



T: 0300 244 4000
E: scottish.ministers@gov.scot

Finlay Carson MSP
Convener
Rural Affairs, Islands and Natural Environment
Committee

rural.committee@Parliament.Scot

23 November 2022

Dear Finlay

Consultation draft of the Joint Fisheries Statement

Thank you for your letter of 26 April 2022 presenting the Rural Affairs, Islands and Natural Environment Committee's response to the draft Joint Fisheries Statement (JFS) and wider Fisheries Framework.

I am writing to confirm that the Joint Fisheries Statement (JFS) has been jointly published today by all UK Administrations and can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/joint-fisheries-statement-jfs>

I would also like to draw your attention to the formal response to the consultation on the draft JFS, which has been published in parallel. It complements the factual summary of responses to the consultation published on 1 July and can be found here: [Draft Joint Fisheries Statement \(JFS\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Further, I am pleased to respond in greater detail below to the committee's specific points and look forward to discussing the JFS with you on the 14th December 2022.

The Joint Fisheries Statement

The Joint Fisheries Statement sets out the ambitious high-level goals to deliver world class, sustainable management of our sea fisheries and marine aquaculture. To achieve this UK's fisheries policy authorities (FPA) will work together across the UK to support a vibrant, profitable, and sustainable fishing industry, underpinned by a healthy marine environment that is resilient to climate change.

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See www.lobbying.scot

St Andrew's House, Regent Road, Edinburgh EH1 3DG
www.gov.scot



INVESTORS
IN PEOPLE

Accredited
Until 2020



As the committee notes, the devolved nature of fisheries means it is appropriate that each administration determine and set out how the policy objectives will be achieved. The JFS, and fisheries framework, work together to help explain how, in future years, fisheries will be managed across the UK in a way that allows the four UK fisheries policy authorities to share common goals on fisheries management and marine protection while, at the same time, protecting the devolved powers of Scottish Ministers in this area.

I have noted the comments from the committee asking for greater clarity on how the policies in the JFS will achieve, or contribute to the achievement of, the fisheries objectives. The JFS has been amended accordingly. For example, in finalising the JFS officials have sought to:

- set out more clearly how an ecosystem-based approach will be embedded in policies, supporting the ecosystem objective;
- emphasise more clearly the relationship between fishing and the wider marine environment, acknowledging it can be compromised by human-induced pressures including fishing activity and impacted by environmental threats such as climate change;
- redraft the JFS to highlight our understanding that managing these pressures as a whole, is fundamental not only to having a healthy marine environment, but also to the future of sustainable fisheries management;
- recognise more clearly the interdependencies between the range of sea users and the competing spatial pressures - how these can lead to displacement, for instance, and may have adverse impacts more widely such as socially, economically or environmentally;
- highlight that in this policy space, a number of considerations must be appropriately balanced due to the interdependencies between the range of sea users and the competing spatial pressures; and
- strengthen the JFS by making clearer the need to consider the relationship between marine spatial planning and fisheries management measures where co-location occurs so that key policies are more joined up, ensuring the effective use of marine space and resources

Specifically on the question relating to time-bound targets it is worth reiterating that the JFS sets out the FPAs collective ambition for the policies which will shape the management and use of our fisheries. It is a high-level document by nature, which I believe provides the appropriate level of detail to set the direction of travel on fisheries management. The recent future catching policy and remote electronic monitoring consultations are good examples of the key delivery mechanisms to achieve the fisheries objectives being delivered at the devolved level.

The Scottish Government will continue to engage constructively with the other FPAs, while pursuing our own particular policies and remaining aligned with the JFS's overall objectives. The MoU in the Fisheries Framework allows Administrations to approach each issue independently by allowing, for example, changes to quota management to be made without the entire MOU needing to be reopened. There also exists a structure for engagement between the FPAs as outlined in the MoU through which policy areas that need a greater degree of coherence can be determined. A recent example of this is the Bycatch Mitigation Initiative which was developed jointly between the FPAs.

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See www.lobbying.scot

St Andrew's House, Regent Road, Edinburgh EH1 3DG
www.gov.scot



INVESTORS
IN PEOPLE

Accredited
Until 2020



I note and agree with the Committee's conclusions that collaboration with stakeholders is the key to ensuring trust in fisheries science, and note that the JFS emphasises the key role stakeholders have in strengthening our understanding of the marine eco-systems. In combination with my commitment to participatory decision making through our existing stakeholder structures I am confident we will be able to deliver on the commitments in the JFS in this area.

The Committee concluded the JFS should provide more detail on how the FPAs will ensure the negative social, economic and environmental impacts of displacement are minimised. However, I believe that the management of these pressures is best taken forward within each FPA in order that tailored solutions can be developed. For that reason, the JFS retains the clear commitment that each FPA should address these issues, but leaves it to each FPA to come forward with solutions for their own waters.

Fisheries Management Plans

On Fisheries Management Plans, I note the issues raised by the Committee and would like to draw your attention to section 5.3 of the finalised JFS which goes into greater detail on how the stocks for inclusion within FMPs were identified.

I note the Committee's request for additional information on how the Scottish Government will take forward the development of future FMPs and I would like to address this following the completion of the first round of FMPs when I will be able to discuss the lessons we have learned from our experience and that of other administrations.

Concluding remarks

The Committee has requested biannual written updates from the Scottish Government on the implementation of the JFS and FMPs. The Fisheries Act (2020) requires the Fisheries Policy Authorities to provide a report within three years of the publication of the JFS and a review no later than six years after the publication of the JFS. Given this, I think it would be useful to explore how best to keep the Committee informed of developments in fisheries management and what information could usefully be provided on a biannual basis.

Finally I share your concerns regarding the lack of clarity around how the UK Internal Market Act (2020), the Fisheries Act (2020), the Subsidy Control Act (2022) and the UKG's Retained EU Law (revocation and Reform) Bill intersect with devolved competence. I would like to reassure the Committee that I regularly raise with UKG and continue to press for greater clarity on these matters of vital importance.



MAIRI GOUGEON

«Signature»

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See www.lobbying.scot

St Andrew's House, Regent Road, Edinburgh EH1 3DG
www.gov.scot



INVESTORS
IN PEOPLE

Accredited
Until 2020

