform work in Wales but also as there is an unprecedented level of change that is being driven by legislation, both domestic and European. Much of this change will be focussed over the next three to four years and some of it is already underway. The changes will lead to a radically different, pro-active and positive way to steward the marine environment and to manage fisheries. Together they provide an opportunity to ensure greater coherence across marine-related work within and beyond Welsh Government
2. That major change related work will be managed within Welsh Government under Programme Management principles and alongside existing and ongoing work. This will afford the development of this innovative area of Welsh Government responsibility the priority and resourcing that it requires and allow effective delivery of new initiatives alongside the vital day-to-day work.
3. As the Minister for Natural Resources and Food set out in June, the Welsh Government is committed to integrated policy-making for our coasts and seas. The full delivery of that is a process that will take a number of years.
4. The Welsh Government realises that Wales' tourism, transport, fisheries and marine renewable energy industries, amongst others, are vital to the needs and vibrancy of coastal communities. Many of these industries are developing rapidly. The Welsh Government is committed to the sustainable use of our seas and coasts and will aim to have a Welsh National Marine Planning process for the Inshore and Offshore areas, in place by the end of 2015. This will be an important point in the establishment of Wales' marine planning system which will provide an enabling framework for the future sustainable development of those industries.
5. Welsh Government is committed to implementing an ecosystem based approach to the management of our seas. The Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) sets out such an approach. Under the MSFD, we are required to achieve the Good Environmental Status (GES) of our seas by 2020. We want to integrate the delivery of the MSFD with the marine planning process. Achieving GES can also provide a positive boost to sustainable fisheries and aquaculture and other industries and activities that depend upon a healthy marine environment.
6. The Wales Fisheries Strategy, published in 2008, signalled the need to improve fisheries legislation and a move towards more sustainable fisheries. Whilst this strategy has served the industry well, the Welsh Government Marine and Fisheries Division has been reviewing it to ensure it is fit for purpose, easy to understand and in line with current demands and legislation.

¹ www.assemblywales.org/docs/rop_xml/130618_plenary_bilingual.xml#88055

7. Working closely with a range of stakeholders, this new Marine and Fisheries Strategic Action Plan aims to safeguard environmental resources; use them as a driver for economic growth and help to ensure that the Welsh fishing industry receives the level of support it needs in order to grow and become more competitive. From small-scale coastal fisheries to fresh water fishing and aquaculture projects, Wales has the potential to fully develop a sustainable marine and fisheries industry which everyone can benefit from, and be proud of.
8. The Welsh Government is committed to helping support the sustainable growth of aquaculture and has ambitious plans to double Wales' annual finfish aquaculture output, from 1 000 tonnes to 2 000 tonnes by 2020, and shellfish aquaculture production from 8 000 tonnes to 16 000 tonnes. In order to ensure such growth, the current administrative and licensing procedures must be simplified, supporting innovation and collaboration between industry and academic research centres and developing the co-location of aquaculture with other marine industries. The Welsh Government will ensure that the new European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) is aligned to develop programmes that will support the delivery of the Marine and Fisheries Strategic Action Plan and will work with local businesses to enable them to make the best use of the full range of European funds available.
9. Coastal communities require support if they are to develop a fishing sector that is resource efficient, low carbon, resilient and in line with both, the "Blue Growth" and "Green Growth" agendas. This is why the Welsh Government has started a process of integrated policy-making for our seas and coasts, focussing initially on marine planning, management and fisheries. The Welsh Government plans to develop that approach further alongside, and as a component of, our approach to marine planning.

