

Fisheries in brief

4: Stakeholder engagement

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Fisheries management decisions have environmental, social, economic and political impacts that can affect marine industries, coastal communities and international negotiations (particularly with regard to access to national waters and joint management of fish stocks). Stakeholders often have competing visions for fisheries and environmental management. Therefore, finding a balance between each of their demands is essential for identifying and delivering long-term environmental, economic and social benefits.

Delivering progressive fisheries management that effectively protects, restores and enhances the marine environment requires a collaborative, cross-sectoral and multi-national approach.

The benefits of inclusive stakeholder engagement throughout fisheries management decisions include:

- A diversity of stakeholders and transparency in decision-making.
- Collaboration between Coastal States to manage shared resources and widespread pressures.
- Natural assets that are managed as commodities with shared ownership, rather than owned by individuals, with those harvesting the assets considered as stewards of a public resource.
- Better stakeholder representation through effective, streamlined stakeholder groups.
- Local knowledge and expertise are incorporated into management and decision-making.

What the Scottish Wildlife Trust would like to see:

- The impacts on often-overlooked stakeholders, including the continued right to enjoyment and use of a healthy marine environment by the general public and future generations, to be considered in fisheries management decisions.
- Long-term environmental sustainability and ecosystem-service benefits prioritised in fisheries management decisions.
- A review of existing systems for stakeholder engagement and co-management of fisheries to assess whether they are representative and fit for purpose, and the establishment of new forums for co-management if required.
- Opportunities considered for co-management of inshore waters through existing groups, such as Marine Planning Partnerships (MPPs), and Inshore Fisheries Groups (IFGs), akin to the Inshore Fisheries Conservation Authorities (IFCAs) in England.
- An increase in information sharing and transparency for all involved stakeholders, and the establishment of effective routes of communication and collaboration at both national and international levels.
- Annual fishing negotiations that do not undermine the environment, and Fisheries Administrations that are transparent (e.g. scientific advice and Government proposals are published in advance of negotiations), both within the UK and with other coastal states.
- Management approaches by all coastal states that are complementary and do not result in unilateral setting of catch limits in relation to shared stocks.

To read our full Fisheries Management Policy, visit: scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk/living-seas

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