

A significant deal to safeguard Wales' fish stocks – Lesley Griffiths

As part of the UK Ministerial negotiating team, the Welsh Government helped secure the deal at the EU Fisheries Council in Brussels which concluded in the early hours of this morning.

The Welsh Government secured deals to:

- avoid needless discards of sea bass and protect the interests of commercial and recreational fishers
- increase quotas for cod and plaice in the Irish sea, sole and cod in the Bristol channel while still meeting sustainability targets
- substantial increase quota for skates and rays.

The Cabinet Secretary said:

“I would like to thank the commercial fishers and recreational angling representatives who have helped identify the key issues around sea bass and other key stocks in Wales. As a result, we were able to present a robust Welsh case to the Presidency and Commission, along with colleagues from the UK Government and other Devolved Administrations.

“We are committed to ensuring our natural resources are sustainably managed. This meaningful deal goes a long way to achieving that goal by securing a positive outcome for coastal communities whose economies and livelihoods depend so much on the sea while protecting our precious marine environment.

“As a Government, we are committed to the key principles of the Common Fisheries Policy and this week’s negotiations underline the importance of following sound science and evidence.

“Securing the right balance in the negotiations is always challenging. This deal strikes the right balance between protecting the economic interests of small-scale fishers and recreational anglers with the need to move stocks toward the position where they can be fished sustainably into the future.”

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Cabinet Secretary considers a Wales wide approach to tackle nitrate pollution

Following an extensive [consultation on Nitrate Vulnerable Zones](#) last year, the Cabinet Secretary said work would get underway with partners over the coming months to develop the right balance of comprehensive regulatory measures, voluntary measures and investment.

This will also include exploring further options to provide land managers with flexibility, where these would achieve the same or better outcomes than a regulatory approach.

Cabinet Secretary said:

“Pure, clean water is vital to human health and well-being, as well as to natural ecosystems and economic development. While nitrogen is a vital nutrient that helps plants and crops grow, high concentrations are harmful. The agricultural use of nitrates is a major source of water pollution.

“We had a considerable interest in our consultation on Nitrate Vulnerable Zones, reflecting the importance of water quality to Wales as a nation.

“Most respondents recognised the significant impact nitrate pollution is having on our waters, businesses and human and environmental well-being throughout Wales and agreed further action was needed.

“Poor nutrient management is still a major problem across Wales. Pollution of this kind is entirely preventable and is simply not acceptable in the 21st century.

“We should not at the end of 2017 see significant stretches of some of our most well known and popular rivers largely devoid of fish, proving just how much work remains to be done.

“Wales’ waters need much greater protection from agricultural pollution and that is why I am minded to introduce a whole Wales approach to tackling nitrate pollution from agriculture.

“Over the coming months, I intend to work in partnership with our stakeholders to get the right balance of comprehensive regulatory measures, voluntary measures and investment. I also intend to explore further options to provide land managers with flexibility, where these would achieve the same or better outcomes than a regulatory approach.

“We have some of the finest countryside and stretches of water in Europe which we have a duty to protect and enhance. This new regulatory approach will help deliver this and ensure current and future generations continue to benefit from our natural resources.”

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Minister visits Citizens Advice Swansea Neath Port Talbot to discuss Universal Credit

The Minister talked to staff who provide valuable information and advice to people across the Swansea and Neath Port Talbot area to learn about some of the concerns they have raised.

Rebecca Evans said:

“Citizens Advice provided advice and information to over 18,000 people last year – and they tell me that the largest number of enquiries were from people experiencing welfare benefit problems.

“Many vulnerable people across Wales are facing challenges as a result of the UK Government’s welfare reforms, including the introduction of Universal Credit, which have particularly hit low income earners, families and the poorest.

“The Welsh Government continues to fund Citizens Advice Swansea Neath Port Talbot, which enables the fantastic team here to help people make the most of their household income and to resolve problems with welfare benefit claims.

“The vital work done by this fantastic team working across Swansea and Neath Port Talbot makes a big difference to many people.

“However, I am deeply concerned about the fundamental flaws and complexities of Universal Credit. I am extremely disappointed that

the UK Government is persisting with its roll-out, despite our calls on them to halt this and address the problems.

“There are still some claimants waiting more than six weeks for their first payment. I am seeking reassurance from Damian Hinds MP, the Minister for Employment that those claiming Universal Credit, including people living in Swansea, who will now have to claim it, will receive financial support over the Christmas period.

“The DWP’s solution to tackling the delays in payments is an advance of a claimant’s indicative award. This is not a robust solution for people who are struggling. This loan has the potential to push people into more debt and rent arrears.”