Wales Marine and Fisheries Strategic Action Plan

10. This is the beginning of a phase in which Welsh Government will launch new initiatives in marine and fisheries management in Wales. This Plan is a work in progress; the Welsh Government will work closely with stakeholders to refine and develop it, particularly in the light of emerging European Union work to implement the new Common Fisheries Policy (CFP).
11. Many people look to our seas to make a living or to enjoy their leisure and will have an interest in the changing way that our seas and coasts will be managed. Change on this scale can be complex and it is important that we both communicate and seek the views of those directly affected by the change. We need to examine further how best to ensure that a wider range of stakeholders have the chance to play an active role. The development of stakeholder consultative structure is an important part of the achievement of the Welsh Government's ambitions for improved marine management. The Welsh Government is reviewing marine stakeholder arrangements and plans to identify and publish options for that in the coming months. The Welsh Government continues to work with Natural Resources Wales, who manage most inland fisheries in Wales, to identify and establish new, appropriate mechanisms for stakeholder engagement on inland fisheries. The focus of this Plan relates specifically marine and fisheries matters. As the Minister explained, the bigger, longer-term ambition is for an integrated approach to the development of all policies across Welsh Government affecting our seas and our coastal communities through the establishment of Marine Planning and integrated marine governance arrangements. The Minister for Natural Resources and Food intends to discuss this further with Cabinet colleagues in the coming months. Following

that work, the Welsh Government expects to make an announcement during 2014 explaining how this can best be set up to allow the expansion of marine-based jobs, and promote economic growth (“Blue Growth”) across the sector. That work will aim to identify ways in which our coastal communities, and the economy they depend on, can be strengthened by addressing the underlying socio-economic issues and finding solutions through local community engagement.

12. This Strategic Action Plan also builds upon the Inquiry into marine policy in Wales, published by the Environment & Sustainability Committee of the National Assembly for Wales in January 2013. The Welsh Government has already accepted, in whole or in principle, the recommendations of that Inquiry. In particular, the commitments to six-monthly Ministerial statements updating on progress, and the publication of this Action Plan, are responses to the high-level Recommendations of that Inquiry. Welsh Government actions in relation to the various other recommendations apparent in the following sections.
13. The Strategic Action Plan will be delivered in partnership with stakeholders. Working closely with them, the Welsh Government will create the right environment for businesses to set up and prosper, attracting innovative companies to grow the coastal economy and making sure we utilise our natural marine resources in a sustainable way.
14. The Welsh Government will continue to develop the three Inshore Fisheries Groups (IFGs) across Wales set up to improve management of local fisheries as a partnership between Welsh Government and fishermen. They have recently been reviewed and now operate more effectively with a smaller membership focussed more on active fishermen, but also including representation from scientists, environmental bodies and Natural Resources Wales. These IFGs report to the Wales Marine Fisheries Advisory Group (WMFAG), established to make recommendations to Welsh Ministers on specific action needed to improve the development of sustainable fisheries in Wales.
15. These Groups are a vital part of ensuring that the Welsh Government understands the needs of fishermen and to try to take their views into account as far as possible in the development of management decisions, policies and legislation. They also allow the Welsh Government to explain to fishermen directly the statutory environmental obligations that it and other public bodies operate under in relation to, for example, the EU Habitats and Birds Directives, and how they can help meet them. These Groups will have an important role in the implementation and elaboration of this Strategic Action Plan.
16. The Welsh Government is clear that the better management of the marine environment and fisheries practices requires a fit for purpose evidence base. For much of our marine environment, we are still short of the levels of knowledge that we need in order to operate all Welsh fisheries on an ecosystem-basis at levels that are known to be at the maximum sustainable level, or to be fully confident of the best sustainable use of a marine site for an economic purpose. Plugging that evidence gap is a significant project that needs to be undertaken in order to fulfil our various EU obligations under environmental and fisheries legislation. Some of that data collection work will be undertaken specifically for those purposes, but will also support the Marine Planning Process, as outlined below. The Welsh Government is establishing efficient procurement arrangements for the necessary research to be undertaken on its behalf.

