



Press release 11 August 2020

## **Action Plan launched to protect the Critically Endangered Angelshark, still found off the Welsh coast**

A five-year [action plan](http://www.angelsharkproject.com/wales/#actionplan) has been published today to help safeguard Angelsharks, one of the world's rarest shark species, which can still be found around the Welsh coastline. [[www.angelsharkproject.com/wales/#actionplan](http://www.angelsharkproject.com/wales/#actionplan)]

The Wales Angelshark Action Plan has been developed with organisations from across Wales in response to the limited understanding of the ecology and status of the Critically Endangered Angelsharks in Wales and sets out priority actions to safeguard this protected species.

The Action Plan is the culmination of two years' extensive evidence gathering carried out as part of Angel Shark Project: Wales (ASP:W), a collaborative initiative led by Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and international conservation charity ZSL (Zoological Society of London).

Since its launch in 2018, ASP:W has successfully brought together fishers, government bodies, NGOs and local people from across Wales, to build a clearer picture of where Angelsharks are found in Welsh waters and to understand their role in Wales' maritime heritage.

Data gathered from community memories, historical research, fisher knowledge and citizen science surveys has been used to inform the Action Plan, which will be implemented over the next five years.

Joanna Barker, Senior Project Manager - Marine and Freshwater Conservation at ZSL, said: "The launch of this Action Plan is a vital step to safeguard the future of Angelsharks in Wales. This species has significant scientific and cultural importance to Wales and is listed as the fifth most Evolutionarily Distinct and Globally Endangered (EDGE) shark in the world, representing a distinct branch of the tree of life.

Since 1980, more than 1,600 Angelsharks have been reported in coastal waters of the Welsh Zone, including 79 juvenile records from areas around North Cardigan Bay and the Bristol Channel.

Ben Wray, Marine Ecologist at NRW said: “It’s hugely exciting that we still have an Angelshark population here in Wales, and the collaborative working over the last two years has significantly improved our understanding of the status and ecology of this very important species.

“What’s vital now is that we build on what we’ve learned so far and improve our understanding further to make sure that this rare shark is safeguarded – both now and in the future.”

Jake Davies, ASP:W Coordinator added: “We’re extremely grateful to all the partners, including the fishing community and members of the public, who have taken part in this project to date.

“Thanks to funding and support from several organisations, including On The EDGE Conservation, priority actions from the Action Plan can start next month. This will include a systematic environmental DNA (eDNA) study in North Cardigan Bay to understand Angelshark presence throughout the year, continued work with the fishing community and inspiring coastal communities in Wales with the Angels of Wales eBook.”

**-ends-**

#### **Notes to Editors:**

- Press Release: 11:00 BST, Tuesday 11 August 2020
- Media Contact:
  - Eiliw Williams ([communications@naturalresourceswales.gov.uk](mailto:communications@naturalresourceswales.gov.uk), 029 2046 4227)
  - Will Richard ([Will.Richard@zsl.org](mailto:Will.Richard@zsl.org))
- Interviews: Available with Joanna Barker (ZSL), Ben Wray (NRW) and Jake Davies (ZSL & NRW in Welsh Language) upon request
- Attached photo: Angelshark buried in the sand. Copyright – Michael Sealey

#### **Natural Resources Wales**

Natural Resources Wales is a Welsh Government Sponsored Body. Its purpose is to ensure that the natural resources of Wales are sustainably maintained, enhanced and used, now and in the future

For more information, see our website: [www.naturalresources.wales](http://www.naturalresources.wales)

**ZSL**

ZSL (Zoological Society of London) is an international conservation charity working to create a world where wildlife thrives. From investigating the health threats facing animals to helping people and wildlife live alongside each other, ZSL is committed to bringing wildlife back from the brink of extinction. Our work is realised through our ground-breaking science, our field conservation around the world and engaging millions of people through our two zoos, ZSL London Zoo and ZSL Whipsnade Zoo. For more information, visit [www.zsl.org](http://www.zsl.org)

A lack of funding - as a result of the current pandemic - has put ZSL's world-leading expertise in science and conservation in serious jeopardy. ZSL needs urgent support to keep its scientists investigating wildlife diseases such as Covid-19, and its conservationists working in the field to protect the wildlife and ecosystems on which we rely. Find out more at [www.zsl.org/donate](http://www.zsl.org/donate).

### **Organisations that developed the Wales Angelshark Action Plan**

Angel Shark Project: Wales, Angel Shark Project: Canary Islands, Bangor University, Cefas, Imperial College London, IUCN Shark Specialist Group, Marine Biological Association, National Waterfront Museum, Natural Resources Wales, North Wales Wildlife Trust, Peoples Collection Wales, Swansea University, The Advocacy Hub, The Shark Trust, Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Welsh Federation of Sea Anglers, Welsh Fisherman's Association, Welsh Government, Zoological Research Museum Alexander Koenig, Zoological Society of London.

Development of the Action Plan was made possible through funding by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Natural Resources Wales and Welsh Government.

### **Angel Shark Project: Wales**

Angel Shark Project: Wales (ASP:W) is a collaborative project led by Zoological Society of London (ZSL) and Natural Resources Wales (NRW). It was piloted in 2017, before formal launch in 2018 with the aim to better understand and safeguard Angelsharks in Wales through fisher participation, heritage and citizen science. [www.angelsharkproject.com/wales](http://www.angelsharkproject.com/wales).