



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

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

7 October 2024

Dear Finlay,

*** Embargoed until 10 October 2024 ***

Advance Notice of Amendments to Annex A of the Joint Fisheries Statement

At the Rural Affairs and Islands Committee on 11 September, I updated members on the challenges of the current timeframes for all four UK nations in relation to developing quality, credible Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs) in accordance with the current statutory deadlines contained within Annex A of the UK Joint Fisheries Statement (JFS).

The purpose of this correspondence is to give the Committee advance notice of the scrutiny period and the intention across all four UK Administrations to hold a 6-week public consultation between **10 October and 21 November 2024** to amend Annex A in the Joint Fisheries Statement (JFS) which contains the list of Fisheries Management Plans.

Please note the embargoed marking included in this letter and I hope that you understand that given the sensitivities around launching a cross-UK public consultation, we cannot communicate this message publicly until all UK administrations are ready to do the same. A formal notification to the Scottish Parliament and the Fisheries Management and Conservation Group (FMAC) will be made on 10 October to coincide with the consultation.

As per the requirements of Paragraph 3 of Schedule 1 to the Fisheries Act 2020, I intend to lay the consultation draft before the Scottish Parliament with a proposed Committee scrutiny period to take place at the same time as the consultation, as per the process followed for the development of the overall JFS in 2022. The scrutiny period will be the same for each of the UK legislatures, although I appreciate this falls over the autumn recess in Scotland (and

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



Wales and Northern Ireland), reducing the scrutiny period to a minimum of at least four weeks for all.

The key purpose of holding this consultation is to amend the timetable set out in the JFS for a number of the FMPs. The proposed amendments focus on the following areas contained within Annex A of the JFS:

- Changing FMP publication deadlines;
- Technical and other relatively small changes to planned FMPs;
- New FMP for periwinkles in Northern Ireland;
- Changes to authorities responsible for preparation and publication of FMPs.

Scottish Government officials have been working closely with the other fisheries policy authorities (FPAs) across the UK to develop the consultation draft. The proposals are narrow in scope and are not a wide-ranging consultation on the overarching JFS itself.

Section 3(3) of the Fisheries Act 2020 provides that an amendment to the JFS will come into effect when it is published in accordance with Part 1 of Schedule 1. Accordingly, the change to the statutory deadline for publishing the FMPs will be affected when the amended JFS is published, following the consultation and scrutiny period. The four Administrations are working to a timeline to publish the amended Annex A before the end of this year.

FMPs are very new instruments and, given the nature of what FMPs are seeking to achieve, this is recognised as an ambitious programme of work. Each FMP is unique, allowing the fisheries policy authorities to consider new and existing approaches to fisheries management whilst engaging with stakeholders and testing how best to develop the plans.

Undeniably, FMPs will be an important tool to support management of our fisheries and the marine ecosystem. Whilst much of our management approach is well-established, and key policies to deliver improvements are underway, we recognise the importance of using FMPs to enhance and improve transparency around this. We also want to make sure we have given stakeholders adequate time to engage and contribute their ideas, and that we have also considered any potential impacts particularly to safeguard against any unintended consequences.

I hope this information is helpful for you in managing your work programme.

I would be grateful for any response/recommendations from the Committee to be provided by 29 November 2024.

Yours sincerely,



MAIRI GOUGEON

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
We invest in people Silver