² www.senedd.assemblywales.org/mglIssueHistoryHome.aspx?IId=4412

Marine Planning

17. The system of marine planning in the UK has already begun. All four UK administrations adopted a UK Marine Policy Statement (MPS) in March 2011. As the framework for marine plans, the MPS will ensure appropriate consistency in marine planning across the UK marine area. The MPS also sets the direction for marine licensing and other relevant authorisation systems.
18. Under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 (MCAA) Welsh Ministers are responsible for creating marine plans in Wales. The Welsh Government intends to develop a Welsh National Marine Planning Process (WNMP) by 2015. Marine plans provide the opportunity to manage marine activities in a sustainable manner taking into account economic, social and environmental considerations. The WNMP will support and inform marine licensing by clarifying marine objectives and priorities and directing decision makers and users towards more consistent, evidence-based decisions for the sustainable use of marine resources in the Welsh inshore and offshore regions. Decisions by public authorities which may affect a marine area must be made in accordance with the MPS and any relevant marine plans.
19. The process for marine planning will begin this financial year. In accordance with the MCAA the Welsh Government will send out letters indicating intent to start the marine planning process to related planning authorities before the end of 2013. The Welsh Government will then publish the Statement of Public Participation (SPP) for Marine Planning in Wales early in 2014. The SPP will set out how and when the Welsh Government will engage with stakeholders throughout marine planning process for Wales.
20. As part of the marine planning process the Welsh Government will undertake a strategic scoping exercise to ensure that marine planning is based upon the best available evidence and that strategic issues that marine planning may be able to address are identified early in the process.
21. Welsh Government will work with the public bodies who will be users of the Marine Plan to issue licenses and consents to understand how a WNMP can add value to decision-making by bringing greater clarity and certainty to licensing processes.
22. Following the strategic scoping exercise, and after considering the SPP consultation responses and stakeholder feedback the Welsh Government will consult on the visions and objectives for the WNMP. This is scheduled to take place from spring 2014.

Marine Licensing

23. The Welsh Ministers are the licensing authority under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 – Part 4 – marine licensing. The marine licensing functions have been delegated to Natural Resources Wales which undertakes the role on the Welsh Government’s behalf. The Welsh Government retains certain functions in relation to marine licensing, including powers to set fees via regulation. Welsh Government is working with Natural Resources Wales to carry out a fees review and powers are also being sought to extend the fee making powers via the Environment (Wales) Bill.
24. Decisions on marine licensing are made by Natural Resources Wales in accordance with the requirements of Part 4 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 and the principles of sustainable development. Once a Welsh National Plan is in place, decisions made by Natural Resources Wales and other decision makers, will need to be made in accordance with the Plan. As noted above, Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales plan to work with stakeholders, as part of embedding Marine Licensing into the Marine Planning Process, to seek to streamline and to simplify consenting.



Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD)

25. A key driver for the holistic approach to managing our waters, the MSFD requires Member States to put in place the necessary management measures to achieve Good Environmental Status (GES) in their marine waters by 2020. This involves ensuring all the components required for a healthy marine ecosystem are monitored and targets are set to achieve the standard. This will protect the marine environment and restoring it, where practical, whilst providing for sustainable uses of marine resources. The MSFD is consistent with the Welsh Government's vision of clean, healthy, safe and productive and biologically diverse oceans and seas.
26. The "Marine Strategy Part One: UK Initial Assessment and Good Environmental Status" was published in December 2012³ setting out an initial assessment of the current status of our seas and setting out characteristics of GES for our waters, with more specific environmental targets and indicators to underpin this. The Marine Strategy Part One promotes an ecosystem-based approach to the management of human activities in our marine environment.
27. The next stage for MSFD implementation is to put in place monitoring programmes to measure progress towards GES by 15 July 2014. Following that, by December 2015, a programme of management measures to achieve GES by 2020, must be established.
28. The Marine and Fisheries Strategy and components of the Action Plan will deliver a range of key outcomes for the implementation of MSFD in Welsh waters and the achievement of GES by 2020. For example, marine planning and marine licensing are expected to be tools for delivery as well as the new CFP and the Welsh Government's approach to Marine Protected Areas in Welsh waters (including implementation of the Habitats and Birds Directives).
29. The Marine and Fisheries Strategy will also enable a positive approach to joined-up working where there are cross cutting themes across Welsh Government and on non-devolved matters, with the UK Government. Marine Planning provides a platform for this holistic approach to managing our waters.
30. The Welsh Government also recognises that managing our marine environment cannot be done in isolation. Many of the significant activities that impact on our seas, such as fisheries, are managed at a European or International level. MSFD puts in place a framework to allow co-ordinated action across Europe to improve the marine environment, giving us all the wider, necessary tools to achieve the visions for Welsh waters.

