

## I'd like to harvest seaweed - what do I need to know?

### Key points if you are considering seaweed harvesting by hand

- You must gain permission from the landowner before harvesting seaweed.
- In some circumstances you will need a licence to harvest seaweed; for example, if you are harvesting seaweed for commercial reasons on The Crown Estate owned shores.
- You should consult Natural Resources Wales before harvesting seaweed in a protected site.
- It is illegal to drive mechanised vehicles on to the shore without permission from the landowner.
- It is an offence to cause the spread of certain non-native species.

### Summary of best practice guidelines for harvesting seaweed by hand

- Avoid disturbing wildlife on the shore by keeping at least 100m away, especially in bird nesting season (March-July), areas important for overwintering birds (October-March) and seal pupping season (August-January).
- Avoid or minimise trampling other plants and species, including when accessing the site
- If you move any rocks, replace them as you found them.
- Cut fronds cleanly with sharp tools such as scissors or knives, well above the point of growth. **Always leave the holdfast attached.**
- Try to avoid collecting 'bycatch' of other species attached to the seaweed.
- Harvest sparsely, taking only a small proportion of attached seaweed from the habitat.
- Rotate harvesting areas to allow ample time for recovery.
- Harvest during active growth season, and after reproduction has occurred if possible.
- Seek advice from NRW if you wish to harvest non-native species.
- Follow '[Check, Clean, Dry](#)' biosecurity principles for all equipment and clothing before moving between sites.
- Do not collect all the drift seaweed from a strandline – harvest sparsely from various locations and vary the shore from which you collect. Drift seaweed has an important role as a habitat for invertebrates and birds (especially in winter), a food source and nutrient input.
- Minimise collecting drift seaweed in front of sand dunes as it plays an important role in dune development.
- Be aware that foreshores can be hazardous. Do not put yourself at risk of injury by collecting seaweed in adverse conditions and be aware of tides.



# Harvesting seaweed by hand – the basics

## Why is seaweed important?

Seaweed has several important functions in marine and coastal ecosystems, including primary production, a habitat and food source, spawning and nursery grounds, coastal protection and dune development, improving water quality and nutrient cycling.

## Do I need permission to collect seaweed by hand?

Anyone is permitted to collect seaweed which is both floating and unattached. If the seaweed is growing on the foreshore or seabed or has been deposited on shore by the tide (drift seaweed), then **you must obtain the landowner's permission**. Harvesting seaweed from a SSSI may also require permission from NRW.

## How do I find out who the landowner is?

You have three options:

1. Search the [Crown Estate Foreshore and Estuary Map](#). The Crown Estate owns approximately 65% of the foreshore in Wales, and most of the seabed out to 12 nautical miles, as indicated on the map. Some of this land may be leased to other authorities.
2. Search the [Land Registry](#)
3. Ask locally for more information

## Do I need a licence to harvest seaweed?

A licence may be required depending on where you want to collect and for what purpose;

### Crown Estate Licence

You do **not** need a licence to harvest seaweed on The Crown Estate foreshore for personal use. You **will** need a licence to harvest seaweed for any monetary or other reward from the foreshore or seabed owned by the Crown Estate.

### Marine Licence

You only require a Marine Licence (issued by NRW) if you plan to deposit or remove any substance or object (including a structure on which to cultivate seaweed) from any kind of vehicle, vessel or structure onto, or from, the sea bed. Gathering of seaweed by hand is unlikely to require a Marine Licence.

You **do not** need a Marine Licence if you are removing seaweed from a beach on behalf of a local authority. However, the removal might be subject to other restrictions if the area is in or near a protected site. Contact NRW if you are unsure if a protected site may be affected.

## Where can I collect seaweed?

You can collect seaweed from many parts of the Welsh coast and inshore waters wherever it is safe to do so. However, there are a number of protected sites in Wales where harvesting might be subject to certain conditions or be prohibited. You should contact NRW if you wish to harvest in one of these areas.

## How do I know if the coast is in a protected site?

Protected site boundaries for Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Ramsar sites and Marine Conservation Zones can be found on the [DataMapWales](#).

If you contact NRW about harvesting seaweed in a protected site, we will assess each enquiry on a case-by-case basis. Please make sure you have the following information available:

## Checklist to use when contacting NRW

### Where

We will need details on the exact locations of harvesting (i.e. grid references, plan or map). Do you propose to harvest on the foreshore only (i.e. between Mean Low Water and Mean High Water) or on the seabed below Mean Low Water as well?

### Who

Who will be carrying out the harvesting? (individual, company, contractor etc)  
Who owns the land in question? (if known)

### What

The seaweed species that you would like to harvest.

### How

The method of collection and whether you wish to use a boat.  
Details of access and whether you wish to use a vehicle on the foreshore.

### When

The seasonality, frequency and pattern of collection.

### How much

An indication of the amount / volume sought. We appreciate that you may not know this in any detail, but to know whether it will amount to grammes, kilograms or tonnes etc. will help us to give you appropriate advice.

### What for

It would be valuable for us to understand why you wish to collect seaweed.

For all enquiries:

### Natural Resources Wales

Telephone: 0300 065 3000

Email: [enquiries@naturalresourceswales.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@naturalresourceswales.gov.uk)

By Post:

Natural Resources Wales  
c/o Customer Care Centre  
Ty Cambria  
29 Newport Road  
Cardiff  
CF24 0TP

If you decide you would like to collect seaweed in Wales, we advise that you read 'Detailed Guidance for Seaweed Hand Harvesting'. Guidance Note. NRW, 2022 for further details.