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Finlay Carson, Convener
Rural Affairs and Islands Committee
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

26 November 2024

Dear Finlay,

Notice of publication - Call for Evidence for Scotland's Inshore Fisheries Management Improvement (IFMI) Programme

I am writing to make the Rural Affairs and Islands Committee aware that we have published a [call for evidence](#) for our Inshore Fisheries Management Improvement (IFMI) Programme this afternoon. This will be open for a ten week period until 04 February 2025.

The IFMI Programme presents an opportunity to develop a new framework for more agile inshore fisheries management in Scotland. Our vision is that this framework will enable us to tailor a range of fisheries management tools to the changing needs of our marine environment and fishers, based on the best available scientific data.

Our [Fisheries Management Strategy](#) outlines our commitment to working with stakeholders, and this framework offers an opportunity to strengthen existing arrangements. The IFMI programme will consider a structure that enables a greater focus on strategic decision making both regionally and nationally. It will help us to manage fishing activity within the space available, and consider how responsibility for management and delivery can be shared whilst respecting the ultimate accountability of Scottish Ministers to the Scottish Parliament and the general public.

You may be aware that the intention had been to consult on a broader package of inshore management measures under this workstream in November 2024. The work to outline and develop interim measures to protect crab and lobster stocks highlighted an inherent

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challenge in accounting for the nuances of Scotland's diverse inshore waters through our existing fisheries management mechanisms. It therefore became clear during this process that it is necessary to reform how Scotland's inshore fisheries are managed, in order to deliver nuanced management with co-management and transparency at its heart. Although originally driven by concern for crab and lobster stocks, this work will encompass all of Scotland's inshore fisheries to support improved management across the board.

Holding a call for evidence instead of a consultation will give us the information we need to develop a framework that achieves the best outcomes for all, avoiding as far as possible any unintended consequences. It will help us to get this complex reform right first time, with further stakeholder engagement during and following the call for evidence to refine a proposal and consider implementation and monitoring. We will bring this final proposal to public consultation in late 2025 to receive views and intend to begin implementation in late 2026.

I hope that you find this information helpful.



MAIRI GOUGEON

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