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/marine-strategy-part-one-uk-initial-assessment-and-good-environmental-status>

Contributing towards a coherent and well managed network of marine protected areas

31. A range of marine habitats and species are protected by a variety of different types of marine protected areas (MPAs) that cover 36% of Welsh seas. The Welsh Government must contribute to a coherent and well-managed network of MPAs by 2016 to comply with the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) and the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 (MCAA).
32. To assess progress towards achieving a coherent network the Welsh Government is working with the other UK administrations, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee and Natural Resources Wales to carry out a stocktake of our current MPA network. This is a substantial piece of work that consists of a number of different phases that will be taken forward over the next year.
33. We are already aware of some shortfalls in our contribution to the network. Natural Resources Wales will begin a consultation in January to seek views on extending protection around three seabird breeding colonies. We are proposing to extend the area of these sites into the water adjacent to the colonies to protect the marine areas the birds rely on for maintenance behaviours related to the breeding sites. We will also continue discussion with Natural Resources Wales regarding any other areas important to birds in Welsh seas.
34. To ensure that our network contributes to the conservation and improvement of the marine environment, it is important that Welsh Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) are well managed. The Welsh Government has been working with Natural Resources Wales to identify ways in which the management of Welsh MPAs can be improved. As a first step it will be creating an MPA management steering group to agree the priorities for improvement and ensure consistency across Wales. This group will play an important role in co-ordinating the management of all Welsh MPAs and it is expected that the group will meet for the first time before the end of March 2014.

Sustainable Fisheries

A Healthy Marine Environment

35. It is essential that we all recognise the role our fisheries play in the ecosystem. This means we need to manage our natural resources together so that our underlying ecosystems are sustained in a healthy, functioning way. It is this feedback and balance between use and maintenance of the natural environment that is at the heart of the ecosystem-based approach.
36. The establishment of Natural Resources Wales provides a very positive opportunity to support this approach. It has already reached agreement with the Welsh Fisherman's Association to help build a sustainable industry in a way that does not compromise the future for a healthy and diverse marine environment. As part of this, both organisations will seek to share scientific information so that decisions affecting Wales's fishing industry can be based on sound evidence
37. The Welsh Government is aiming to develop the fishing industry by looking at the management of all natural resources in the marine environment and providing a balanced framework for the consideration of potential uses of our seas, including:
 - A single Division in the Welsh Government dealing with marine and fisheries to ensure a more integrated policy-making approach for our seas and coasts.
 - The identification of specific actions (see attached action plan) to ensure that Wales meets its various obligations for the protection of our seas and coasts.
 - The delivery of these actions in a way that supports the sustainable use of our marine natural resources.
 - Simplified and enhanced controls and more effective enforcement operations to further encourage compliance by the fishing industry
38. This should achieve a successful marine economy by ensuring resources are used to maximise sustainable activity, prosperity and opportunities for all, both now and in the future. In particular, this approach will help to ensure fish stocks are managed in a sustainable manner.
39. The agreement recognises that fishermen and shellfish cultivators make a valuable contribution to the stewardship and management of inshore waters and that fishing is an integral part of the fabric and heritage of the coastal communities in Wales, socially and economically.
40. In his June statement, the Minister signalled his intention to develop a co-management approach with the fishing industry as set out in the WFA's document "Striking the Balance". The WFA is now seeking to implement a regional co-management approach, based on the principles of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, on the Llyn peninsula. This will be a key demonstration of the principles in practice and the Minister is keen to participate in this important initiative.

