

4.3 Deputy G.C.L. Baudains of the Minister for Planning and Environment regarding the monitoring of local bass stocks:

Give the Minister's recent monitoring of wrasse and rays at Portelet, has there been a major decline in local bass stocks, and if so, how does he now intend to investigate this? If not, why not?

Deputy R.C. Duhamel of St. Saviour (The Minister for Planning and Environment):

I am committed to the sustainable fishing of fish and shellfish stocks in our waters, including bass, which is an important commercial and recreational stock. My department analyses data provided by fishermen to assess stocks, and while this process is not yet complete for 2012, at present there is no evidence for any major decline in bass stocks to date. My department is involved in a joint project with recreational fishermen tagging bass around Jersey, and I think Members will have received a report from one of those persons. One of the objectives of this project is to better understand stock numbers and movements of bass to assist in future management of the stocks. The stocks are important and they need to be protected, but there are international considerations in terms of limiting the sizes.

4.3.1 Deputy G.C.L. Baudains:

I wonder if the Minister would be kind enough to check the robustness of the information which he has just given, because I think if he asks certainly any recreational fishermen, they will say whereas you used to be able to catch perhaps half a dozen bass, now you are lucky if you can get one. Is the Minister aware that there is an area of Guernsey where huge amounts of spawning bass are caught? There is a thought within the industry that this is what is adversely affecting Jersey. So I ask the Minister, would he work with his counterparts in Guernsey to investigate this as soon as possible, because there does appear to be a major decline in bass stocks around Jersey.

Deputy R.C. Duhamel:

Absolutely. I am in favour generally of what is currently known in the trade as "no take" zones, which are basically areas of water, which could include spawning grounds for different species of fish, in order to enhance the fishing prospects of those who rely upon those fish. It is something that my department is working at, but as I said, there are international considerations in working not only with our Guernsey colleagues, but indeed with Defra (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) in the U.K. (United Kingdom) and indeed the French authorities for the wise management of fish stocks in our waters.

4.3.2 Deputy G.C.L. Baudains:

I thank the Minister for his response. I am not sure if he committed to working with his Guernsey counterparts. Could he confirm that?

Deputy R.C. Duhamel:

For the sake of clarity, I most definitely did.