

**PRESS RELEASE, EMBARGOED UNTIL 00:01, 4<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2023**

## **Marine charity's UK seafood ratings award only 13% with 'green' environmental status**

- **The Marine Conservation Society reviews 117 environmental ratings for seafood**
- **Good Fish Guide sees 53 ratings changes, with 19 moving down the sustainability scale**
- **62% of UK ratings are 'amber' rated, showing UK fisheries are in need of improvements**

The [Marine Conservation Society](#), the UK's leading ocean charity, has updated its [Good Fish Guide](#) in line with the latest scientific advice.

This autumn's update to the Good Fish Guide sees 53 ratings changes, with 19 moving down the sustainability scale.

The Guide includes 337 ratings for seafood caught in UK seas, of which only 13% are green rated. The majority (62%) of UK fisheries are amber rated.

**Charlotte Coombes, Good Fish Guide Manager:** "With the majority of UK ratings in the Good Fish Guide staying on amber, it is evident that the UK has yet to fulfil its commitment to achieving world-class sustainability in fisheries. In this latest update, an additional 12 ratings have regrettably received red ratings. Urgent and improved fisheries management is imperative for the sake of our seas."

The UK Government's Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) has released a suite of consultations on the future management of UK fisheries, including details of new, highly anticipated Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs). These are intended to be 'on-the-water' delivery mechanisms for the Fisheries Act, but there is concern from environmental organisations about the lack of proposed action, meaningful timelines and the sheer number of important consultations under review at the same time.

**Dr Kenneth Bodles, Head of Fisheries and Aquaculture at the Marine Conservation Society** said, "It's vital that all fisheries stakeholders have their voice heard for truly informed and sound policy development. While we welcome these first draft Fisheries Management Plans, they are scant on details."

“These plans should outline clear short- and long-term management options. They should bring forward strong proposals for monitoring, assessment and control, and include clear targets to restore stocks, minimise bycatch, monitor habitat impacts and maximise economic and social benefits. However, the current plans fail to deliver the management needed”

In the first of almost 50 new plans for UK seas, DEFRA have produced drafts for six ‘frontrunner FMPs’, including species such as lobsters, scallops, and cuttlefish. Cuttlefish is mostly red rated on the Good Fish Guide, reflecting the need for better management and data collection. Very little is known about the population size, but with several thousand tonnes being caught each year and mostly exported to Europe, it’s an incredibly valuable fishery.

The Marine Conservation Society want to see widespread roll out of cameras on boats, or Remote Electronic Monitoring with cameras (REM), which would monitor what’s being caught and provide data to support scientists and governments in making informed decisions about how much seafood to catch. This is a cost-effective tool that would help support fishers in fishing sustainably, as well as reduce overfishing and better inform future management plans.

**Nicola Cusack, Fisheries Policy Officer at the Marine Conservation Society**, said, “Data and better management go hand-in-hand. You can’t have well managed fisheries without knowing what’s happening below the surface, and on boats. How we interact with the ocean is fundamental to keeping it vibrant and full of life. We need to maintain the health of our seas to support livelihoods, our culture and food production.”

“It is possible to recover fish stocks to sustainable levels, protect and restore the marine environment, and secure fishing in the UK as a world class example of good management. But it’s time to move on from plans and into action.”

*To learn more about the Marine Conservation Society’s work, please visit the charity’s website: [www.mcsuk.org](http://www.mcsuk.org).*

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## **Press Contact**

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## **Images**

Please find a selection of high-res imagery [here](#).

## Notes to Editors

The Good Fish Guide is the charity's flagship tool for identifying sustainable seafood. The Guide uses a simple traffic light system to help consumers and businesses make sustainable seafood choices depending on where and how a species is caught or farmed.

Covering seafood sold or produced in the UK, green are the 'Best Choice' most sustainable options, amber is an 'OK Choice', but improvements are needed, and red indicates unsustainable 'Fish to Avoid'.

Please see a full list of Good Fish Guide ratings changes [here](#).

The rating for each UK fishery is specific to species, location, and fishing method. This means we can highlight the differences in sustainability between, for example, dredging and diving for scallops.

DEFRA have produced drafts for six 'frontrunner FMPs', these are:

- Sea bass in English and Welsh Waters
- Crab and Lobster in English Waters
- Channel Demersal Non-Quota Species
- King scallops in English and Welsh Waters
- Southern North Sea and Eastern Channel Mixed Flatfish Fisheries
- Whelk in English Waters

The **Marine Conservation Society** is the UK's leading ocean charity, fighting for cleaner, better-protected, healthier seas. The charity works to highlight the importance of our ocean, and the life within it, through working with governments, communities, and industry to take action to restore and protect the marine environment.