Common Fisheries Policy

41. The new framework for managing fisheries within European waters is set to commence on 1 January 2014 with a reformed package of measures. This package of measures includes:
 - the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) – overarching regulation to manage fisheries within the EU;
 - the Common Organisation of the Market (CMO) – for the marketing fisheries products; and
 - the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) – the financial instrument to deliver the changes.
42. The reformed CFP will establish the high level framework to enable Member States to manage fisheries and deliver the objectives of the reform including the discard ban, achieving Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) for all major fisheries by 2020, establishing Multi-Annual Plans to support decisions around fishing opportunities while maintaining MSY, introducing a regional approach to management and improving aquaculture.
43. To implement a reformed CFP will require legislative changes to deliver the objectives. This includes a revised Control Regulation and Technical Control measures, but also corresponding domestic legislation to deliver those changes within Member States.
44. The delivery of a reformed CFP is a statutory commitment placed upon the UK as a Member State and its delivery in Wales is devolved to the Welsh Government. In addition to the initial changes, the reformed CFP provides the basis for the day-to-day management of fisheries through licensing and quota and associated statutory enforcement obligations.
45. The new CFP also offers the possibility of a more decentralised approach to aspects of fisheries management. Where EU Member States with a shared interest in a fishery can collaborate and agree on certain regulatory measures (e.g. minimum landing size, mesh size) they may seek to have these embodied into the CFP regulatory framework as part of a more “regionalised” approach to decision-making. Although the process for this is complex and likely to be time-consuming, the Welsh Government remains committed to working with the rest of the UK, and other Member States in order to find the best mechanisms for the most sustainable management of the various fisheries in Welsh waters.
46. An important element to deliver the new CFP in Wales is the management of licensing and quota. The UK Fisheries Concordat provided the mechanism to enable those functions to be managed by the Welsh Government. There has been good progress in 2013 on implementing this and the Welsh Government plans to establish regional groups in 2014 to provide effective industry input on licensing and quota management.

European Maritime and Fisheries Fund

47. The European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) will be the new European fund for 2014-2020 established to support the development of sustainable fisheries and aquaculture, and the implementation of the new Common Fisheries Policy (CFP). It also combines 'data collection' and 'control & enforcement' funding which was previously captured under separate funding regimes. The EMFF has 4 broad objectives set at a European level;
- Promoting competitive and sustainable fisheries and aquaculture;
 - Fostering the implementation of the CFP;
 - Promoting a balanced and inclusive territorial development of fisheries areas;
 - Fostering the development and implementation of Integrated Maritime Policy.
48. In Wales the core EMFF activities (i.e. not including data collection or control and enforcement) will be focused on 3 primary areas;
- 'Smart Green' Fisheries
 - 'Smart Green' Aquaculture
 - Fisheries Communities – Community Led Local Development (CLLD)
49. Any projects must support the development of the Welsh Marine and Fisheries industry, as well as being consistent with the UK Operational Programme and the Welsh Economic Prioritisation Framework.

Legislative Review

50. There have been a number of major changes to fisheries management in Wales over recent years. In 2009 the Marine and Coastal Access Act gave the Welsh Ministers new powers for inshore fisheries management. In 2010 the two Sea Fisheries Committees that were active in Wales were abolished and the staff, legislation and assets transferred into the Welsh Government. The Welsh zone was also established in 2010 which extended the area of sea over which the Welsh Ministers were responsible; the creation of the Welsh zone also transferred all UK fisheries legislation covering the zone to Welsh Ministers. Then in 2011 the further powers referendum gave primary law making powers to Wales (including fisheries) for the first time.
51. In 2012, the four UK fisheries Ministers signed the fisheries concordat giving each nation administrative responsibilities for fisheries licencing and quota management.
52. It is plain to see how over the past four years, Welsh Government has gained increased management responsibilities, powers and legislation in relation to fisheries. This has created a need to review all fisheries legislation in relation to Wales, much of which developed over a number of years in isolation from each other and enacted by different bodies and tiers of government. Over 200 items of domestic legislation have been identified and the full review will take some years to carry out. The review goes further than simply tidying up the legislation. The Welsh Government is taking this opportunity to question the need for legislation, and what management measures are appropriate to ensure sustainable and viable fisheries in Wales.

