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DEPARTMENT FOR ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS
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Mr Alistair Carmichael MP
Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee Chair
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

10 October 2024

Dear Chair,

Fisheries Management Plans

I am writing to let you know that today we are:

- Publishing Defra's sixth FMP covering Southern North Sea and Eastern Channel Mixed Flatfish.
- Opening consultations on the next five Defra-led draft FMPs, covering:
 - Cockles (English waters only)
 - Queen Scallop (English waters only)
 - Southern North Sea Non-Quota Demersal (English waters only)
 - Southern North Sea and Channel Skates and Rays (English waters only)
 - North Sea and Channel Sprat (applies to English and Scottish waters)
- Opening a consultation jointly with the UK fisheries policy authorities (the Secretary of State, Welsh Ministers, Scottish Ministers and Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs in Northern Ireland) on proposals to amend Annex A of the Joint Fisheries Statement to:
 - Amend the deadlines for producing 5 Defra led plans to 2025, 4 Defra led plans to 2026, 22 Scottish Government led plans to 2026, 3 Northern Ireland led plan to 2026 and 1 Welsh Government plan to 2028.
 - For Welsh Government to remain as a joint authority only for the 3 plans led by the Scottish Government that extend in to Welsh waters.
 - To add a periwinkle FMP for Northern Ireland.
 - To add species to 3 FMPs to better reflect stocks.
 - To amend the geographic scope of 3 FMPs to better align with the stocks.
 - To merge two cod plans to better align with the biological stock.

In accordance with Part 1 of Schedule 1 of the Fisheries Act 2020 (“the Act”), the consultation draft of Annex A has today been laid in Parliament. Through this letter (I am also writing to the Chairs of the Environmental Audit and the Lords Environment and Climate Change Committees), I am drawing the consultation to your attention. I would be grateful if any scrutiny you may wish to undertake, be completed and reported to me by close on 21 November 2024.

Similar processes are being undertaken in parallel across other UK legislatures.

Background

The [JFS](#) was published in November 2022, as required by the Act. The JFS sets out the policies of the fisheries policy authorities for achieving or contributing to the achievement of the eight fisheries objectives in the Act.

Annex A of the JFS sets out the lead fisheries policy authority for preparation and publication of each planned FMP. It also includes the publication timetable for all FMPs and details of which species and which areas of UK waters each are covered by each planned FMP.

Experience has shown that longer is needed to develop FMPs. The timing of the UK General Election has delayed the Defra-led Plans. We have also identified several technical amendments (as listed above) that we believe would be helpful to make. These proposed amendments will enable the fisheries policy authorities to produce high-quality, comprehensive and robust FMPs that will achieve the long-term aim of sustainably managed fisheries, in line with the fisheries objectives set out in the Act.

FMPs are evidence based and highly technical plans which set out a series of short, medium and long-term measures to maintain or improve the sustainability of fish stocks. They are being developed in close collaboration with industry.

A link to the consultation on amending Annex A of the JFS is provided here:

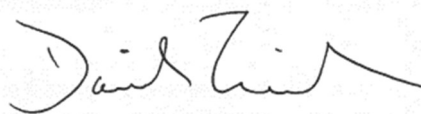
<https://consult.defra.gov.uk/joint-fisheries-statement/jfs-amendment-consultation/>

It is also worth drawing to your attention that as required by the S11 of the Act we will be preparing and publishing a report on the implementation of the policies set out in the JFS by November 2025, and will engage with you closer to the time.

I am placing a copy of the letters in the House libraries.

I am happy to answer questions or assist any scrutiny you wish to undertake.

Sincerely,



DANIEL ZEICHNER MP