

Rural Affairs and Islands Committee
Wednesday 6 November 2024
27th Meeting, 2024 (Session 6)

Note by the Clerk on the proposed amendments to annex a of the joint fisheries statement

Introduction

1. On 7 October 2024, the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands wrote to the Committee to advise members that the Scottish Government, together with the other UK administrations, intended to consult on amendments to annex a of the joint fisheries statement (JFS).
2. This paper sets out the background to the JFS and aims to support members' consideration of the proposed amendments.

Joint fisheries statement

3. The [Fisheries Act 2020](#) established a new UK-wide legal framework to replace the EU common fisheries policy and set out eight fisheries objectives.
4. The Act required the four UK administrations' fisheries policy authorities (FPAs) to prepare and publish a joint fisheries statement (JFS) which would set out how the FPAs intend, either individually or jointly, to achieve the fisheries objectives and how they plan to use fisheries management plans (FMPs) as part of this process.
5. The four administrations consulted on the draft first JFS in spring 2022 and the [Committee scrutinised the draft first JFS](#) in spring 2022. The [first JFS was subsequently agreed by the four administrations](#).
6. Annex A to the JFS lists the stocks and fishing areas of planned FMPs and a timetable for their preparation and publication. These FMPs were timetabled to be published by the end of 2024.

Proposed amendments to annex a of the JFS

7. The Committee heard, during its Marine Directorate pre-budget roundtable, concerns that the deadline for publishing FMPs would not be met. The Cabinet Secretary, during her evidence on 11 September, highlighted how the FMP process was a "really complex piece of work", with assessments, consultation, and dialogue across the four administrations. The Cabinet Secretary told members, "I hope to be able to provide more of an update to the committee in due course on the overall timelines for the plans".
8. In her 7 October 2024 letter, the Cabinet Secretary confirmed the four administrations' decision to extend the FMP timetable, as well as to make a small number of minor amendments. She told the Committee these amendments "are

narrow in scope and are not a wide-ranging consultation on the overarching JFS itself” and would focus on—

- Changing FMP publication deadlines, including extending the deadline for the 22 FMPs led by the Scottish Ministers to 2026
 - Making a “number of technical and other relatively small amendments” to a number of the FMPs
 - Creating a new FMP for periwinkles in Northern Ireland and
 - Changes to authorities responsible for preparation and publication of FMPs.
9. The [four UK administrations are consulting on the JFS amendments](#) between 10 October and 21 November 2024 (the consultation is being co-ordinated by the UK Government Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs). The proposed amendments must be considered by each legislature before 21 November 2024.

Parliamentary scrutiny of JFS and amendments to the JFS

10. Following publication of the DEFRA consultation, The Committee ran a call for views on the proposed amendments. [The call for views closed on 28 October and received 11 responses.](#)
11. The Committee will take evidence from the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands at this meeting and report on its consideration in advance of 21 November 2024.

**Clerks to the Committee
October 2024**