53. The overarching aim of the review is to deliver a set of legislation that is coherent, easily understood by the industry and so improves compliance, easy to implement for managers. This review, while ensuring Welsh Ministers meet their obligations under European and domestic legislation, should seek to reduce the burden on industry, facilitating the introduction of simplified management processes whenever possible. The powers enshrined in primary legislation that Welsh Ministers have in relation to Fisheries are broad. Almost all of the changes necessary can be achieved through primary legislation.
54. Over recent years, the legislation has been catalogued and a set of priority areas for review have been identified. Three priority work streams have been identified as follows:

Management of cockle fisheries:

55. Cockle fisheries are some of the most valuable fisheries in Wales and often of great local and cultural importance. Two consultations have been held recently proposing a new management regime for cockle fisheries in Wales which would facilitate an economically and environmentally sustainable industry for future generations. Responses are currently being considered. The Natural Resources and Food Minister plans to make a statement on these consultations before the end of the year.

Management of Welsh crustacean fisheries:

56. Crustaceans are the mainstay of much of the Welsh fishing fleet with crab and lobsters traditionally targeted via fishing with pots. Proposals have been developed in conjunction with the fisheries industry with the launch of a consultation expected before the end of the year. The proposals within the forthcoming consultation seek to remove the current fragmented legislation across Wales replacing them with a single harmonised regulation, providing a consistent set of regulations which simplifies the requirements on industry while protecting stocks for future generations.

Bass fishery:

57. Bass is an important species for the industry in South & West Wales as well as a mainstay of the recreational fleet. Recently, the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) recommended a significant decrease in the level of bass catch in Europe. Bass is currently a non-quota species and if it is to stay that way, new robust technical measures are needed. The domestic and European pressure on bass fishery is driving significant change in the attitude towards management of bass. The Welsh Government expects to bring forward proposals for management of the bass fishery early in 2014.

Historic Access Rights

58. The consultation regarding the future of Historic Access Rights (Grandfather rights) in the Welsh inshore area, will come to a close on the 1 December 2013, The Minister will then consider any new evidence presented alongside the existing evidence and take an informed decision regarding such rights.

More Profitable Fisheries

The Minister's June statement committed the Welsh Government to assist the Welsh fishing industry to increasing the profitability to retaining more value from Welsh fish in Wales. In particular, he identified the need for a fast-track process to be able to consider applications for new fisheries. The Welsh Government is undertaking internal work on this and will be discussing ideas with stakeholders through the IFGs.

60. Achieving overall progress is complex and will require engagement with producers, buyers, processors and retailers over a sustained period. Aspects of the work that relate particularly to engagement with processors and retailers are likely to form part of the work that will be taken forward as part of the new Food Strategy. In conjunction with that, the Welsh Government intends to use the IFG and WMFAG fisheries stakeholder groups to identify the priorities and most effective ways of achieving them. In addition, the Welsh Government expects that the new European Structural & Investment funds, not only EMFF, to play a useful role in supporting more profitable fisheries businesses.

Smart, Green Fisheries:

61. Fisheries in Wales interact with areas with some level of environmental designation; this provides both challenges and opportunities. The Welsh fishing industry needs to adapt to the CFP, in terms of the new legislative requirements and the shift to more sustainable fishing practices. The industry has already made large strides towards achieving that in recent years. There is a wealth of knowledge within the industry and within academic institutions in Wales. The intention is to build on work already undertaken in this field supporting a forum for the exchange of ideas and best practice and then provide support for projects which arise from this partnership approach. This is intended to help address the issues around discards, support fisheries which are less damaging to the marine environment, support innovation, best practice, and build resilience to external factors such as disease of marine species.

Sustainable aquaculture:

62. The Welsh Government is committed to the sustainable development of aquaculture in Wales. This includes shellfish and finfish, in the both coastal marine environment and in freshwater. Article 34 of the CFP sets out the requirement for each Member State to have a multiannual national strategic plan for aquaculture. The European Commission Communication "Strategic Guidelines for the sustainable development of EU aquaculture" (COM (2013) 229)⁴ further develops this. The plan covers actions which can be taken to improve aquaculture, including reducing the administrative burden on operators, increasing collaboration between industry and scientific institutions.
63. In relation to aquaculture, the EMFF in Wales will focus on capacity building, increasing innovation and new developments, building on links between operators and scientific bodies as well as increasing the sustainability of the industry in its interactions with the environment.

⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/cfp/aquaculture/official_documents/com_2013_229_en.pdf

Fisheries Communities

64. The third area of funding is fisheries communities. Under the current scheme, four Fisheries Local Action Groups (FLAGs) are in operation. These bring together local actors to jointly implement a Local Development Strategy (LDS) to improve their local area through fishery and marine related actions, which also have a wider social benefit (such as supporting food festivals or renovating boat houses or multi-use facilities).
65. FLAGs are run under a Community Lead Local Development (CLLD) process. The EMFF makes provision for FLAGs to again be established. However, the way in which all European structural and investment funds for the 2014-2020 period are coordinated – via the Common Provisions Regulation (CPR) – gives the opportunity for greater collaboration between FLAGs and Local Action Groups established through the European Agriculture and Rural Development Plan and funded via the Welsh Rural Development Plan.
66. FLAGs' current local development strategies are due to run into 2015. It is the Welsh Government's intention that new LDS will be established to build on achievements.

Inland Fisheries

67. Welsh Ministers are responsible for the inland fisheries in Wales but discharge this function through the work of Natural Resources Wales. The Welsh Government continues to work with Natural Resources Wales to ensure that it manages fisheries effectively and sustainably.
68. The Minister will update on further developments on policy developments on inland fisheries as soon as possible, and by the time of the next regular update to the National Assembly in June 2014. The Welsh Government is currently reviewing the legislation on access and outdoor recreation, which includes the current arrangements on inland water. A green paper consultation will be issued in due course.



The Action Plan

69. Over the next six months, the Welsh Government will ensure that the following actions are carried out to comply with current and future legislative requirements, whilst supporting the development of a sustainable and productive marine and fisheries industries.
70. The actions are mapped in relation to four thematic objectives:
- Objective 1: A planned approach to guide the management of Welsh seas
 - Objective 2: Encourage sustainable, local and shared management of all marine activities in Wales
 - Objective 3: Ensure better evidence and understanding of our marine life
 - Objective 4: Increase profitability in the marine and fisheries industry

Note: Objectives 2, 3 and 4 were set out by the Minister in his 18 June statement; objective 1 has been added to reflect the importance of the Wales National Marine Planning Process in informing specific actions.

Objective 1: A planned approach to guide the management of Welsh seas

Ref	Action	Description	Lead(s)	Timescale*
1.1	Initiate Marine Planning for Wales	The first stage of achieving a marine planning process, as set out in statute, is to publish a Statement of Public Participation (SPP) Vision and Objectives workshops are planned to take place across Wales and a consultation concerning marine planning will be issued	Marine & Fisheries Division (M&FD)	2014 – Qtr 1
1.2	Undertake a baseline assessment of evidence data related to Marine planning	An evidence audit is to be undertaken and a first iteration of a portal to present the evidence to interested parties involved in Marine Planning is to be developed	M&FD	2014 – Qtr 2
1.3	Implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) for Wales – Programme of Monitoring	The MSFD requires Member States to put in place measures to achieve Good Environmental Standards (GES) in their seas by 2020. The initial stage of the MSFD process involves the development of a programme of monitoring, jointly with DEFRA and the other Devolved Administrations, and the production of a report following consultation	M&FD	2014 – Qtr 2
1.4	Implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) for Wales – Programme of Measures	As part of the MSFD, Wales needs to have a Programme of Measures in place by the end of 2015. An audit of measures will be carried out in order to establish the current situation	M&FD	2014 – Qtr 2
1.5	Set up Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) Management Steering Group to coordinate the management of all MPAs in Wales	A Management Steering Group will be set up to agree priorities and a consistent approach across Wales in order to ensure that MPAs are well managed	M&FD	2014 – Qtr 2
1.6	Consult on proposed extensions to 3 Special Protection Areas (SPAs)	To further implement the Birds Directive in the marine area we will be consulting on extensions to 3 existing seabird breeding colonies into adjacent marine areas.	M&FD	2014 – Qtr 1

