

Fisheries and marine ecology of the Irish Sea

The Irish Sea (ICES Division VIIa) contains many important fisheries for shellfish (e.g. *Nephrops*, scallop and queen scallop), flatfish (e.g. sole, plaice, brill and turbot), gadoids (e.g. cod, haddock and whiting) and elasmobranchs (e.g. skates and rays, and spurdog).

The eastern Irish Sea is comparatively shallow (mostly <40 m deep) with sandy sediments, and plaice and sole are abundant on such grounds. The central Irish Sea and St George's Channel are deeper with coarser sediments. These habitats are very diverse, and support many fishery species, including queen scallops. The muddy grounds south-west of the Isle of Man and off Cumbria are important for *Nephrops*.

Horse mussel *Modiolus modiolus* beds support a high diversity of fauna, and are a Biodiversity Action Plan habitat. Important horse mussel beds occur in the North Channel and Strangford Lough, and off Anglesey.



The bryozoan *Cellaria* spp. is an important species on coarse grounds, as juvenile queen scallop often settle onto it.

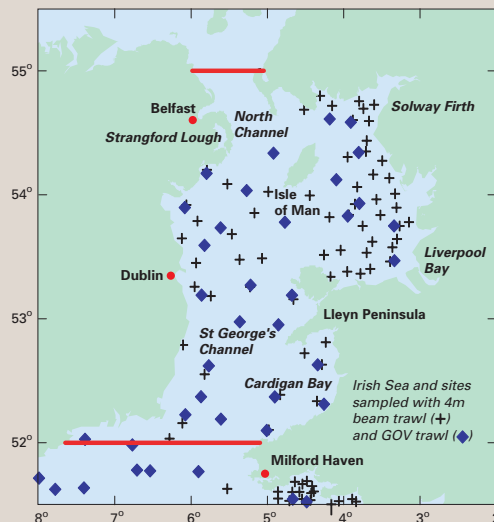


Thornback ray *Raja clavata* is most common in the Solway Firth, Liverpool Bay and Cardigan Bay.

Catches of Irish Sea cod *Gadus morhua* have declined in recent years, and recovery plans have been developed.



Norway lobster *Nephrops norvegicus* supports the most valuable fishery in the Irish Sea.

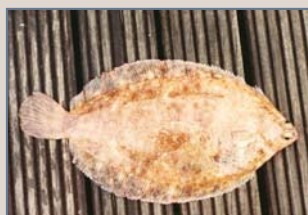


Queen scallop *Aequipecten opercularis* is one of the more abundant species on the coarse grounds of the central Irish Sea.



Plaice *Pleuronectes platessa* is one of the major fishery resources in the area, and is most abundant in the shallow waters of the eastern Irish Sea.

Lemon sole *Microstomus kitt* is common on coarse grounds in the central Irish Sea and St George's Channel.



Sole *Solea solea* is one of the most valuable fish resources in the area, and is most abundant in Liverpool Bay.

Several small shark species, such as starry smooth hound *Mustelus asterias*, are common in Cardigan Bay.



Important fisheries for edible crab *Cancer pagurus* and other shellfish operate in Welsh coastal waters.



Greater spotted dogfish *Scyllorhinus stellaris* is locally abundant off Anglesey and the Lleyn Peninsula.