Objective 2: Encourage sustainable, local and shared management of all marine activities in Wales

Ref	Action	Description	Lead(s)	Timescale*
2.1	Review systems and procedures for quota management and licensing.	Establish Quota Management Groups to facilitate provisions	M&FD	2014 – Qtr 1
2.2	Implement system of points on vessel licences	Obligation under EU Fisheries Control Regulation to establish penalties to establish penalties for infringements	M&FD	2014 – Qtr 2
2.3	Revise the Crustacean legislation in Welsh waters	This involves issuing a consultation of Crustacean Legislation as well as announcing the results of such consultation	M&FD	2014 – Qtr 2
2.4	Obtain and analyse discards data to identify where gaps occur, to work toward a discard plan and to ensure consistency with the approaches of other member states	Data capture and Discards monitoring are an important requirement for the implementation of the new Common Fisheries Policy (CFP)	M&FD	2014 – Qtr 2
2.5	Implementation of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) reform - Statutory Instrument (SI)	Including the production of guidelines, desk instructions and consultation. Also, sharing best practice with regional Member States	M&FD	2014 – Qtr 2

Objective 3: Ensure better evidence and understanding of our marine life

Ref	Action	Description	Lead(s)	Timescale*
3.1	Undertake a Welsh strategic marine evidence audit	Carry out a strategic level evidence audit to inform marine planning and wider marine and fisheries management activities	M&FD	2014 – Qtr 3
3.2	Publish a Marine Evidence Strategy	Establish clear marine evidence governance structure including a Marine Evidence Group and develop a Welsh marine and fisheries evidence strategy including prioritised evidence and research needs	M&FD	2014 – Qtr 4
3.3	Create a marine planning evidence portal for Wales	Ensure marine spatial data is widely available through the marine planning data portal	M&FD	2014 – Qtr 2
3.4	Set up sampling regime in Wales as part of joint England and Wales programme under Data Collection Framework (DCF).	The DCF is the statutory evidence-gathering part of the Common Fisheries Policy. Determining how this is put in place will require collaboration between UK fisheries administrations and data collection providers	M&FD	2014 – Qtr 1
3.5	Procure a data collection and analytical services contract for Wales	A call-off contract to let a range of marine and fisheries data collection and analytical services will be issued to meet statutory fisheries information needs	M&FD	2014 – Qtr 1

Objective 4: Increase profitability in the marine and fisheries industry

Ref	Action	Description	Lead(s)	Timescale*
4.1	Implementation of the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) – Publish Aquaculture Multi-Annual National Plan	Welsh Government needs to agree with DEFRA and the other Devolved Administrations the final submission of Multi-Annual National Plan (MANP) to support the development of sustainable fisheries and Aquaculture projects	M&FD	2014 – Qtr 2
4.2	Issue a statement on the management of fishing opportunities for Welsh administered fishing vessels	Fishing opportunities available to UK fishing vessels are divided on the basis of Total Allowable Catch (TAC) for the over 10m fleet receiving a percentage share of the TAC, which gives them their yearly	M&FD	2014 – Qtr 1
4.3	Encourage Marine and Fisheries companies to apply for marketing, promotion and trade support services sponsored by the Welsh Government	Welsh Government provides business support and assistance for firms to set up and grow their business, making sure they utilise the natural resources in a responsible and sustainable way	M&FD/ WF&D Sector	2014 – Qtr 1
4.4	Support Welsh companies attending the Seafood Expo International Exhibition, which takes place in Brussels in May 2014	Fisheries are an important contributor to the coastal economy and an integral part of the Welsh tourism industry. Abroad, the industry is promoted by the Welsh Food and Drink (WF&D) sector	M&FD/ WF&D Sector	2014 – Qtr 2
4.5	Publish on website clear procedures for fisheries openings	In order to assist fishing industry, establish clear process guidance for applicants for marine capture fisheries	M&FD	2014 – Qtr 2
4.6	Make announcement on inland fisheries policy	Working with Natural Resources Wales and in the framework of WG Outdoor Recreation policy	M&FD	2014 – Qtr 2

*(Timescales are based on a calendar year)